



The Corporation of the City of Cornwall
Regular Meeting of Council
Report

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation
Division: Economic Development
Report Number: 2024-125-Planning, Development and Recreation
Meeting Date: July 8, 2024
Subject: Medical Recruitment Programs, Efforts, and Financials

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Mayor’s Task Force on Medical Recruitment information on the existing medical recruitment programs, efforts, and financial structure.

Recommendation

That the Mayor’s Task Force on Medical Recruitment received report 2024-125-Planning, Development, and Recreation.

Financial Implications

There are no Financial Implications.

Strategic Priority Implications

The information provided supports the Mayor’s Task Force on Medical Recruitment mandate which aligns with Council’s Strategic Priority Pillar 2.4: Community Connections – Position Cornwall as a destination of choice for young families, professionals, and investors.

Background / Discussion

In the early 1990's, the Economic Development Department was made aware of a rural medical recruitment tour, initially funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC, Ministry has since been changed) and later, coordinated by Provincial Association of Interns and Residents of Ontario (PAIRO). The purpose of the initiative was to help underserved rural communities attract and retain family physicians and specialists from the Schools of Medicine across Ontario. A local recruitment team was established to help coordinate the tour engagement and any follow-up relocation efforts. The team included local physicians and staff from Cornwall Economic Development and the Cornwall Community Hospital. Initial costs were absorbed by Cornwall Economic Development.

When Cornwall first became involved in medical recruitment activities, there were just over 30 Ontario communities identified as underserved. By 2004, that number had increased past 140. This trend intensified recruitment competition across the province and municipalities started offering financial incentives to physicians willing to relocate to northern and other rural communities. These efforts put Cornwall at a disadvantage and in response, Mayor Poirier established a Task Force in 2000 to review the issue and provide recommendations to Council.

Mayor Poirier's Task Force on Medical Recruitment and Relocation Forgivable Loan

Mayor Poirier's Task Force on Medical Recruitment included representatives from the Council, The Cornwall Community Hospital, the boarder health sector, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, and Cornwall Economic Development. Their mandate was to explore how the City could improve its competitiveness and attract more health professional to the region. After completing their review, the Task Force recommended that Council develop and approve a financial incentive program specific to medical recruitment. Council approved the overall recommendation, and a program was developed using the Task Force's proposed funding criteria.

In 2006, the Medical Recruitment Funding criteria was amended further to include a "return-of-service" condition to the funding agreements. This means those receiving funding agree to stay and practice in Cornwall for a period of time until it is forgiven (usually 3 years). This type of loan is often called a forgivable

loan. Funding was also shifted to an expense reimbursement model to help ensure the resources were only invested in the medical practice.

Since establishing the Recruitment and Relocation program in 2001, the City has spent \$920,173 on relocation and office reimbursements to help 42 physicians and specialists move to Cornwall and establish their business. Most recently, one (1) physician completed their return-of-service in 2024 and three (3) will complete their return-of-service over the next two years. Staff are currently working with seven (7) physicians who are considering the recruitment incentive to help them relocate to Cornwall from out of province.

Finally, the City has offered \$238,000 in repayable loans to 4 physicians who established larger offices or needing more resources for relocation. All loans have been repaid.

Cornwall Medical Scholarship (Forgivable Loan)

In 2009, discussions were undertaken with the Cornwall Community Hospital, Cornwall Economic Development, and the recruitment team about enhancing our efforts to better attract and retain family physicians. They proposed a forgivable loan scholarship program for local students pursuing a degree in Family Medicine. Council supported and approved the proposal, and an annual scholarship was created for residents of Cornwall and SDG pursuing their medical degree at a recognized Canadian institution.



Dr. Crevier, 2020 Scholarship Recipient, with Mark Boileau, retired General Manager for the City of Cornwall

Eligible candidates apply to the Scholarship Review Committee, who review and interview the candidate based on qualifications, goals, and plans to return to Cornwall. If there is consensus by the Committee to award a scholarship, staff prepare a recommendation to Council. If approved by Council, the recipient receives \$150,000 over the course of their studies (up to 6 years), in exchange for five years return-of-service as a family physician in Cornwall after they graduate. If the student does not complete the return-of-service, they must repay the scholarship (pro-rated) with interest.

As of 2024, ten individuals have taken advantage of the scholarship program. One (1) has completed their return-of-service and continue to practice in Cornwall. Five (5) are completing their return-of-service portion of the agreement, one (1) is on parental leave, two (2) are currently in school or residency, and one (1) cancelled the agreement for personal reasons.

The terms of the scholarship have changed only slightly in recent years to accommodate as needed. Notably, the last six candidates have applied for the scholarship further into their studies which required an accelerated payment plan by the City. This has increased financial pressures on the Medical Recruitment Reserve, but it has also significantly advanced the return-of-service timeline. This means all six physicians have or will begin practicing in Cornwall sooner than expected under the original program timelines.

In 2022, two foreign-trained candidates were approved by Council for the first time since the creation of the scholarship. These exceptions to the program were only permitted because the students were able to

- a) demonstrate the transferability of their training into Ontario following recent changes to international licensing agreements and
- b) provide a plan for a 1-year supervised license which was a condition of the Ontario license transfer process.

In both cases, the City is withholding the final scholarship installment until after the Ontario license is finalized.

Timelines have also been amended in three instances for those who have wanted to pursue a speciality (known as a +1 Fellowship) and for those taking parental leave.

Adopt a Medical Resident

In 2018, the Cornwall Community Hospital Foundation announced a joint Adopt a Medical Resident Program with Queen's University. The program launched in mid-2019 and by 2021, the Hospital had secured two new Emergency Medicine physicians. The program was financed through community fundraising by the Foundation, the Cornwall Community Hospital, and the City of Cornwall. City Council approved \$50,000 in 2019 and \$50,000 in 2021 (the 2020 gap in program was due to the pandemic).

The program ran for two years and was deemed a success. The previously "adopted" residents continue to practice at the Cornwall Community Hospital as

permanent physicians. The Foundation no longer runs the program due to funding constraints.

Recruitment Efforts

Over the years, an average of 5% of the annual Medical Recruitment budget has gone towards proactive recruitment efforts. Efforts include:

- online and print communication and marketing materials,
- advertising fees for career services pages, medical publications and journals, and with national medical associations,
- fees for specialised recruitment events in Ontario and across Canada, and
- hosting potential candidates as they consider and tour the community.

Opportunities for Medical Professionals in the city with a world of possibilities

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Choose Cornwall

Faire carrière dans les soins de santé

Faites la différence avec une carrière enrichissante et enrichissante dans le domaine de la santé

Medical Scholarship

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Medical Scholarship

The City of Cornwall is committed to the recruitment of medical professionals and the ongoing enhancement of community health care assets. Please click on the tabs below to learn more about the two programs: Medical Recruitment and Medical Scholarship.

Medical Recruitment

Medical Scholarship

The City of Cornwall Medical Scholarship is valued at \$25,000 annually and may be awarded, each year, for up to six years, to a qualified Medical Student. In order to be eligible, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be a permanent resident of the City of Cornwall or, the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry.
- Be accepted into full-time studies in a Faculty of Medicine in Canada with the intent of having resided in practice Family Medicine in the Province of Ontario or

MEDICAL RECRUITMENT

- Ongoing efforts to attract and retain specialized, emergency, and family medicine physicians
- Neerav Muller is the recipient of the 2023 Medical Scholarship

Sampling of various recruitment publications, online promotions, and presentations.

Within the sector, Cornwall is recognized for its direct, long-term, and personalized recruitment approach. Unlike other disciplines, physician recruitment can take years, especially if they are still in training. The strategy is most successful with multiple calls and emails, repeat meetings at recruitment

events, and on-going dialogue to address other personal concerns like daycare, local schools, housing, and other employment for a spouse. Until recently, the City was known for being one of the only municipalities of our size actively recruiting using the wide advertising and concierge approach. Unfortunately, the “Cornwall model” has inspired other communities in Ontario, and staff are now seeing more competition in advertising, at events, and with relocation incentives. That said, Cornwall is still considered one of the most well-established and successful programs in Ontario.

Community Week

Every year, the City partners with the Cornwall Community Hospital to welcome an average of 15 first year and third year medical students from the University of Ottawa. Participating students spend a week working with local physicians and specialists during the day, and then have planned activities in the evening which help them explore the community. The purpose of the program is to introduce the students to smaller community environments rather than large metropolitan regions. A very popular and appreciated annual activity is “Dinner With The Mayor”, which allows students to interact direct with the Mayor and City staff so they can learn more about the community.

In recent years, Cornwall has become the number one choice for uOttawa’s Community Week and many students return in later years for their rotations, residencies, and permanent positions. Funding for student accommodation is provided by the Eastern Region Medical Education Program (ERMEP).



Community Week 2024 – Participants had dinner with Mayor Towndale and physicians working at the Cornwall Community Hospital.

Medical Recruitment Reserve – 3 Year Financial Summary

Year	2024	2023	2022
	Budget	Actuals	Actuals
Revenue			
Contribution To Reserve	-200,000	-200,000	-100,000
Recovery Of Loans		-480	-2,015
Total Revenue	-200,000	-200,480	-102,015
Expenses - Recruitment Initiatives			
Medical Scholarships (forgivable loan, return-of-service)	100,000	70,000	60,000
Physician Relocation Program (forgivable loan, return-of-service)	75,000	25,000	44,128
General Recruitment (advertising, events, visits)	10,000	9,256	15,388
Total Expenditures	185,000	104,256	119,516
Annual Net Funding/Expenditures	-15,000	-96,224	17,501
Balance of Medical Recruitment Reserve	845,273	830,273	734,049
Return of Service Commitments (Scholarships/Loans)	795,000	795,000	715,000
Net Reserve Amount	50,273	35,273	19,049

Medical Scholarship Return-of-Service Finance Model

As outlined, medical scholarship agreements can extend up to a period of 12 years depending on the student’s year of study. The length of time presents a risk to the corporation which is mitigated by adding funds to the Reserve from the tax base annually. The key is to ensure there are sufficient funds available when it is time for the corporation to forgive the scholarship payments. This is why Administration has increased the contribution amounts in recent years. Colour coding has been used in the example below to show how the contributions and expenses show up in the Financial Summary above.

Understanding the financial management is important because although the Reserve has a balance of \$845,273.00 in 2024, we can see \$795,000.00 is committed to future forgiveness payments. Should the Task Force wish to

recommend changes to the use of the Medical Recruitment Reserve, they will still need to maintain the required commitment amount to uphold our existing agreements. It is worth noting that Administration budgets annually to ensure \$40,000-\$50,000 remains in Net Reserve Amount as a contingency. This allows for some flexibility if an opportunity arises and ensures we continue to maintain the necessary reserve for committed scholarship funds.

Agreement Year	Payment Plan Timeline Forgivable Loan	Return of Service Commitment	Expensed from the Reserve
1	Medical School Year 1	25,000.00	
2	Medical School Year 2	25,000.00	
3	Medical School Year 3	25,000.00	
4	Medical School Year 4	25,000.00	
5	Residency Year 1	25,000.00	
6	Residency Year 2	25,000.00	
7	Begins Practice July 1 Return of Service 0.5 years completed		(15,000.00)
8	Return of Service 1.5 years completed		(30,000.00)
9	Return of Service 2.5 years complete		(30,000.00)
10	Return of Service 3.5 years complete		(30,000.00)
11	Return of Service 4.5 years complete		(30,000.00)
12	Return of Service 5 years complete		(15,000.00)

Example Payment Plan and Forgivable Loan

Finally, we have had 2 students pursue a third residency year which extends the timeline and risk, even further.

Partnerships

The City’s medical recruitment efforts have been made possible through long-standing partnerships with the Cornwall Community Hospital, the Seaway Valley Community Health Centre, Centre de santé communautaire de l'estrie, and members of the regional Family Health Organization (FHO).

More recently, staff have also been working with the newly established Great River Ontario Health Team - Health Human Resources Roundtable (OHT) which is a collaborative network group working together to better understand and address human resources issues across the health sectors in Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry, Akwesasne, and Prescott Russell.

Key items under consideration by the OHT include:

- lack of access to primary health care providers
- workforce shortages for physicians, specialists, nurses, personal support workers, and health administrators
- workforce challenges related to pandemic burnout, early or expected retirements, and new legislation regarding level of care
- international and provincial recruitment and the licensing limitations in Ontario

Finally, Administration continues to work with SDG Economic Development to explore and advance partnership opportunities including regional marketing and shared incentive agreements.

Current and Near-Future Opportunities

The landscape of medical recruitment and retention has changed in recent years due to pandemic pressures, burnout, early retirements, lack of nursing and support staff, and the increased amount of administrative and regulatory requirements assigned to physicians and health care providers.

The most common concern by new graduates is the “business” side of their practice, which can amount to an estimated 30% of their time. This means physicians must either work more hours to manage their administrative load or they need to take on fewer patients. This burden is felt most by primary health care providers billing through the FHO, but it is also felt by those practicing in primary health care teams and in emergency medicine. These concerns are even more pronounced by those retiring who are now looking to transfer their patient and business files to another physician.

Strategies to address these administrative burdens have the potential to significantly improve service delivery and offer more of a work life balance for physicians. Administration recommends the following through partnership:

- support regional health care providers as they transition toward the same or compatible electronic medical record systems,
- develop a locally relevant health care business training program in partnership with the Business Enterprise Centre of Cornwall and SDG, MD Financial, and or the St. Lawrence College,
- work with St. Lawrence College and their Health Administration Program (based out of Kingston) to promote employment and co-op placements in Cornwall to encourage new pipeline of health administrators into the community, and

- develop a medical business succession planning resource for those planning for retirement in the next few years so they can more easily transfer their business to another.

Compounding the administrative burden is the overhead cost of health care facilities and clinics. Some municipalities across Canada are now offering what is commonly termed “turnkey” municipal health care facility as part of their incentive programs, to alleviate the upfront costs to those relocating to start a practice. Long-term success of municipal health care facilities is mixed, but the concept may warrant further research to see if this would be an appropriate solution for Cornwall.

Earlier this year, the primary health care teams in Cornwall and SDG received over \$4 million to expand their workforce, but now they lack the space to physically expand their services and accommodate their workforce. Administration is working to help identify a new location to meet their needs but there may be an opportunity for the City to further support the expansion under our Community Improvement Programs (CIP) and forgivable loans. Staff also see the potential of developing a new CIP geared to investors looking to improve or develop new medical clinic and health service spaces in the City.



Dr. Hartley, 2019 Scholarship recipient and practicing physician with Seaway Valley Community Health Centre

Similarly, there are several established physicians looking to expand their practice in the near future who have inquired about an interest free loan or return-of-service agreement with the City. These tend to be larger financial requests but without a defined program to offer these physicians, Administration has been somewhat limited in the ways they can help in recent years. The Task Force could consider recommending a “health service expansion” type of municipal program to compliment the recruitment and relocation programs.

Finally, overall recruitment and training in the health care sector remains a concern. The Task Force could consider the relocation and recruitment program criteria to expand or adapt to the changing need. Ongoing conversations with key

interest holders over the last year have also illuminated opportunities for new partnerships and advocacy including:

- develop a formal residency program in Cornwall in partnership with Queen's University School of Medicine, University of Ottawa School of Medicine, and perhaps York University School of Medicine which will be opening their doors over the next few years,
- advocate for the necessary changes to provincial licensing to allow for a faster and easier process for those relocating from another provinces and country, and
- expanded and more flexible incentive programs that meet the changing and expanding needs of modern practices.

Accessibility Impact

The above report offers information to the Task Force so they may consider existing programs and recommend changes that better support residents of Cornwall. The Task Force is mandated to give additional consideration for ways in which these programs can be expanded or improved to serve equity seeking groups and residents. This should lead to more accessible and inclusive municipal programs and resources.