



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

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation
Division: Economic Development
Report Number: 2024-169-Planning, Development and Recreation
Meeting Date: August 14, 2024
Subject: Ontario Medical Association (OMA) Delegation During The Association of the Municipalities of Ontario's (AMO) Annual Conference

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Mayor's Task Force on Medical Recruitment with confirmed details regarding the upcoming Ontario Medical Association (OMA) delegation arranged during the Association of the Municipalities of Ontario's (AMO) Annual Conference.

Recommendation

That the Mayor's Task Force on Medical Recruitment receive report 2024-169-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 July 2024, City Administration learned of a unique opportunity to meet with the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) Executives during the upcoming Association of the Municipalities of Ontario's (AMO) Annual Conference (August 18 – 21, 2024). OMA is a membership-based not-for-profit organization representing and advocating for the well-being of physicians in Ontario.

A meeting request was sent to OMA on behalf of the Mayor's Task Force, and staff confirmed a delegation for August 19, 2024. All members of the Task Force and the CAO will participate in the delegation.

In preparation for the meeting, OMA sent a survey with specific questions to help inform the meeting's discussion. The following is a text copy of the electronically submitted answers.

City of Cornwall Submission – Delegation with OMA, August 19th, 2024

1. Health-care Challenges: What are the current health-care challenges your municipality is facing? Are there specific areas where you feel improvements are urgently needed?

The lack of family physicians accepting new patients in Cornwall, the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry (SDG), and Akwesasne remains the top health care concern and challenge in our region. Recent data estimates 14% of our residents are unattached and a further 16% will be without care by 2030. Among other things, the lack of primary care services has put increased pressure on emergency, community, and long-term care resources.

Unfortunately, these pressures come at a time when emergency and community health services are also facing unique challenges following the pandemic including increased competition for specialists, nursing and PSW staff shortages, new administrative burdens, and an overall increase to operational costs.

As such, support for primary and specialized care recruitment and retention in rural communities like Cornwall, as well as increased assistance for those managing the business and administration of practice is urgently needed by the province. In our area, we have a long-standing and robust recruitment fund, but it is still not enough to meet the needs of our community. With the help of the Mayor's Task Force on Medical Recruitment, we are considering new ways of supporting primary care including helping to fund the transition to electronic

medical records, developing a locally relevant health care business training program, expanding health administration education programs, and also more tangible options like a “turnkey” facility or a municipal tax-incentive for developers willing to invest in new health clinic space development (Community Improvement Program model). If OMA has any direction or can offer feedback for any of these ideas, we would be grateful for the support.

Finally, a significant challenge in our region is the lack of mental health services and specialists in our region. This is being felt by residents but also by those working in the health care sector. A recent report by the Great River Ontario Health Team showed that 52% of local health care workers (n=551) are experiencing stress, early or advanced symptoms of burn-out, and overall job dissatisfaction. Proper mental health support in our region, especially for those who were at the front line of the pandemic would help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

2. Access to Family Doctors: Are you hearing from your constituents that they cannot access a family doctor? If so, can you provide any specific examples or data that highlight this issue?

The lack of family physicians accepting new patients is the most common concern raised by residents. Data presented in the INSPIRE-PHC OCHPP Primary Care Data Reports for Ontario Health Teams (March 31, 2022) identified approximately 17,000 unattached patients in our region (14% of the regional population). Notably, 20% of those unattached are aged <5. With an average patient roster of 1100 patients, this means our community needs at least 16 new primary care physicians or nurse practitioners to meet current shortages.

The lack of sufficient primary care services has resulted in higher and more frequent use of local Emergency Departments (ED). A recent report Ontario Health East looking at emergency care the entire East Region identified Cornwall as the area with both the highest percentage (31%) and 4th highest count (1,821) of low acuity ED visits by patients without primary care access. The data also showed that our region has the highest rate of repeat visits to the ED, which has been attributed to a lack of primary and outpatient care resources within the community.

We also know immigration into Ontario plays a large factor in attachment status, with 27.4% of new arrivals being unable to find a family physician. This is particularly relevant in Cornwall, which has a large and growing newcomer population due primarily to francophone immigration patterns, region specific provincial immigration pathways (OINP), and recent asylum seeker claimants living and working in our city.

The above concerns are further amplified by residents who are increasingly worried about losing access to primary care when their current physician or nurse practitioner retires without a patient succession plan. Recent survey and analysis conducted by the Great River Ontario Health Team shows that a further 18,000 residents will find themselves without primary care in the next 3-5 years due to retirement alone. As such, our region will need an *additional* 17 primary care providers by 2030. This equates to a total of 33 primary care providers to meet current and near-future needs.

3. Specialist Services: Are there particular shortages or challenges in accessing specialist services within your municipality? Can you please provide us with some details?

Our local hospitals are actively and aggressively recruiting psychiatrists, pediatricians, and anesthesiologists, as well as specialists in internal medicine, obstetrics, gynecology, and dermatology. These specialists are becoming increasingly hard to recruit to our community due to competition from other communities with higher salaries and relocation incentives.

Notably, the lack of anesthesiologists in our region has meant decreasing the surgical volume, especially over the last few months, which has put significant pressure on the emergency department, trauma care, and obstetrics, not to mention elective surgeries. We know those who can afford it are now seeking private surgery care in Quebec or the US to avoid waiting, especially for non-acute and elective surgeries.

4. Additional Concerns: Is there anything else related to health care that you feel should be discussed at the conference? Are there specific initiatives or policies you believe the OMA should advocate for on behalf of your municipality?



Something OMA may want to consider is working more closely with the province to create more opportunities for those with international medical licenses and or develop new incentives for internationally trained to work in smaller Ontario communities, like Cornwall.

Similarly, it may also help to create more family medicine residency spots in rural communities, especially with those who plan on retiring in the next 5 years. This strategy may help address succession planning for those looking to retire while also ensuring effective mentorship for those needing support as they start their practice.

(end of submission)

Accessibility Impact

The above report offers information to the Task Force so they may effectively advocate for health care needs in Cornwall and the region. Advocacy efforts include expanded or improved access to serve equity seeking groups and residents. This should lead to more accessible and inclusive municipal programs and resources.

Climate Action Plan Alignment

By arranging this delegation during the AMO conference, delegates are not required to travel a second time to visit with officials. By leveraging travel resources, this effort supports the Climate Action Plan goals.