



Office of the CAO

Prepared for: Council-in-Committee

Report: CAO-01-2024

Meeting Date: December 11, 2023

File: 120303

1. Title

Revised Physician Recruitment, Retention and Medical Education Financial Incentive Policy

2. Recommendations

That: Council approves the Physician Recruitment, Retention and Medical Education Financial Incentive Policy attached as Appendix 1, and further

That: Council directs staff to submit the necessary By-law.

3. Relation to Council's Corporate Strategic Plan

Priority: Sustainable and reliable access to local health care

Initiative: Update the Physician Recruitment and Attraction Program to address challenges and health system changes.

4. List of Stakeholders

Fort Erie Medical Community

Fort Erie Community Health Care Services Committee

5. Purpose of Report

This report proposes some recommended changes, for Council consideration and approval, to the Physician Recruitment, Retention and Medical Education Policy based on feedback received from local physicians, health service providers, and discussions with the Community Health Services committee.

6. Analysis

It is important to have a physician recruitment, retention and medical education financial incentive guideline that aligns with Council's objectives and outlines appropriate incentives to support this program. Recruiting family physicians in today's market remains very competitive, as there are not enough family medicine residents graduating to meet the demands of available positions. Retirement of physicians with large fee for service practices, physicians wanting better work/life balance, and practice interests outside of family medicine all play a role in the current situation.

Over the past few years, the Town of Fort Erie has been successful with new physician

recruitment, but continued population growth and physician retirements will continue to present challenges with un-rostered (unattached) residents in the Town. Succession plans still need to be established for upcoming retirements and efforts to recruit new family physicians to care for un-rostered residents in the community needs to continue.

A competitive analysis was performed comparing our incentives to other municipalities within the Niagara Region. Based on our recent success in recruitment, and our intent to remain competitive, it is being recommended that the current incentive be set at a maximum amount of \$75,000 and separate funding for equipment be set at a lifetime maximum of \$50,000. Clinic space in the Town of Fort Erie is in short supply, so there will be a need for clinics to expand. The proposed changes for equipment funding stipulates in the Policy that all equipment purchased must be new and must remain within the Town of Fort Erie should the physician leave for any reason and that all equipment requests would be vetted through the Community Health Care Services Committee prior to approval.

A program for REACH Niagara has also been added for consideration. This mobile health clinic provides services in the Jarvis Street area to Fort Erie residents and many are newcomers and refugees, homeless or impacted by mental health and addictions. REACH Niagara's plan is to expand into the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre and Crystal Beach area, making their healthcare services more accessible. All other programs within the Policy remain unchanged. These changes to the Policy were discussed at the Community Health Care Services Committee meeting on September 19, 2023 and were agreed to by all members in attendance.

Following an analysis of incentive programs, staff recommend Council consideration to delegate authority to the CAO for consideration and execution of funding agreements within the approved amount. Any requests outside the approved program would require Council approval. Delegation of authority to the CAO will allow the Town to confidentially negotiate with applicants and remain competitive against other jurisdictions. Additionally, applicants will feel more confident maintaining confidentiality regarding their agreements with the Town. Within 30 days of the final execution of an agreement, staff would bring forward a memorandum to Council. This process is consistent with other municipalities.

7. Financial, Staffing and Accessibility (AODA) Implications

No staffing implications.

8. Policies Affecting Proposal

By-law No. 123-2019 adopted the Physician Recruitment, Retention and Medical Education Financial Incentive Guideline; If Council approves the recommendations in this Report, council will need to repeal this By-law.

9. Comments from Departments, Community and Corporate Partners

Not applicable.

10. Alternatives

Alternative 1: Council could decide not to approve the revised Policy, which would have the current program remain unchanged.

Alternative 2: Council could require staff to bring a report to a Closed Session regarding details of a physician agreements for approval before execution. This alternative requires greater time to execute agreements with physicians.

11. Communicating Results

Upon adoption by Council, staff will share the Policy with the local healthcare community.

12. Conclusion

The approval of this proposed Policy will help fulfill the goals for enhanced health services planning by this Council.

13. Report Approval

Prepared by:
Alice Preston, BBA
Community Health Care Services Coordinator

Approved by:
Chris McQueen, MBA
Chief Administrative Officer

14. Attachments

Appendix 1 – Revised Physician Recruitment, Retention and Medical Education Financial Incentive Policy

Physician Recruitment, Retention and Medical Education Incentive Policy



The Corporation of the Town of Fort Erie

1. Definitions

- a) **CAO** means the Chief Administrative Officer of The Corporation of the Town of Fort Erie (the “Corporation”) or designate.
- b) **Coordinator, Health Care Services** means the person or designate who develops and coordinates health care resources with physician, community organizations and associations, reporting to the CAO.
- c) **Education** means family medicine learners, either students or residents.
- d) **Equipment** means medical tools, instruments and technology necessary for the provision of healthcare services in a Family Medicine Practice, and includes, but is not limited to, exam tables, Ear, Nose, Throat (“ENT”) equipment, medical carts, and laptops for Electronic Medical records.
- e) **Locum** means a temporary substitute or replacement physician or medical professional hired to fulfill the duties of an absent regular physician.
- f) **Physician Recruitment** means the effort of promoting and attracting family practice opportunities and hiring qualified physicians to practice within the Town of Fort Erie.
- g) **Physician Retention** means strategies and incentives aimed at retaining our base of family physicians practicing within the community for an extended period.

2. Purpose

- a) This Policy's purpose is to:
 - i) Establish guidelines for the process of retaining and attracting qualified physicians to practice in the Town of Fort Erie by providing competitive incentives; and
 - ii) Delegate authority to the CAO to prepare, approve and enter into agreements in accordance with this Policy.

3. Process

- a) Applications
 - i) Applicants applying for funding shall submit a written request to the Coordinator, Health Care Services. The application must provide detailed information, including the amount and intended purpose of the funding requested, and a clear indication that the location of services will be located within the Town of Fort Erie.
 - ii) Funding eligibility is determined based on the programs listed in Table 1. These programs are reviewed annually as part of Council's budgetary process and are used as a guideline for all funding applications based on the market's competitive nature.

b) Appeals

If the physician wishes to appeal the decision, they must submit additional information in writing to the Coordinator, Health Care Services. The appeal documentation should include a detailed explanation of the grounds for the appeal, any supporting evidence or documentation and any relevant information not previously considered during the initial decision-making process. The

Appendix 1 – Report CAO-01-2024

Coordinator, Health Care Services will review the appeal with the CAO and will provide a response within a reasonable timeframe.

c) Physician Recruitment and Funding Agreements

i) For each agreement, specific conditions and return of service requirements will be established based on individual physician needs including a clause that physicians agree to be introduced to Niagara Health Medical Affairs personnel for consideration and mutual agreement to provide Urgent Care after-hours services. Staff will analyze these conditions and return of service annually with updates given to Council to ensure accountability to the binding agreements, as necessary.

ii) Equipment Funding Agreements:

- a. Equipment must either directly benefit health services in Fort Erie or be transferable to a future health services facility within the Town of Fort Erie.
- b. Equipment must be new, and physicians must provide proof of purchase to substantiate the grant funding application.
- c. Ownership of the equipment should be clearly outlined in the application (physician-owned or clinic-owned), as well as a commitment to ensure the equipment will continue to serve the Fort Erie community.
- d. Funding requests for equipment are subject to a lifetime maximum of \$50,000 per practice or physician.
- e. Purchase of new equipment must be directly related to the ongoing recruitment efforts and retention of healthcare providers.
- f. The Community Health Care Services Committee will review and assess all equipment applications to ensure alignment with established criteria and goals.

4. Delegated Authority

- a) Authority to prepare, approve and execute funding agreements for physician recruitment, retention, equipment and education is delegated to the CAO subject to the programs in Table 1. Within 30 days of the final execution of an agreement, staff will bring a memorandum to Council.

Appendix 1 – Report CAO-01-2024

Table 1 - Physician Recruitment, Retention and Medical Education Programs

| Program Description | Criteria | Upset Limit | Other comments |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Physician Recruitment | 5 years return of service within the Town of Fort Erie Eligibility limited to rostering model of practice. | \$75,000 for a full-time family physician (3.5 days/week). Anything less than full-time will be pro-rated. | Dependent upon model of practice; includes relocation/ moving expenses and all other costs associated with setting up a practice. |
| Physician Retention | Locum coverage: a locum physician is a physician that is providing temporary coverage in the event of illness or retirement. | \$5,000 per calendar year; not to exceed 50% of the daily cost of a Locum | Locum coverage is a critical component of succession planning. It is not meant for vacation coverage. |
| Equipment | Equipment for a family medicine physician must be new and receipts must be submitted. Equipment must remain in Fort Erie and be part of any new health services facility. The physician or family practice maintains ownership of the equipment. | Lifetime maximum of \$50,000 All requests for new equipment will be vetted through the Community Health Care Services Committee | Eligible equipment such as examination tables, ENT equipment, etc. related to family medicine practise. |
| Education | Partnership programming (funded learners) | Maximum of \$2,000 for each visiting physician or medical student | i.e. Rural Medicine Week, Student Assistance Program, clerkships |
| Programs | Mental Health | \$20,000 per year | Reviewed annually. Partnership with Port Colborne (Pathstone Mental Health) |
| | Memory Clinic | \$6,000 per year | Reviewed annually Partnership with City of Port Colborne |
| | Outreach Health Services | \$4,500 start-up costs; \$6,750 per year starting in 2024 | Reviewed annually (REACH Niagara) |