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MINTO-MAPLETON HEALTH PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE
c/o North Wellington Health Care, 500 Whites Road, Palmerston, ON N0G 2P0

Tuesday, November 10, 2015

Mayor George Bridge
Town of Minto
5941 Highway #89, R.R. #1
Harriston, ON N0G 1Z0

Dear Mayor Bridge:

On behalf of the Minto-Mapleton Health Professional Recruitment Committee, I would like to thank you for your continued support of our health care professional recruitment efforts in this area. With the past financial assistance from the Town of Minto, the Health Professional Recruitment Committee was able to successfully market and promote our community in 2015 as an excellent place to live, learn and practice health care.

The next few years ahead for our local Recruitment Committee, will be important and yet challenging years. Currently, Ontario physicians have been locked in a war of words with the province over cuts to health care funding, including reduction of fees for physicians that they say will hurt patient care and discourage good physicians from setting up practices in Ontario. Local physicians have voiced concern with a New Graduate Entry Program (NGEP) launched by the government in September, 2015, stating that the program will create an entire generation of family physicians who are not comfortable or experienced working in hospitals (an important component of rural medicine). This Program will significantly impact rural communities down the road as these new physicians will not be suitable recruits to rural medicine once they have completed the 3-year NGEP program.

Nurse Practitioners working in primary care (Family Health Teams or FHTs) and the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario, have been actively lobbying the government for fair compensation for nurse practitioners and other health care professionals working in FHTs. To date, no progress has been made. Disparity in wages for health care professionals working in primary care compared to other sectors (community, acute and long-term care) need to be addressed if we hope to successfully attract and retain staff in our rural Family Health Teams.

Partnerships with our local Municipalities have never been more important to ensuring success in recruiting and retaining health professionals to our communities. Having good access to primary care providers in a community is an important indicator of the overall viability and health of a community. Without continued successful recruitment and retention of primary care providers, including physicians, nurse practitioners and other interdisciplinary health care providers, community growth, and the health and well-being of the residents of our communities will be negatively impacted. The Town of Minto clearly understands this relationship given its past interest and investments in recruitment efforts.

We are aware of a local physician who is looking to transition into retirement over the next two years. Our recruitment focus over the next year or so is to recruit for this physician, which will likely mean the recruitment of two new physicians to replace one retiring physician. We know that new graduates are looking for group practices, in modern facilities. The addition of the new Minto Rural Health Centre will certainly help attract and retain new physicians.

The attached summary provides an update of the current recruitment and retention strategies that we have in place. These strategies have been guided by input and support from the Recruitment Committee. Funding that we receive from the Municipality allows us to continue successful recruitment and retention strategies.

It is our sincere hope that the Town of Minto will continue to provide \$10,000 financial support in 2016 for health professional recruitment and retention efforts. Without your support, we will not be successful.

Alison Armstrong and I would be pleased to attend a future Council meeting to discuss our past year's work with the Committee and our future plans. Should you have any questions you may reach me at the Family Health Team Office (519-638-2110 Ext. 227) or by email at: sborges@mmfht.ca

Sincerely,



Shirley Borges,
Chair, Minto-Mapleton Health Professional Recruitment Committee.

c.c.: Alison Armstrong, Health Care Recruiter, North Wellington Health Care.

c.c.: Bill White, CAO Clerk, Town of Minto.

Recruitment Strategies for Rural Family Physicians to the Minto-Mapleton Area

The goal of recruitment strategies in Minto-Mapleton is to focus our energies on significantly increasing the number of medical students, residents, interns and practicing physicians interested in exploring what our area has to offer, both in terms of work and leisure. We need to continue to put Minto-Mapleton on the map as a great place to live and work. While there are no guarantees when it comes to physician recruitment, we do know that the more interest and positive experiences we generate, the greater the odds of recruiting.

Highlights of some of our key recruitment efforts are:

A NEW MINTO RURAL HEALTH CENTRE IS COMING



New Physicians are looking for group practices, in modern facilities with electronic medical records already in place. The current Minto physicians work in solo offices. To help plan for upcoming physician retirements our Committee has advocated and helped to plan for the Minto Rural Health Centre. The Centre will help attract and retain new physicians. The building will be designed to house a number of physicians and key community partners in the delivery of integrated health services to area residents. The building is well underway and construction and scheduled to be completed by the end of the calendar year.

TARGETING MEDICAL TRAINEES TO HAVE A RURAL EXPERIENCE

Education is the key to solving the problem of recruitment and retention of rural physicians. Appropriate education involves ongoing training suitable for practice in rural areas, from undergraduate medical school and into practice, to meet the needs of rural areas and to meet the educational needs of rural doctors. Learning experience for medical students increases interest and understanding of rural practice. Students go back to their main campus and tell other students about their experiences.

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Over the past year, we have concentrated our efforts on increasing Medical Resident training opportunities in our communities. Medical Residents are in their final years of training and are starting to look for places to live and work. They are also licensed physicians and, as such, are able to help provide care to our patients with the support and mentorship of our local physicians. Dr. Christine Peterkin and Dr. Chris Cressey are increasing the number of Residents they will mentor. This will give potential recruits an excellent opportunity to get to know our community and health care system.

RETENTION IS AS IMPORTANT AS RECRUITMENT



Retaining health care workers in our communities is just as important as recruiting health care workers. Rural health care workers are an important part of our communities. Not only do their health care skills and practices enhance the quality of rural life, but they also contribute to rural life on a more personal level. They have special relationships with their patients and staff because they live and work alongside them as family, friends, neighbours and community volunteers. This past year the Minto-Mapleton Health Care Recruitment Committee recognized the need to thank our health care workers for the work they do and the Committee hosted an appreciation day. The event was a success and will become an annual event.

ADDITIONAL RECRUITMENT INITIATIVES

- Hosting prospective applicants is an important strategy used in our health care recruitment initiatives.
- Increasing locum opportunities. A locum doctor is a physician holding a temporary job at a medical facility or medical office. New physician graduates will often want to try out a community by locuming. For those physicians interested in our community, and not ready to set up a practice, we encourage them to do a locum. The goal of increasing the number of locum experiences in Minto-Mapleton is to increase the odds a physician will want to stay and work in our area.
- Marketing our community through health care recruitment fairs and our website – promoting Minto-Mapleton as a place to live and work that offers rural comforts with close proximity to urban centres, along with plenty of recreational opportunities.

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WHO WE ARE

The Minto-Mapleton Health Professional Recruitment Committee was created as a strategy to enhance the recruitment of doctors and other health care professionals to the Minto-Mapleton area. The Committee consists of members from The Town of Minto Council, Township of Mapleton Representative, Local Physicians, Minto-Mapleton Family Health Team, local Chamber of Commerce staff, Economic Development staff, local Business Leaders, North Wellington Health Care Staff and Physician Recruiter.

The Committee meets quarterly to review recruitment strategies, monitor progress, identify gaps and develop strategies to meet these gaps. The Committee's work has become even more important as we face the reality of future physician retirements.