



**NOVEMBER 23, 2022**

**To: Mayor and Members of Council**

**Re: Budget Request 2023**

Health Georgina has committed to fund the recruitment of 2 General Practitioners in the new clinic in Jackson's Point.

### **The Ask**

That Council set aside beginning in the 2023 budget, as a pilot project, a reserve fund for primary health care provision in Georgina to be used as follows:

1. To match our commitment for the recruitment of 2 additional doctors at \$20,000 - \$25,000 per year per General Practitioner over a 4- or 5-year contract totalling to \$200,000 over the contract term.
2. To create a reserve fund of \$100,000 annually over a 10-year term in support of our future vision to develop and execute a plan for the building of an Integrated Health Care Hub centrally located in Georgina in concert with Southlake Regional Hospital and Oak Valley Health.

### **The Goal**

The goal of this pilot project with the Town of Georgina is to:

1. Short term - Balance primary care delivery throughout all wards. So that primary care practitioner/patient ratio is consistent throughout all wards.
2. Long term vision – to build a Health Hub centrally located in Georgina to provide urgent care and ambulatory services including short and long term stay here within our community.

Several municipalities in Ontario have been making significant contributions to hospital expansions and new hospitals. Those contributions are based on local share requirements and in several cases are funded through a specific tax levy. See Appendix 1.

# GENERAL PRACTITIONER ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

## The Need for Additional General Practitioners

While Health Georgina understands and recognizes that health care services are a responsibility of the provincial government, more and more often it is the municipality that must step up to ensure the availability of local health care for its residents. The absence of strong, local health care programs directly impact residents and has an impact on municipal services, such as EMS, Fire, and Police.

Health Georgina has been actively trying to recruit General Physicians to Georgina. However, recruitment of new General Practitioners is challenging. Many surrounding communities are providing incentive programs of \$100,000 or more to attract and retain General Practitioners. For example, General Practitioners being courted for the new medical clinic to be established in Jackson's Point decided to relocate to the Town of Oakville when offered \$200,000 each. Hastings County attracted medical students by offering \$150,000 over six years in exchange for a five-year service agreement upon graduation. These are just two examples of the type of incentives being offered to General Practitioners by municipalities. Other examples are included in Appendix A. If Georgina wants more General Practitioners for its residents, the Town will have to step up to the plate financially.

To understand the severity of the issue of the General Practitioner shortage in Georgina, Table 1 summarizes the number of General Practitioners in Georgina and their geographical dispersion. While the Ontario average is 1,000 patients per General Practitioner, in Georgina, the average is already 1,234 patients per doctor. Further, the population of Georgina swells dramatically with the seasons, including campers (Sibbald Point), RVers (Elmgrove, Lyndhurst, Green Acres in Pefferlaw), summer residents, ice fishermen, sports tournaments, boaters/Seadooers, hotels, AirBnB, VRBO, beach goers, and day trippers, so the numbers of people potentially requiring medical care is understated in the table.

**Table 1. Number and Geographical Distribution of General Physicians in Georgina**

Geographic Area	Estimated Population (people)	% of Population	No. of medical practitioners	% of medical practitioners	Residents per medical practitioner
Keswick	32,000	66%	30	77%	1067
Wards 4 & 5	16,150	34%	8	23%	1794
Town of Georgina	48150	100%	39	100%	1,234

As can be seen in the table, the number of patients per General Practitioner is not distributed evenly throughout the town. While Keswick has just over the provincial average number of patients per General Practitioner, in Wards 4 & 5 are significantly more underserved. Many Georgina residents do not have access to stable, or sometimes any, internet for virtual appointments or on-line bookings. Therefore, with the bulk of Georgina's General Practitioners located in Keswick, it means long, often difficult, trips for many residents; bus service is inefficient and lengthy, and travelling by taxi is slow and expensive.

Of the 8 primary care providers outside of Keswick, five are Nurse Practitioners at the GNPLC, which is currently at capacity and not accepting new patients for at least a year, and 3 are primary care practitioners. Dr. Marchuk in Pefferlaw, who has about 2000 patients rostered, has reached the normal retirement age for General Practitioner. Dr. Macintyre, practicing full time in Sutton, has indicated that he will also be considering retirement in 2-3 years, which will leave his 1700 patients with no doctor. And Dr. Bi, who purchased Dr. Hall's practice upon his retirement, is only practising 2 to 3 days a week in Sutton. Georgina has only a couple of walk-in clinics, with sporadic hours, and they are all located in Keswick. There is only one public lab/imaging site, and it is in Keswick. While a couple of the clinics and the GNPLC have labs, they are for their patients only.

Although there are 30 General Practitioners in Keswick, only a couple are accepting new patients; yet almost daily, someone is posting on Facebook asking, "does anyone know of a doctor accepting new patients?"

The population of Georgina is slated to grow to about 72,000 people by 2051. To maintain the provincial average of 1000 people per General Practitioner, we will need to add at least 33 additional General Practitioners, plus replace those who will be retiring. The Keswick Business Park and other commercial opportunities will also increase medical demand for hospitals, walk-in clinics, and emergency response teams. Further, Georgina has an aging population, with rising chronic disease rates, that will put increasing pressure on its already strained healthcare capacity.

Because Georgina is only an hour from Toronto and is considered part of the GTA, we are not considered rural. Therefore, even though we are underserved, we are unable to secure Federal and Provincial funding available to rural areas.

The small bit of good news we have is that there is a new medical office currently under construction in Sutton on Dalton Road. The goal is to have six General Practitioners in the office by end of 2023, a lab, a small pharmacy, and rotating rooms designated for specialists for weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly appointments. Health Georgina has already committed some funding to attract 2 General Practitioners to this office.

The other bit of good news is that in partnership with the Oak Valley Health Team, Health Georgina has engaged a team from Schulich School of Medicine to conduct a

review of health care in Georgina. The review will include, but will not be limited to, an assessment of current services, a projection of future needs, a gap analysis to identify missing services, and a financial impact study. The start and finish dates have not yet been established but we look forward to the findings. The results will provide more focussed data on both the short-term and long-term health needs in Georgina.

## **General Practitioner Recruitment Incentives**

General Practitioner recruitment initiatives in Ontario are typically led by the region, the municipality, or a Family Health Team. Irrespective of who is leading the initiatives, they are primarily funded by the municipalities that are engaging in the recruitment.

The most common financial incentive offered by other municipalities is \$100,000 over five years. Municipalities who are in dire need of General Practitioners might offer more to stand out in a very crowded field. While the focus has traditionally been on enticing practicing General Practitioners to move, that has begun to shift toward attracting medical students and residents who have not started practicing yet. The benefit of this approach is access to a larger pool of future doctors without having to poach from other communities.

We anticipate the need for \$200,000 per year for the next five years for incentives for attracting ten to fifteen physicians. Some other incentives that may be provided (based on what has been seen in other municipalities) include the following:

1. Relocation support.
2. Return of service agreements for General Practitioners who are relocating (ranging from \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year for 5 years).
3. Support for medical students/residents who commit to practice in the community once they complete their training.
4. Auxiliary financial incentives and reimbursements for upgrades to existing practice.
5. Continuing education opportunities/adjunct professorships.
6. Spousal support programs that help with employment and community integration.
7. Turnkey space such as new medical clinics with state-of-the-art equipment.
8. Access to administrative support / IT support.
9. Events / tours / gift baskets to introduce medical students, residents, and physicians to the community.
10. Free golf club or marina fees.

## **GEORGINA HEALTH HUB**

The Town of Georgina represents approximately 25% of Southlake Hospital's as well as approximately 15% of Oak Valley (Markham Stouffville) Hospital's emergency services. Georgina has only a couple of walk-in clinics (with sporadic hours) and only one public lab/imaging site. A new Georgina Health Hub (GHH) will help to alleviate the pressure on these facilities, as well as provide important health services closer to Georgina residents.

### **Our Future Vision and Opportunity**

Implementation of a new regional Georgina Health Hub (GHH) which will lay the foundation for integrated, efficient, and effective patient care in Georgina and the surrounding region for decades to come. The centerpiece of the vision will be the construction of a new 10,000 – 15,000 sq. Ft. facility including an expanded and updated emergency department, state-of-the-art operating rooms, labour and delivery unit, neonatal intensive care unit, clinical laboratories, 20 short term inpatient beds, and a roof-top helipad. This construction will be augmented with continued investments in clinical technology and equipment. The anticipated results will be transformative: they will expand the community's access to leading-edge care and improve the patient experience for the citizens of Georgina, as well as bring direct and indirect economic benefits to Georgina. Targeted completion of this new facility is 2032.

Modern healthcare facilities need to be designed to meet current care requirements, which are significantly different from those of the past. Single accommodation patient care rooms are the new standard for prevention of hospital-acquired infections; operating rooms require enough space to accommodate minimally invasive, image-guided, robotic procedures, along with intraoperative imaging techniques and large, multidisciplinary teams; and birthing rooms must accommodate the full scope of family-centred maternity care, including labor, delivery, recovery, and post-partum care.

The immense pressure placed on facilities, already operating above capacity, was very clearly highlighted by the pandemic and continues as the pandemic recedes, creating unsustainable risk. Despite the reduction in COVID emergencies the demand on local hospitals is still very high. On Monday October 25<sup>th</sup> Southlake Regional Health Centre posted:



## Southlake Regional Health Centre

20h · 🌐

Our Emergency Department is under pressure and experiencing significant patient volumes this morning. Only essential caregivers will be permitted based on current volumes in the department to keep our staff and patients safe, avoid overcrowding, and allow for physical distancing. Please be patient with our teams. We thank you for your understanding.



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The Georgina Health Hub (GHH) will provide much needed low barrier service with 24/7 access for people that are homeless with mental health and addiction challenges, wound care, walk-in clinics, after hours clinic, labs, diagnostics, etc. The exact model of this facility has yet to be determined, however, discussions are ongoing with potential partners including Oak Valley, South Lake, and General Practitioners. Health Georgina will also begin discussions with the Region of York, Federal and Provincial members, and Ministry of Health to secure multi-year operating funds.

### Five Priority Areas in the Georgina Health Hub (GHH)

#### 1) Emergency Department Walk-in and After-Hours Clinics

For patients in need of emergency care, every moment counts, and the Emergency Department (ED) provides them with life-saving care when it's needed most. Across the province, emergency departments are facing unprecedented and rapidly rising patient volumes.

Hospital emergency teams currently must be very resourceful at finding ways to accommodate patients seeking care in the ED. This means that many patients receive care in busy, cramped conditions which can be detrimental to their overall wellbeing. This includes trauma rooms that are not large enough to accommodate the healthcare teams and the technology required to provide the critical life-saving care.

30 per cent of ED patients arrive by ambulance. Too often, paramedics also face long waits for their patients to be transferred from the ambulance to an emergency bed because of the already overcrowded ED.

The Georgina Health Hub will be planned to overcome these challenges and the expertise required to design a new and greatly improved local health care services to greatly reduce pressure on surrounding hospitals. The GHH will be a well-designed, modern space – with more private treatment areas, family- centered spaces, larger trauma bays, and faster access to tools and equipment.

To help address the increase in mental health patients, the new GHH will also have a Mental Health Emergency Services Unit presence in triage. This will be available 24/7 to identify and support individuals that require specialized mental health emergency care — giving them the attention and privacy they need during a crisis.

## **2) Operating Rooms**

Operating rooms are where the most specialized surgical care takes place. Demand is high and is expected to rise by 15 per cent over the next decade.

GHH looks to the future of surgical care, planning for larger and more flexible spaces that can accommodate new technology while adapting to growing patient volumes. These spaces will include designated areas for learners such as classrooms and simulation space. More comfortable waiting spaces will also improve the patient and family experience for those waiting for loved ones to return from surgery.

## **3) Labour and Delivery**

Every day, staff on the labour and delivery floor have the honour of helping families welcome their newest, youngest family members into the world. While most will have normal, healthy pregnancies and deliveries, Currently Georgina residents must travel outside the area to have their child in a hospital.

GHH will offer private spaces to benefit a patient's wellbeing. Modern care-by-parent practices mean that newborns stay by their mother's bedside. Partners and family

members who support mothers and babies are also in need of a comfortable place to rest. There will be no neonatal intensive care on site but transport to hospitals in the area will be available.

#### **4) Clinical Laboratories and Diagnostic**

Behind the doors of the clinical laboratories are a team of professionals working around the clock to screen, test and diagnose millions of specimens brought to them every year. These staff members are often known as the 'unsung heroes' of health care and to them, test tubes are more than just specimens – these are their patients.

The clinical laboratories will serve the needs of patients at GHH, as well as residents of Georgina.

Modern laboratory facilities will enable patients to quickly access results for a much wider range of tests, including those required for sophisticated cancer care, critical care, cardiac and pediatric care. With new laboratories, GHH will also take full advantage of emerging technologies in digital imaging, automation, and robotics as well as artificial intelligence, while training future technologists, doctors, and scientists.

#### **5) On Site General Practitioners and Specialists**

- Almost ALL the General Practitioners in Georgina are Family doctors. There are few specialists.

### **COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

1. **Strengthen economic development opportunities.** Improving health care and bringing more General Practitioners to Georgina will encourage more people and businesses to move to Georgina.
2. **Create jobs for Georgina residents.** Improving health care will bring more jobs both in the construction of new facilities and the operating of them. For example, the doctor's clinic coming to Jackson's Point has advised that once they are in operation 8-10 residents will be hired to staff and run day to day business.
3. **Better balance the distribution of health care across the municipality.**

Health Georgina wishes to thank Council for considering our request. We are available to answer any questions Council or Staff may have.

Thank you

Steve Jacobson  
Chair Health Georgina, on behalf of the Board

## APPENDIX 1

### EXAMPLES OF PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT EFFORTS IN OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

#### Hastings County

Hastings County has had an active General Practitioner recruiting program for 15 years. It is managed by the County and funded by the 14 member **municipalities**. Initially the County was in desperate need of General Practitioners and focused on attracting medical students by offering \$150,000 over 6 years towards expenses in exchange for a 5-year return of service agreement upon graduation. The program has successfully recruited 19 General Practitioners and is currently 4 short of a full complement.

The City of Belleville runs its own General Practitioner recruitment program, offering medical students up to \$150,000 in return for a five-year commitment of full-time service to the community. Payments are made in six instalments.

#### Quinte West & Brighton

The General Practitioner recruitment program for Brighton and Quinte West runs the 'Docs by the Bay' campaign with a registered physician recruiter at the helm. The program is funded through contributions from both **councils** as well as the hospital foundation and the budget is reviewed on an annual basis. It offers \$100,000 in exchange for a 5-year return of service agreement and will support both medical residents and practicing physicians. In the last 3 years, the program has successfully recruited 12 doctors.

#### Napanee

In Lennox & Addington, the county has downloaded the responsibility for General Practitioner recruitment to the individual municipalities. In response, Napanee developed a financial incentive program in 2019 that is funded by the **municipality** and operates as a special project within the Finance Department. It offers \$100,000 in exchange for a 5-year commitment. While the hospital does not provide financial support for the initiative, it works closely with the municipality and helps identify interested medical residents. The hospital will also offer training and support to new doctors. As a result, Napanee successfully recruited 2 new doctors in 2019.

The municipality also collaborated with Hastings County on establishing a new medical clinic in Deseronto, which is considered underserved by the province. Napanee contributed 25% of the funds to the project and was allocated 25% of the patient slots for its citizen. The clinic opened in March 2020.

Incentives are funded and managed by individual **municipalities**. Communities that don't have the budget for large incentives might offer a one-time signing bonus instead. Another popular incentive in the Niagara region is support for upgrades to old clinics so

that new General Practitioners do not have to shoulder the cost of converting paper records or purchasing new equipment. The success of the program has been significant with 22 new doctors signing on last year.

## **Kingston**

In late 2005, the City of Kingston launched an Ad Hoc Committee for the Recruitment, Retention and Recognition of General Practitioners. The committee completed its recommendations in May 2006 and the responsibility for administering the program was assigned to Kingston Economic Development Corporation (Kingston EcDev), in coordination with City of Kingston Finance department, and which hired a position responsible for the General Practitioner recruitment portfolio. In late 2007, Kingston EcDev submitted a request to the province to be re-designated as an underserved area. The request was denied in January 2008. In May 2008, recommendations were presented to Council for a family physician recruitment support package that would allow the City to compete with provincially funded recruitment efforts. City Council decided to support a Family Physician Support Package, with a total budget of \$1.8M to be amortized over 5 years. Council approved two types of support for family physicians:

- \$25,000 per new, full-time, established family physician to Kingston to help defray the costs of relocation and establishing a practice.
- \$75,000 (cash flow amortized over 5 years) per new, full-time, un-established, family physician to Kingston to help defray the costs of relocation & establishing a medical practice, subject to entering a 5-year contract, including repayment on a proportionate basis, should the term not be complete.

The success of the program led to an extension of the support package from 2010 to 2011, with \$350,000 of the \$1.8M that had not been committed between 2008 and 2010. The package was revised using the remaining funds in the budget to provide funding at the level of \$25,000 per new, full-time, un-established physician, beginning September 1, 2010, which resulted in all new family physicians receiving \$25,000.

In October 2015, Kingston EcDev presented a report on the results of the recruitment program: Between 15,000 and 17,000 un-attached patients gained a family doctor

- 28 doctors signed onto the program:
- 7 doctors terminated their agreements
  - 3 prior to beginning the program
    - 1 accepted a position at Providence Care
    - 1 could not get certified to practice in Ontario
    - 1 took a position at Toronto Western
  - 4 terminated agreements with pro-rated service

- 3 with 2 years of service or less
  - 1 due to health, 3 months short of the 5-year agreement
- 21 doctors were still actively participating in the program in 2015
- 7 received the \$25K funding, and all 7 continue to practice in Kingston
- 14 received the \$75K funding, with completion of the 5-year term between 2013 and 2017

In late August 2021, the City launched a social media recruitment campaign that targets family physicians in Ontario. This campaign produced interest but limited results as there was an absence of any incentive program. As a result, City staff are proposing that the City implement a family physician recruitment incentive program with \$250,000 of funding per year for eight (8) years. Based on best practices, it is anticipated that the incentive would be equivalent to \$100,000 for a minimum of a five (5) year contract for service. Staff are anticipating that this program will secure a minimum fifteen (15) additional family physicians recruited through this program over the eight (8) year period with remaining funds used to administer and promote the recruitment and incentive program. Staff recognize that this will not meet all of the community needs but will help to reduce the gap in local family physician care which should be led at the provincial level. Staff are also proposing that the program be administered and delivered through KEYS Job Centre which has expertise in recruitment and job placements. KEYS will engage a family physician recruiter who will work with community stakeholders to build out a comprehensive program of attraction and retention. Should Council approve this program, it would be implemented in 2022 and would target the recruitment of three (3) additional physicians in the first year.