



Town of Huntsville Staff Report

Meeting Date: February 1, 2023

To: General Committee

Report Number: DEV-2023-23

Confidential: No

Author(s): Lauren MacDermid, Economic Development Officer

Subject: Recruitment Funding Support for Muskoka and Area Ontario Health Team (MAOHT)

Report Highlights

- Recommendation to support the Muskoka and Area Ontario Health Team (MAOHT) funding request for a health care recruiter position, for the next 3 years.
- The dedicated role will focus on attracting and retaining primary care providers for the Muskoka area.

Recommendation

That: Committeesupport, in principal, the hiring of a Health Human Resources Recruiter as outlined in report DEV-2023-23;

And Further That: A contribution of \$25,000 toward this initiative be budgeted annually for up to 3 years to be funded through the Municipal Accommodation Tax;

And further that: Financial contributions cease upon confirmation of provincial funding or an alternate funding model.

Background

The Muskoka and Area Ontario Health Team (MAOHT) is a voluntary formal collaboration of 13 health and social service providers that has been in place since 2019 and includes the local hospitals, family health teams, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics (NPLC), hospices and home care providers. The MAOHT has successfully implemented a number of new programs and secured project funding from the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health. Being acutely aware of recent health care provider shortages, the MAOHT has created a Health Human Resources (HHR) Task Force that will focus efforts on recruitment and retention of primary care clinicians (i.e., family physicians and nurse practitioners) followed by specialist physician recruitment and other health care providers. This task force includes representatives from the District of Muskoka and surrounding Area Municipalities.

At the April 27, 2022 General Committee a resolution was passed directing staff to work with the MAOHT and Algonquin Family Health Team on a physician recruitment initiative.

Discussion

To facilitate the work of the HHR Task Force, small subgroups have been formed to focus on early deliverables. The Funding and Recruiter Task Group has developed recommendations to facilitate recruitment of a dedicated “HHR Recruiter” position, including but not limited to options for funding and position description.

The Funding and Recruiter Task Group is approaching community partners, including hospital foundations, family health teams, municipalities, community businesses (through Chambers of Commerce) and local service groups (e.g., Rotary) to request a collaborative fundraising commitment to hire a dedicated HHR Recruiter for the MAOHT catchment area. The MAOHT will also be making a financial contribution to the effort, but does not have a substantial funding base, nor multi-year funding commitments in order to support the entire project.

The waitlist for a primary care provider in Muskoka is currently estimated to be in excess of 3,300 individuals. This figure does not take into account the waitlist for the North Muskoka Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic (NPLC) and walk-in clinics. With a number of primary care physicians entering retirement and with expected population growth, the HHR Task Force has estimated there could be between 15,000 and 18,000 people without a primary care provider within three years. These numbers do not take into account the primary care providers needed to cover the hospital (Emergency Department, inpatient) or for specialized areas of practice like geriatrics, palliative care, obstetrics and long-term care home coverage. It is estimated that the MAOHT service area needs four primary care providers immediately and will require 15-17 new primary care providers in three years to meet projected need.

Using a dedicated recruiter to tackle health care human resource challenges is considered best practice. Financial incentives to attract care providers have achieved minimal results; however, having a dedicated recruiter whose role is to network and establish personal connections with potential candidates has been shown to significantly increase the likelihood of attracting and retaining dedicated care providers. The HHR Funding and Recruiter Task Group has reviewed how other areas have successfully recruited new medical professionals and has determined that the hiring of a dedicated resource is the most effective way to drive recruitment.

The proposed total annual contribution (including municipal, health care and community support) is \$150,000 to \$200,000 to cover salary, marketing, and other costs required to execute the duties of the position. Hiring will be conducted by the MAOHT hiring partner, Cottage Country Family Health Team. The Recruiter will report directly to the MAOHT Director of Operations and receive guidance regarding priorities from the HHR Task Force.

Proposed municipal contribution amounts are based on proportional population size to support the overall targeted municipal contribution toward the cost of the recruiter position. A chart of proposed contribution by municipality is provided below:

Municipality	Population Estimate	Proposed Annual Contribution
District of Muskoka	Total=146,600; Year-round:	\$10,000 - \$25,000

	63,290; Seasonal: 83,310 (2020)	
Town of Huntsville	21,147 (2021)	\$10,000 - \$25,000
Town of Bracebridge	17,305 (2021)	\$10,000 - \$25,000
Town of Gravenhurst	13,157 (2021)	\$10,000 - \$25,000
Township of Lake of Bays	3,759 (2021)	\$3,000 - \$5,000
Township of Muskoka Lakes	7,652 (2021)	\$3,000 - \$5,000
Township of Georgian Bay	3,441 (2021)	\$3,000 - \$5,000
Almaguin Health Council	~13,000 (2021)	\$3,000 - \$10,000

Note: Contribution amounts will be pro-rated for current fiscal year (based on October start). See Table below:

Contributors	Annual Amount Committed for 3 year
District of Muskoka	TBC
Town of Gravenhurst	TBC
Town of Bracebridge	\$25,000
Town of Huntsville	TBC
Township of Muskoka Lakes	Declined
Township of Georgian Bay	TBC
Township of Lake of Bays	\$5,000

At this time funding commitments have been secured by the Town of Bracebridge, Township of Lake of Bays, MAHC, Algonquin Family Health Team, South Muskoka Hospital Foundation, Huntsville Hospital Foundation, and Almaguin Health Council. Community support for this initiative is strong and remaining municipalities and MAOHT partners are seeking contributions based on fiscal year approvals.

As a result of timelines, and need to align recruitment initiatives with medical students school year cycle, the MAOT Financial Advisor determined the contribution threshold has been reached. Therefore, the MAOHT HHR Task Force was able to proceed with hiring a HHR Recruiter while additional contributions are confirmed by MAOHT partners and Area Municipalities. It should be noted that further contributions are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the HHR Recruiter role via recruitment tactics such as strategic marketing and communication efforts, conferences and attraction initiatives.

Financial commitments from local partner organizations will support the goals of the HHR Task Force and begin addressing the region's immediate health care needs. This community-led pilot program will favorably position the MAOHT to obtain provincial funding support for longer-term financial sustainability, which in turn will alleviate the financial impacts on the municipalities and other local partners.

Staff are recommending that Council support, in principal, the hiring of a Health Human Resources Recruiter and commit to a maximum contribution of \$25,000 for the next three years, with financial contributions to cease upon confirmation of provincial funding or an alternate funding model. Noting

that financial contributions are subject to confirmed contributions from local partner organizations and confirmation of successful implementation of the MAOHT's hiring of a dedicated Health Human Resources Recruiter.

Community Quality of Life

Following 2.2.3 of the Economic Development Strategy, the Town aims to increase the number of skilled workers and professionals in the town to support new and existing businesses, services, and operators. By supporting this regional initiative, the Town is able to support a tailored approach with expertise in healthcare attraction. Therefore, the chance of attracting skilled healthcare professionals to the Huntsville area is increased, and will benefit residents in need of primary care. Alternatively, without a focused attraction approach, many residents will continue to face challenges with finding healthcare professionals as physicians retire and the community population increases.

Investing in quality of life is an economic driver that benefits the community in more ways than one. As a rural community, it is recommended that the Town support innovative ways to attract healthcare workers to the community and surrounding municipalities, for as a region we all benefit by having more ways to access healthcare. With stronger healthcare services, the community's economy is strengthened and as a result makes the community more attractive for living, working and visiting the Town.

Options

1. Proceed as noted above (**recommended**)
2. Council could choose not to include a financial contribution of \$25,000 in the draft 2023 Operating Budget and not commit to three years of financial contributions to support the Muskoka and Area Ontario Health Team collaborative effort to hire a dedicated Health Human Resources Recruiter. (**not recommended**)
3. Do not proceed with any recommendations (**not recommended**)

Operational

The amount of \$25,000 will be included in the draft 2023 budget to be funded through the Municipal Accommodation Tax reserve for the recruitment of health care professionals.

Council Strategic Direction / Relevant Policies / Legislation / Resolutions

Strategic Plan:

CW1.2 Actively participate in regional health care initiatives

CW1.3 Continue engagement and partnerships with neighbouring municipalities on the protection of acute care services (mandate)

CW1.4 Partnerships with District and Regional Health Care Initiatives

CW1.6 Seek opportunities to make specialty health services available in Huntsville (mandate)

2022 - 2026 Economic Development Strategy:

2.2.3 Increase the number of skilled workers and professionals in the town to support new and existing businesses, services, and operators.

[MAT Budget Principles:](#)

2c Economic Programming

Apr 27, 2022 Motion [GC79-22](#)

Consultations

Julia McKenzie, Director of Finance

Respectfully Submitted: Lauren MacDermid, Economic Development Officer

Manager Approval (if required): _____

Director Approval: Kirstin Maxwell, Director of Development Services

CAO Approval: Denise Corry, Chief Administrative Officer