

City of Belleville

Report No: MPRR-2025-01

Meeting Date: February 20, 2025



To: Mayor and Members of Council

Department: CAO's Office

Staff Contact: Karen Poste, Manager of Physician Recruitment and Retention

Subject: Family Physician Appreciation Fund (FPAF) - One-time Funding Program

Recommendation:

"THAT pursuant to the Manager of Physician Recruitment and Retention Report No. MPRR-2025-01, Family Physician Appreciation Fund (FPAF), be received and referred to Issue No. D6-10 - Family Physician Appreciation Fund (FPAF) - One-time Funding Program."

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Community Health, Safety and Security: Support and advocate for the establishment of responsive public health services and accessible medical care.

Background:

In October, 2024 Council reviewed report MPRR 2024-22 which recommended the development of a Family Physician Appreciation Fund (FPAF) and referred the report to the operating budget for further consideration.

The report recommended that a fund be established that could provide family physicians that have a clinical practice, the opportunity to apply for City funding for specific aspects of their practice. It was noted that other communities in the region and beyond, are offering their existing physicians funding to encourage the retention of established doctors and the expansion of their practices. The City has approximately 45 family physicians with a clinical practice and several other options for implementing other retention initiatives have been discounted as too expensive, not impactful enough, competition with private business and/or too burdensome from an administrative perspective.

Financial/Analysis:

Management has reviewed various programs from other communities and recommends a "Made in Belleville" solution that will provide some relief to our physicians in the short term but will allow the City to reduce or eliminate the program as the provincial government makes the improvements to health care they have been promising. Health care is not a municipal responsibility and it would not be in the best interest of Belleville tax payers to implement a program that cannot be scaled back once the Province makes improvements to the practice and compensation models for family physicians. It may be important to note that Dr. Jane Philpott has been tasked by the current government to develop new models and policies which are to improve the health care system in Ontario. If appropriate changes are made, the FPAF may no longer be needed. However, these changes will take time to be implemented and this fund can be reevaluated annually until the current issues have been addressed.

Management proposes a 2025 operating budget commitment of \$250,000 to fund the FPAF which will be an application based fund following the same structure as the Municipal Grant programs. Upon approval, the grant policy and guidelines will be updated to include this program, including the following eligibility and evaluation criteria for accessing the funding:

- applicants must be a fully licensed family physician operating in Belleville with a roster of at least 500 existing patients
- priority will be given to applicants that apply for funding to increase their roster of patients and the applicant must provide proof that they have taken these patients from the Health Care Connect service
- applicants may apply for funding to support investments in new equipment, software, training, onboarding additional staff, the implementation of benefit plans for staff and any other items that the City considers reasonable investments in established medical clinics
- applicants may only apply once per year for the fund and the maximum funding amount will be \$10,000 per physician per year.
 - \$10,000 will be available for doctors adding to their roster at the rate of \$100/patient.
 - Up to \$5,000 per year will be available to physicians for other investments such as new equipment, software, training, onboarding staff, benefits, etc.
- Family physicians that are currently under a recruitment contract with the City will not be eligible for the incentive that would increase their roster of patients as they are in the process of building their roster, but they would be eligible for funding which would help them purchase equipment, train staff, etc.

A \$250,000 budget commitment won't allow the City to provide all physicians with a \$10,000 grant (with 45 doctors), as there simply isn't enough funding available. However this program will allow the City to provide a grant to a significant number of doctors, with a focus on a return on investment through increased patient load/uptake.

One-time funding for this initiative is proposed to be funded by the Casino - Disaster/Contingency Reserve Fund.

Conclusion:

Health care is a provincial responsibility. The City is not funded or equipped to take on any kind of permanent role when it comes to supporting health care or health care providers.

Control and responsibility for all aspects of health care belongs to the Province and the City must be very careful not to take on any of these responsibilities as our mandate and funding model are ill-equipped to deal with these issues in any real way. Our involvement to date has simply involved the attraction of physicians to our community by offering financial scholarships as a way of ensuring Belleville gets their share of the doctors in the province. This FPAF is intended to provide some limited support for local doctors to encourage them to keep practicing here, to take on more patients if they can and to help ease the burden of updating or growing their practice. This fund is not to be a permanent fund and is only intended to remain in place until the Province addresses the significant issues that remain in the health care system, or until funding is no longer available.

Competition to attract doctors is at an all time high and the race to retain them is getting more competitive every day. This FPAF is intended to help local doctors with some expenses on a short term basis but also to ensure they know what valued members of our community they continue to be.

Management recommends that the 2025 operating budget include a \$250,000 line item to fund the FPAF.

Approved by:

Brandon Ferguson, Director of Finance, Treasurer
Katy Macpherson, Deputy City Clerk
Matt MacDonald, Chief Administrative Officer
Joseph Reid, Director

Status:

Approved - 15 Jan 2025
Approved - 15 Jan 2025
Approved - 20 Jan 2025
Approved - 21 Jan 2025