

Physician Recruitment and Retention still a challenge for Hamilton

Many communities across Ontario are faced with physician shortages and continue to work hard to recruit and retain physicians. In 2005, the City of Hamilton's Physician Recruitment and Retention initiative was established to work closely with its community stakeholders to build a strong recruitment and retention program to address the shortage of physicians in Hamilton. While recruitment efforts have had some success, there is still a tremendous shortage of physicians in Hamilton.

The City of Hamilton is competing for physicians being lured elsewhere through incentives provided by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care's (MOHLTC) Underserviced Area Program (UAP). Every community surrounding Hamilton has been designated as underserviced but Hamilton has been unsuccessful in its attempts to obtain the same status despite the need of 41 additional family physicians¹.

The criteria for evaluating communities has not been applied equitably across all communities. The MOHLTC has consistently denied the UAP applications of Hamilton, Kingston and London citing the advantage of an Academic Health Sciences Centre. Yet, the City of London, not formally designated as underserviced, was quietly granted permission in the fall of 2008 by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to accept up to five University of Western Ontario residents with a Return-of-Service (ROS) to practice full-time in their community.

In spite of successfully recruiting many physicians, the chart below indicates that Hamilton continues to experience an overall **net loss** of physicians with an increasing number of new physicians working on a locum and part-time basis.

RESULTS SINCE INCEPTION OF FAMILY PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT

Year	Total # of New Recruits	Permanent	Locum	Total # of Family Physicians
2005	17	12	5	345
2006	17	13	4	341
2007	19	11	8	340
2008	20	12	8	331

¹ Ministry guidelines suggest 1 physician for 1380 citizens - therefore 372 physicians are required for a population of 513,000. The number as of March 30, 2009 is 331 permanent and local physicians.