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Family physicians to stay in Shelburne after finding new clinic location

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Local family physicians are prepared to stay in the community after finding a new location for the clinic.

The North Dufferin Wellness Centre Primary Care Clinic announced that they will be moving to a new location and will remain in the Shelburne community. The new location of the clinic will be within the Caravaggio IDA Pharmacy, located at 128 Main Street.

?It's a relief to know that we're going into a stable location. We've been in a bit of a drama situation for the past five years, in our current situation with multiple landlords; it's been pretty unstable,? said Dr. Amy Catania, who provides health care in Shelburne. ?It feels good to know that we're going into this new location.?

In November 2024, Dr. Catania delegated to Shelburne Town Council outlining the issues and challenges they've faced since 2018 as tenants of their building, located at 712 Main Street. She also shared that the clinic had been informed their rent would be increasing from $23.50 per square foot to $34.80 per square foot for a total of $3,138.58 per month.

In 2018, Dr. Catania and other healthcare providers in the community came together to open the North Dufferin Wellness Centre, which operated as a ?patient medical home? or a one-stop medical centre for patients.

The North Dufferin Wellness Centre Primary Care Clinic consists of Dr. Amy Catania, Dr. Natasha Gill and Dr. Sonya Caruso.

Dr. Catania detailed to Shelburne Council the number of issues and challenges they as tenants had experienced related to the three landlords, including bills not being paid, mould, leaks in the roof and basement, property disrepair, and animals.

At the end of the delegation, Dr. Catania made it clear ? a solution had to be found or the clinic would be forced to leave the community.

?As physicians, we don't have the ability to just make more money. The government controls what it is that we are paid for our service, and there is no way of really increasing our revenue so we could not pay. We would have lost our business by having to pay that extra amount of money,? said Catania.

Concern for the clinic and family physicians leaving the community was raised due to the shortage of family physicians province-wide.

The Ontario College of Family Physicians reported in July of 2024 that there are about 2.5 million people in Ontario who do not have a family doctor.

According to the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team, the estimated number of local community members needing access to primary and team-based care was over 15,000 as of March 2022.

With the population of the area projected to increase 37 per cent by 2031, Dufferin County and Caledon will require 43 additional family physicians ? 14 for Dufferin County and 29 for Caledon ? in the next seven years to keep up with population growth.

The physicians remaining in Shelburne is highlighted even more in a report to Shelburne Council which indicated that the three physicians - Catania, Gill and Caruso - see 3,627 patients of which 1,035 or roughly 28 per cent are from Shelburne and 1,550 or 42 per cent are from Dufferin County.

Shelburne Town Council approved a motion to supplement the rental cost of the medical facility during a council meeting in December.

Following the meeting with the Town Council, Catania said they were contacted by the owners of Caravaggio I.D.A Drugs, who offered to provide them the needed space to stay within the community.

?At that point in time, we were trying to decide whether or not we needed to leave the community and find another place to go. Thankfully, the Caravaggio I.D.A owners came forward and offered us some space in their pharmacy in order to try and keep us in the community; which was amazing and wonderful,? said Catania.

Speaking about why the North Dufferin Wellness Centre Primary Care Clinic chose to move to the pharmacy rather than accept the subsidy from the Town of Shelburne and remain in the same location, Catania said, ?We were tired of dealing with short term solutions and while it would have been nice to be able to use, between not being able to negotiate a lease with the landlord and not having it be a long term solution, we felt that this was the better option.?

At the time of print, the clinic and pharmacy are waiting for building permits from the Town of Shelburne and the County of Dufferin, but hope to open the new location by March.

The North Dufferin Wellness Centre Primary Care Clinic has temporarily moved its location to the Orangeville Family Medicine Centre (OFMC), located at 1 Elizabeth Street in Orangeville while they wait for confirmation of the new location.