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Local doctor helping recruit physicians in Dufferin?Caledon

By Paula Brown, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A local family doctor is taking on the role of helping recruit more physicians to Dufferin County and the Town of Caledon.

The Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team (HOHC OHT) announced in a press release on Sept. 17 that Orangeville-based physician Dr. Lydia MacFarland would be taking on the new role of physician recruiter.

In the new role, Dr. MacFarland will be tasked with leading the recruitment of new doctors as well as continuing efforts to support existing physicians.

?I have a great love for family medicine and believe that a strong physician and primary care foundation is at the core of a thriving community. My husband and I moved to Orangeville three years ago and we cannot imagine practicing or raising our young family anywhere else,? said Dr. MacFarland. ?My hope is to acknowledge and build on the incredible foundation established by the doctors who came before us while finding creative solutions to the challenges that health care professionals are currently facing.?

The physician recruiter position was created through partnerships between local government representatives, family physicians, health providers and community members. They joined together to form the HOHC OHT's Physician Recruitment and Retention Task Force. The task force's goal is to add to and support existing primary care and physician services in Dufferin County and the Town of Caledon.

Over the first three months, Dr. MacFarland will focus on initiatives to strengthen local physician recruitment, including developing strategies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the current recruitment process for the local hospital.

?From the beginning, this OHT has been committed to improving access to care for all while improving the patient and provider experience. We are confident that Dr. MacFarland will enable these efforts and improve health outcomes in our community,? said Dave Pearson, Executive Director of HOHC OHT.

The recruitment efforts will aim to address physician shortages in the community and needs within the hospital.

According to the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team, the estimated number of 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 would require 43 additional family physicians ? 14 for Dufferin County and 29 for Caledon ? in the next seven years to keep up with population growth.

To help with retaining more physicians in the area, the County of Dufferin along with the Town of Caledon and Headwaters Health Care Center (HHCC) have committed a combined funding of up to $150,000 to support recruitment and retention efforts.

?With many Ontarians lacking access to a family physician, the state of health care is in crisis in our province, including in Dufferin County. Many of our residents are unable to access quality, timely care, which is why Dufferin County partnered with the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team, Headwaters Health Care Centre and the Town of Caledon for physician recruitment efforts,? said Darren White, Warden of Dufferin County. ?We are pleased to announce that Dr. Lydia MacFarland has taken on the physician recruiter role in Dufferin/Caledon and look forward to seeing improved health outcomes in our community.?

President and CEO of Headwaters Hospital Kim Delahunt said, ?Dr. MacFarland's role as physician recruiter marks a significant milestone in our collective commitment to ensuring that our community benefits from the best possible medical expertise."

For more information on the work being done by Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team, visit www.hillsofheadwaterscollaborative.ca.