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Shelburne council investigates possibility
of bringing medical services closer to home]

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Shelburne councillors have inquired with Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) about establishing medical facilities in town as residents express concerns with travel and wait times for care in Orangeville.

During their meeting on Monday (Mar. 13), Shelburne council received a delegation from Headwaters CEO and president Kim Delahunt.

Coun. Kyle Fegan questioned whether the hospital could set up a facility in Shelburne where residents can access triage and care in the community.

?I see the need for more facilities,? said Fegan. ?I hate to admit it, my family goes to Alliston anytime we have an emergency simply because the service times and triage times are much faster, so I do see Headwaters as potentially overburdened ? especially in the emergency department.?

Delahunt explained to council that the likelihood of a facility being approved by the Ontario Ministry of Health is ?very slim? as they would initially look at the possibility of surrounding hospital expansions.

?Because the travel distances for folks here are close to the many hospitals,? said Delahunt. ?It's tough that rather than another smaller hospital coming here they're going to look to expand and grow existing hospitals.?

Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) is a medium-sized community hospital that serves residents from 10 communities, including Amaranth, Caledon, Erin, East Garafraxa, Grand Valley, Melancthon, Mono, Mulmur, Orangeville, and Shelburne.

According to Headwaters staff, 77 per cent of day surgery patients and 84 per cent of emergency department visits come from patients within its catchment area.

?Of course, we see others come from other communities, and of course some our residents go to other hospitals, probably because we don't provide a service at Headwaters,? said Delahunt.

The local hospital recently concluded a Clinical Priority Plan to see what services the hospital needs to plan for in the future.

Initial findings show that individuals 65 and older, as well as adults 20 to 29, are Dufferin's two largest populations.

?Those are really the ages we need to plan for,? said Delahunt. ?You are going to see an enhanced focus on geriatric services and as well really focusing on our young families.?

Research into Headwaters' total patient base found that Shelburne residents represented 11 per cent for medicine, pediatrics and obstetrics; 10 per cent for mental health and palliative; and seven per cent for surgery.

Data also showed that Shelburne residents represented 8 per cent of the hospital's emergency visits while showing that 68 per cent of Shelburne residents visit HHCC for emergency department support.

Coun. Walter Benotto also inquired with Delahunt about possibly bringing x-ray and diagnostic imaging services to the North Dufferin community.

?You need a hospital sponsor, so obviously I think you'll be looking at Headwaters, and then it would need to be a robust business case that goes in to the ministry to obtain thae necessary approvals. There needs to be a critical mass,? said Delahunt. Local community is not a new discussion among Shelburne council.

In October of 2021, council received a presentation from Dr. Michael Stefanos, a radiologist with Headwaters, and Dr. Amy Catania from Shelburne Centre of Health regarding the immediate need for diagnostic imaging in the Shelburne community.

Dr. Amy Catania has since passed away.

According to data collected from Dufferin Area Family Health Team (DAFHT), in 2019, there were approximately 2,900 tests ordered by local physicians for North Dufferin patients, with growth estimated at about 5 to 10 per cent each year.

Headwater is in the last year of its five-year strategic plan and is in the midst of creating a new strategic plan.