

Physician Recruiter Hired To Help Bring More Family Doctors To The Region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2019

A group of doctors, along with the Pembroke Regional Hospital (PRH) have hired a family physician recruiter for Pembroke, Petawawa and the surrounding area.

According to statistics from Health Care Connect, the provincial agency that collects the names of people without a family doctor, at least 2,000 people within Pembroke and area need a primary care physician.

"While we understand from Health Care Connect that approximately 2,000 people without a family doctor have registered, we realize there are others out there who have not come forward," said Sabine Mersmann, PRH representative on the Upper Ottawa Valley (UOV) Medical Group. "It is crucial for us to get ahead of this trend."

The UOV Medical Group has been working in partnership with others throughout Renfrew County and recognizes the need to have a recruiter assist in this process. In late November, the hospital hired Debbie Robinson, the former chairwoman of the UOV Medical Recruitment Committee. That group was supported by seven municipalities and the PRH, enabling it to successfully recruit 11 new physicians to the area.

"Bringing new family doctors to a community is a daunting task, as hundreds of communities throughout Ontario are experiencing a shortage," Ms. Robinson explained.

"Within Renfrew County alone there are at least five active recruiters, so working together for the benefit of the entire county will be important."

She is encouraged by the commitment of the UOV Medical Group, which she describes as doctors recruiting doctors.

"When I attend a recruitment fair, I can sell our community, but it's the physicians who accompany me that make the difference," Ms. Robinson said. "At a recent recruitment fair in Ottawa, the family medicine residents were lining up to speak with Dr. Richard Johnson because he can relate to them on a professional level."

When doctors are recruiting their own colleagues the message is unique, and it's being heard.

"This will not be a quick process, but if we are diligent, I'm convinced we can be successful," Ms. Robinson added.

The UOV Medical Group is also supported by the Petawawa Centennial Family Health Centre, the West Champlain Family Health Team, Pembroke's Family Medicine Teaching Unit and the Whitewater Bromley Community Health Centre. All four facilities

support the recruiting of new physicians and offer various practice models, which make this area very attractive to new doctors.

In the coming weeks, Ms. Robinson, along with members of the UOV Medical Group, will be making presentations to local municipalities so the public can be well informed of the group's actions.

Residents who do not have a family doctor are encouraged to register with Health Care Connect. To do so, go to www.ontario.ca/healthcareconnect or call 1-800-445-1822.

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