

Pembroke Family Medicine Teaching Unit Expansion Strengthens Physician Recruitment in Renfrew County

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The Pembroke Family Medicine Teaching Unit (PFMTU) has recently completed a major expansion, marking a significant milestone in efforts to recruit and retain family physicians for Renfrew County. This initiative reflects the growing demand for family doctors in the region and Pembroke Regional Hospital's (PRH) ongoing commitment to ensuring access to high-quality care for local residents.

Located on the fourth floor of Tower D at PRH, the PFMTU serves over 11,000 patients and consists of nine family physicians, a physician assistant, and a growing number of medical residents and learners. With its 1,500-square-foot expansion earlier this year, the Unit has increased its capacity from eight to 12 family medicine residents, supporting the training of future physicians and addressing physician shortages in the region.

The expansion which was supported by \$380,000 in renovations, has added new workspaces for staff and learners.

"This expansion is a crucial step in tackling the high number of unattached patients in Renfrew County," said Dr. Richard Johnson, Site Director of the Pembroke Residency Program and Chief of Family Practice at PRH. "Since our program began in 2009, over 80% of our graduates have stayed in the area initially, and five years later, 60% are still practicing locally. Additionally, 95% of our graduates choose to remain in rural settings. Building a strong learner pipeline is a proven strategy for long-term recruitment."

As a rural site within the University of Ottawa's Department of Family Medicine, the PFMTU trains residents for two years, providing immersive rural experiences. This includes optional two-month per year placements in Deep River or Barry's Bay with local preceptors. "These remote opportunities not only help prepare our residents for rural practice but also strengthen health care delivery across the county," Dr. Johnson said.

A number of innovative programs and training opportunities have also been launched this year such as Indigenous cultural awareness training in collaboration with the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan.

"Our focus goes beyond training; it's about creating connections to our communities and preparing physicians who are committed to providing care where it's needed most," said Dr. Johnson.

Pembroke Regional Hospital President and CEO Sabine Mersmann said that recruitment programs like this are essential for ensuring sustainable health care in our region. "We want to thank Dr. Johnson, his team and all physicians in the region for supporting our medical learners

and making them feel welcome both in the workplace and in the community. We will continue to support this vital work for the improvement of health care access in Renfrew County.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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Names for accompanying photo depicting some PFMTU staff physicians and residents:

From left, Dr. John Bonell (resident), Dr. Madeleine Nolan (resident), Dr. Taylor Wilkins (resident), Dr. Richard Johnson (staff), Dr. Erin Ferrier (resident), Dr. Sadie Maidens (resident), Dr. Emma Sypes (resident), Dr. Claire Neilson (resident), Dr. Todd Gauthier (staff) and Dr. Brent Deveau (resident).