



STAFF REPORT

Title: Physician Assessment Process - Letter

Meeting Date: November 23, 2021

Executive Summary:

Local Physicians have raised some concerns in regards to the process that Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons has in place for assessing and transitioning doctors who are new to Canada into the Alberta healthcare system.

It is the City of Cold Lake's understanding that doctors coming from outside of Canada to work in Alberta must commit to working for three (3) months at certain healthcare centres where they learn the Alberta Health Services (AHS)-wide systems that are in place, and undergo an assessment. After this initial three (3) months, the physician then transitions to the healthcare centre or clinic where they will establish their practice. This often involves learning additional systems that are in place at the new community, clinic and healthcare centre.

The City of Cold Lake has been told that this significantly slows the recruitment process, as local systems can be learned at the same time that the AHS-wide systems are being learned.

It has been noted that if Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons were to allow physicians to undergo their assessment period at the Cold Lake Healthcare Centre under the supervision of local physicians, then a significant source of delays in the process could be avoided.

Administration is recommending that council authorize a letter on behalf of the City of Cold Lake to the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons, cc'd to AHS, Bonnyville-Cold Lake MLA David Hanson and the Honourable Minister of Health, Jason Copping, in regards to this issue. The letter will seek a better understanding of the process and seek to understand methods whereby the process may be streamlined.

Background:

Physician recruitment has been an ongoing challenge for Cold Lake and a number of communities in rural Alberta for some time. The issue has been on council's radar for at least 15 years and, since 2006, the City of Cold Lake has put significant resources towards efforts intended to recruit and retain physicians.



While the City of Cold Lake has engaged AHS in discussions regarding the total number of doctors in Cold Lake, this matter was brought to administrations attention as a means of expediting the recruitment process in the meantime.

Further to the above, it has been noted that recruiting efforts in the City of Cold Lake have typically served to replace doctors who have left the community, with the total number of physicians typically sitting at 12-13, plus one surgeon. There has been long-lasting concern that a significant number of individuals and families in the community remain unattached to a family physician, although statistics in regards to this have been difficult to obtain.

To that end, the City of Cold Lake asked several plebiscite questions about access to family doctors during the municipal election. This effort was intended as a first step towards gathering more information. A municipal census, for instance, would allow for more detailed questions to be posed, and would allow for a more thorough accounting of the issue in Cold Lake.

Alternatives:

- Council may pass a motion authorizing a letter on behalf of the City of Cold Lake to Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons, cc'd to AHS, Bonnyville-Cold Lake MLA David Hanson and the Honourable Minister of Health, Jason Copping, in regards to the 3-month assessment period and ways to streamline the process.
- Council may decline to pass a motion authorizing a letter on behalf of the City of Cold Lake to AHS in regards to the matter at this time.

Recommended Action:

Administration recommends that Council pass a motion authorizing a letter on behalf of the City of Cold Lake to Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons, cc'd to AHS, Bonnyville-Cold Lake MLA David Hanson and the Honourable Minister of Health, Jason Copping, in regards to the 3-month assessment period and ways to streamline the process.

Budget Implications (Yes or No):

No

Submitted by:

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