



## STAFF REPORT

**Title:** Cold Lake Primary Care Medical Clinic - Draft Business Plan (PH)

**Meeting Date:** January 24, 2023

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### **Executive Summary:**

The following is the executive summary from the draft business plan relating to the proposed establishment of a “Primary Care Medical Clinic” as an Municipal Controlled Corporation (MCC):

*The availability of family doctors in Cold Lake has been a priority for the City of Cold Lake since 2006. The evolution of the community’s efforts to attract and retain doctors has very much evolved from basic fact finding, and seeking to understand the basics of the healthcare system in Alberta, to now include an understanding of a very sophisticated mix of issues and challenges. These include financial considerations, financial supports, government priorities, the priorities of legislative governing bodies, and the priorities and personalities of individuals who influence the system. There have also been times where there was evidence of clear obstruction to new family physicians coming to the community. As best as we can tell, this occurs because of what can be described as concerns over “turf protection.” It is of interest that all of the issues and concerns in the healthcare system tend to be discussed in the context of patients’ care. However, the best interest of patients’ often seems to be lost amongst several other competing and overarching concerns and priorities found throughout the healthcare system, and the political environment which surrounds it.*

*To date, the City has provided financing and support to organizations that have led recruitment efforts (ie. CLR<sup>3</sup>, now called Hearts for Healthcare). Despite community initiatives and an overall increase in physicians throughout rural Alberta, there has been no significant increase in the number of physicians in Cold Lake from 2006 to 2022. This is because the number of physicians recruited to Cold Lake has always been offset by the number of outgoing physicians. Based on information provided by Alberta Health Services (AHS), between 2006 and 2020, Cold Lake has had roughly 12 family doctors plus one surgeon at any given point in time. This trend remained consistent through 2020 during which time the community, through Hearts for Healthcare, assisted with the recruiting of 17 physicians, 1 Nurse Practitioner and 1 Sonographer. Despite continued interest from new physicians wanting to come to the community, once Alberta Health Services has secured the replacement of outgoing physicians, no additional effort is made to continue recruiting (even when positions are being posted). In fact, recruitment efforts are sometimes faced with open opposition and conflict.*



*Unfortunately, many of the family doctors have faced burn-out, others have left the community due to dissension amongst the doctors and what some have described as a toxic atmosphere, while others work to try to change the system. In fact, the general working and professional environment in Cold Lake seems to be a known concern throughout Alberta both among physicians and among professionals who would like to move the community. This, in turn, is having a clear and significant impact on Cold Lake's economic opportunities. All the while, Alberta Health Services has provided cover to the ongoing situation. It has taken the position that there is no concern with access to healthcare in Cold Lake. AHS has maintained that the community's concerns over excessive waiting periods to see family doctors and the number of unattached patients in Cold Lake are greatly exaggerated. Nonetheless, the City's recent election and census data articulate that over 40% of the community is not attached to a family physician and have grown frustrated with the healthcare system in Cold Lake.*

*It is understood that some will say Cold Lake's situation does not differ from many communities in Canada – that doctor shortages are a national issue and not unique to the City of Cold Lake. While there is fact relating to a doctor shortage that has become more prevalent since the COVID-19 pandemic, Cold Lake has been dealing with this very problematic issue for over 18 years. Over the course of this time, the City has monitored the situation and solicited feedback on the recruitment efforts taking place in the community. Unfortunately, there have been times that the City has faced stern criticism for attempting to influence change to the local healthcare system by increasing the availability of doctors.*

*The time for staying on the sidelines while providing substantial tax-payer funding in the hopes of resolving these issues in the local healthcare system is over. Rather than remain a passive observer and a source of recruitment funding, the City of Cold Lake is now looking to establish a strong foothold in the active recruitment of physicians so that it can influence change for the community that will meet its healthcare needs. This foothold will be in the form of a Municipal Controlled Corporation (MCC) that will be charged with the operation and staffing of a primary care medical clinic. An existing medical clinic will be purchased by the City of Cold Lake and transitioned to the MCC.*

*An MCC is a business incorporated under the Business Corporations Act. It will exist as a separate legal entity from its founding municipality, governed by its shareholders. The MCC must be registered with the Province of Alberta's Corporate Registry Office (referred to as Service Alberta). The Municipal Government Act allows a municipality, by itself or with other municipalities, to establish and control or obtain control of, a corporation subject to the terms of Section 75.1(1) of the MGA.*



*This business plan is intended to cover the various requirements and obligations for the establishment and operation of an MCC, as outlined in the MGA and the associated Municipally Controlled Corporation Regulation - Alberta Regulation 112/2018 (Current as of October 7, 2022).*

For the most part, physicians in the region operate under what is best described as incorporated practices (or professional corporation). In Alberta, the “Health Professions Act” allows for the practice of medicine by professional corporations under certain conditions. Although this approach is predominating and preferred in the region, the MCC will not be limited as there are other the other approaches to practices that are permitted in Alberta including, Group Practice, Salaried Positions, or even Alternate Relationship Plans (ARP).

This report has been generated to facilitate the statutory public hearing as required in Section 75.1(3) of the Municipal Government Act for the Municipal Controlled Corporation (MCC).

At the time of this report being generated, the following has submitted to City of Cold Lake:

1. Wendy McWilliam - *Hello, I’m writing about a couple of errors that I immediately see in the business plan for the Cold Lake Primary Care Medical Clinic, mostly relating to the Lakeland Medical Clinic. On page 8- Dr Emagbetere does take OBS referrals as he does C/sections. On page 9, there are many spelling errors- second last paragraph should say Dr. Joseph Stander not Standard!! Dr. Van Jaarsveld is spelled wrong on pages 8 and 9. Merit Medical Clinic is spelled Merrit on page 9. Thank you, Wendy McWilliam, Clinic Manager, Lakeland Medical Clinic*

No other submissions have been made at the time of this report.

**Background:**

A full copy of the draft business plan had been viewed by City Council during their December 13, 2022 regular meeting (In-Camera). A full copy of the business plans handed out to Council during their December 19, 2022 Special Meeting of Council.

A copy of the business plan has been attached for reference purposes. A copy of the fact sheet has also been attached.

Subject to the public hearing, the business plan will be considered at the February 14, 2023 regular meeting of Council.



**Alternatives:**

No alternatives are being proposed at this time.

**Recommended Action:**

Administration recommends that Council proceed with its' Statutory Public Hearing for the proposed establishment of a "Primary Care Medical Clinic" as a Municipal Controlled Corporation (MCC).

**Budget Implications (Yes or No):**

Yes

**Submitted by:**

Kevin Nagoya, Chief Administrative Officer