



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RE: Cumberland region municipal units busy with health-care recruitment, retention

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – At a meeting on health care in Springhill on Dec. 8, 2022, Cumberland region mayors were disappointed more information related to local efforts pertaining to health care around physician recruitment and retention were not highlighted.

“It was disappointing the members of the community who were at the meeting were not enlightened about the efforts underway in the Cumberland region as a joint effort between our three municipalities and volunteers within our communities,” Cumberland County Mayor Murray Scott said.

“It’s why Amherst Mayor David Kogon and I feel we need to speak out to let people know there is a concerted effort throughout the Cumberland region to recruit new physicians and non-medical health-care professionals and to retain the ones who are already here.”

Scott and Kogon pointed out three committees have been working diligently for several years to recruit and retain physicians and other health-care professionals, including nurses and other critical health-care staff.

Kogon said the local effort to support physician recruitment began in 2018 with the creation of a physician recruitment committee led by Amherst physician Dr. Janneke Gradstein.

“It started when we in Amherst were approached by the medical staff at the regional hospital,” the Amherst mayor said. “At that time, there were 41 physician positions in Cumberland County with 29 at the regional hospital and 12 peripheral physician positions. Out of that were 20 vacancies.

“Our efforts were successful in that we were able to reduce the number of vacancies to nine.”

Its success and the realization nurses and other health-care professionals also needed help with recruiting and retention resulted in the original committee evolving to include



*Cumberland County Mayor
Murray Scott*

the original physician recruitment committee, a physician retention and appreciation committee and a non-physician health-care professional recruitment and retention committee.

“Our success was recognized to the point our three municipalities made a presentation to the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities talking about our methodology and how we experienced success,” Kogon said. “I was also asked to make a presentation to the Atlantic Mayors Congress. We’ve been recognized for being successful.”

The committees have experienced a lot of success and Nova Scotia Health has been very supportive of the work taking place in the Cumberland region. That’s why Scott and Kogon were surprised when there was no mention made of that work at the meeting in Springhill.

“Nova Scotia Health has been very good to work with and they have been very supportive of the efforts we’ve been making locally to attract physicians and other non-physician health-care professionals,” Kogon said. “At first, they said we couldn’t recruit health-care professionals because they would be employees of Nova Scotia Health. You can appreciate and retain them, but you can’t recruit them. They’ve come around and will let us recruit people and encourage them to apply. They’ve been very helpful.”

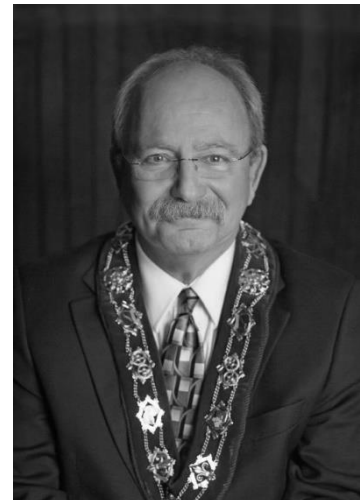
Scott said all municipal leaders in the Cumberland Region are appreciative of the collaboration between the local committees and the provincial health authority. He’s looking forward to that continuing.

“We continue to be willing to work with the health authority and we’re looking forward to continuing that co-operation and collaboration,” Scott said. “We’ve had a lot of success working together and we look forward to improving the relationship.”

Kogon said the committees have been busy doing a variety of initiatives including providing welcome baskets to new recruits while each new professional is welcomed personally by the committees. At the regional hospital, units are recognized for their efforts with an espresso machine that rotates among the units in recognition of their work.

The medical staff host parties and social events to assist in retention efforts and increase morale while the regional hospital’s social committee is supported by the three committees to help celebrate Christmas and other seasonal events as well as multiculturalism.

The physician recruitment committee supports site visits by interested doctors while committee members go to national recruitment events. Kogon has attended a national family medicine meeting, the Canadian Psychiatric Association meeting to assist with



Amherst Mayor David Kogon

recruiting psychiatrists to the Cumberland region and has attended the Dal Family Medicine weekend in St. Andrew's, N.B., with Cumberland County being a gold sponsor this past year.

For non-physician positions, gift cards have been given out for Christmas and there have been professional recognition days within each department, while the committees try to stay in touch with local students who are studying in various health-care fields.

The staff lounges at the regional hospital have also received facelifts through the efforts of the Non-Physician Health-Care Recruitment and Retention committee.

In addition, a recruitment and retention website has been created for the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre and new websites are being proposed for the hospitals in Parrsboro, Pugwash and Springhill.

Earlier this year, elected officials in the Cumberland region formed a leadership committee with other partners to discuss health-care issues and provide suggested solutions to the health authority.

Both Amherst and the Municipality of Cumberland are applying to the Office of Health-Care Professionals Recruitment Health and Wellness for funding that could see each community receive up to \$100,000 for future recruitment efforts.

Individuals and organizations have also supported recruitment and retention efforts through the Cumberland Health Care Foundation. Among those to support the initiative was the Community Credit Union, which donated \$5,400 toward physician recruitment, while Taylor Ford of Amherst also made a \$5,000 contribution.

While a health-care crisis was averted through the efforts of the three committees back in 2018, Kogon stressed the importance of continuing to recruit and retain doctors and other critical health-care professionals.

"It's not an acute crisis right now, but we also know we have family physicians in the area and others who are getting older and with an aging population the change in how health-care is provided you sometimes need to have two to 2.5 positions to replace one retiring physician," Kogon said. "It's a constant activity to maintain what we have."

Amherst and the Municipality of Cumberland have also come together to fund a two-year community navigator position with each municipality providing \$50,000 per year. This person will support the municipalities' goal to increase recruitment and retention of physician and health-care professionals to the Cumberland region.

The community navigator will play a crucial role in recruiting and welcoming health-care providers and their families to the area and ensuring that health-care professionals integrate well into the community by providing supports with housing, employment, social and cultural connections.

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