



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF FORT ERIE  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Fort Erie Paving Way for Health Care Services in Rural Communities**

Community health and wellness initiatives have been a part of Town Council's strategic focus for many years. This commitment has made Fort Erie a leader in community-focused health care for rural communities in Ontario.

"When Douglas Memorial Hospital was converted into an Urgent Care Centre in 2008, Town Council began working with local health and wellness providers to ensure its families had continued access to quality care," said Mayor Wayne Redekop. "Over the years, this approach has allowed us to address gaps in care and to find ways to collaborate on health care services with our community partners. Most recently, this collaboration has led to not only an increase in local family physicians but also the introduction of new specialized health care services, which were not previously available in town such as a new walk-in mental health clinic for youth and a memory clinic for our aging community."

Due to the ongoing efforts of Town Council and Staff, the number of residents in Fort Erie without a family physician dropped from 33 per cent in January 2019 to nine per cent in January 2020 according to Ministry of Health data. This decrease can be attributed to hiring a new Community Health Care Services Coordinator; establishing a Community Health Care Services Committee; and, developing a Physician Recruitment, Retention and Medical Education Financial Incentive Guideline. Since 2018, Town Council has invested over \$130,000 in physician recruitment and retention. The investment includes:

- Recruitment incentives for a family physician to practice at Bridges Community Health Centre;
- Nurse practitioner support located in Ridgeway; and,
- Start-up costs and incentive funding for a new family medicine recruit in Ridgeway.

In addition to increasing the number of family physicians, Town Council provided infrastructure and equipment grants to support the current and future health care needs of the community. Over the past two years, Town Council invested approximately \$770,000 in local grants. The grants provided additional funding to support the following projects:

- Construction of a new clinic located in central Fort Erie;
- Construction of a new full-service clinic in Ridgeway that will provide access to three family physicians;

- Construction of a new regional long-term care facility on Garrison Road;
- Acquisition of new ophthalmology surgical equipment;
- Development of a new walk-in mental health clinic for youth at Bridges Community Health Centre; and,
- Infrastructure updates to 238 Bertie Street Family Group Practice including the addition of an accessible washroom.

On March 9, Town Council will be continuing its efforts to support health care services in Fort Erie by meeting with the Honourable Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, to discuss Fort Erie's current health care initiatives; the future of Douglas Memorial Urgent Care Centre; and the Town's \$3 million commitment to the new South Niagara Hospital.