

## Report to Council

**Report Title:** South Bruce Grey Health Centre Update – September 2022

**Prepared By:** Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer

**Department:** Administration

**Date:** September 20, 2022

**Report Number:** CAO2022-31

**File Number:** C11AD

### Attachments:

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### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number CAO2022-31 – South Bruce Grey Health Centre Update – September 2022, prepared by Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer for information purposes.

### Report:

#### Background:

On December 20th, 2021 the South Bruce Grey Health Centre (SBGHC) released an announcement regarding a reduction in hospital services at both the Walkerton and Chesley Hospital sites. This reduction included overnight emergency room closures and the Walkerton Hospital and modified services to the inpatient unit at the Chesley hospital in addition to the existing close overnight emergency services in Chesley. These closures lead to a joint third-party review initiated by Brockton Council. The review was considered by Brockton Council on February 22, 2022 and sent to various parties and the Province.

After recruitment efforts by the SBGHC resulted in a stable staffing compliment Walkerton Hospital resumed 24-hour emergency services on Monday, May 9th, 2022 and Chesley resumed on June 15th, 2022. While services have resumed, staff levels are critically fragile even with the addition of agency nurses. This will continue to result in periodic and extended closures due to lack of RN's and RPN's to cover the emergency department.

#### Analysis:

This report is to provide an update to Council on this important matter based on information received from Michael Barrett, CEO and to provide clarity on questions asked by Council at the August 23<sup>rd</sup>, meeting and a further update provided on September 16<sup>th</sup> to the local Mayor's and CAO's.

The following outlines the matters communicated:

- Recruitment and retention initiatives remain very challenging across the entire Ontario health care system with various local Emergency Department closures across the region.
- Summer has resulted in periodic Emergency Department (ED) closures due to staffing shortages in surrounding communities, even larger hospitals are not immune – they remain open but will operate with reduced staffing levels and/or longer wait times
- One sick call or change to the schedule makes coverage of the Emergency Department difficult and leads to potential closure with little notice
- While agency nurses have been a quality addition and are bringing valued skills using agency nurses is a costly solution and is not a long-term solution. Also affects moral of permanent staff. Changes to support increased wages for nurses is a more long-term solution.
- Current estimates expect that \$1.9 million will be spent on agency nurses. Ontario Health has confirmed they will cover expenses until June 30<sup>th</sup>. No confirmation on coverage of additional expense past July. Various meetings and requests have been made to the Province for support. These requests will be coming from various hospitals across the Province. Support for added funding is a priority.
- SBGHC has been advocating for increase to nurses' wages to assist with recruitment.
- SBGHC is closely connected with health care partners and are meeting regularly with GBHS and Hanover, as well as all hospitals across the region, on long term planning to address staffing shortages and collaborating on efforts to maintain services.
- Support SBGHC can provide to other partners is often limited due to nursing shortages and vice versa
- Physicians from some of SBGHC Emergency Departments do go to Hanover to support them in the evening hours after one of SBGHCs Emergency Departments must close
- The situation around closures is going to continue for a year or more. The messaging around the importance of residents needing to be aware of and checking for closures is a critical factor and new methods to ensure the public is paying attention will be considered.
- Recruitment efforts are ongoing. Longer-term measures related to incentives, local educational programs and International nurses are underway but the benefits will take time to realize.
- Concerns noted with Bill 7 and the transfer of Alternative Level of Care (ALC) patients to Long-Term Care Homes which are also experiencing staff shortages.

Mayor Peabody attended a meeting on behalf of the Municipality of Brockton with Ministry staff for the Minister of Health, Honourable Patty Hajdu at the AMO conference in August. Many of the concerns related Emergency Department Closures, the effects on residents and the costs of using agency nurses and requests for funding were reiterated to the Minister.

This update is provided for information purposes.

### **Strategic Action Plan Checklist:**

What aspect of the Brockton Strategic Action Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision N/A
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Heritage, Culture, and Community N/A

- Recommendations contribute to achieving Quality of Life N/A
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment N/A
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Development N/A
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Municipal Governance N/A

**Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:**

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective?  
N/A

There are no financial implications with this report.

**Reviewed By:**



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

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**Respectfully Submitted by:**



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer