

Acton Angels

Marjorie Bartels of the Acton Angels (left) took part in the group's latest fundraiser on Saturday, June 4. The car wash and charity barbecue at Acton Auto Tech raised money for breast cancer research and the Weekend to End Breast Cancer Walk. Bartels was joined by granddaughter Ashliegh Harding and fellow Acton Angel Tracy Brouwer. Inset: Kathleen Dills

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Physician Recruitment Initiative helped bring 35 new family doctors to Halton

Halton Region recently announced that the Halton Physician Recruitment Initiative has helped to bring 35 family doctors to Halton in the program's first two years. The initiative was designed to address Halton's shortage of family physicians through a comprehensive marketing and promotion strategy.

"Halton Region and our partners have made significant strides in bringing family physicians to our community," said Halton Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline. "It's important to remember that the physician shortage is not unique to Halton, but is something that is being felt across Ontario and across Canada. Our success is indicative of the high quality of life we have to offer physicians, who view Halton as an attractive place to live and work."

According to a report produced by the Halton-Peel District Health Council in 2004, there are a number of trends responsible for the reduction in the supply of family physicians in the province and the country - fewer medical residents choosing family medicine as a career path, smaller practice sizes and a large number of soon-to-be retiring practitioners, are just a few.

"The success of our initiative has truly been as a result of the collaborative effort between the Region and the other members of the Physician Recruitment and Retention Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from the local municipalities of Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville, local physicians and senior area hospital staff," added Savoline. "The program enjoyed real success in 2003 and 2004, and we will continue both our recruitment and our retention efforts."

In addition to the 35 new physicians, the Region helped to recruit eight more to work in Halton on extended "locums", which refers to back-filling existing positions during leaves of absence.

Halton Region's community partners have praised the program for its effectiveness in bringing new physicians to the area:

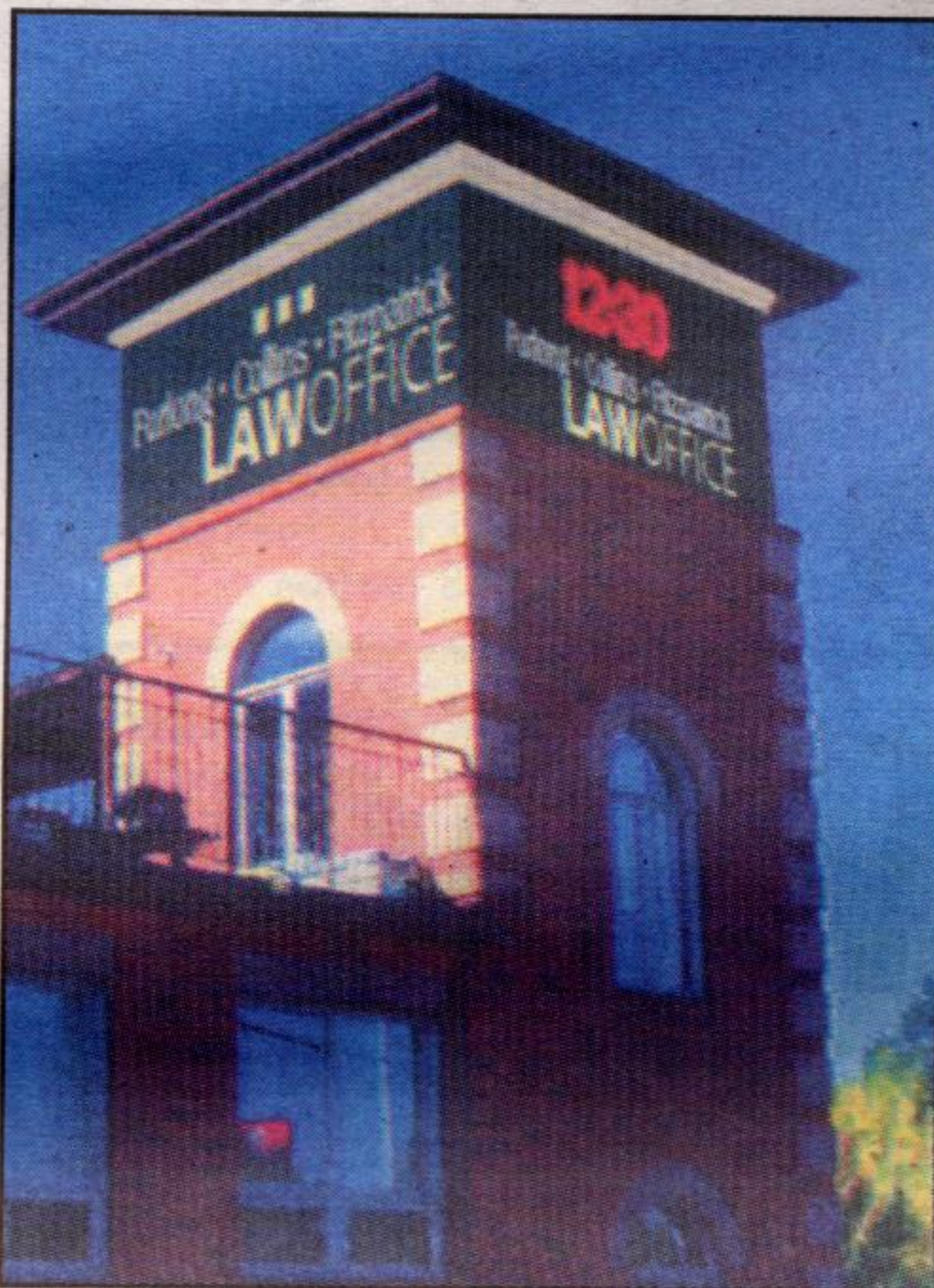
"Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital very much supports the continuance of the Region's Physician Recruitment program - it's been most beneficial to us in identifying and recruiting top-notch physicians that otherwise we would not likely have attracted," said Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital President and Chief Executive Officer Don Scott. "The program assisted us in identifying Burlington as an under-served community, and this has been very helpful, as well."

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has determined that three of Halton's four local municipalities, Burlington, Halton Hills and Milton, are considered under-served on the basis of patient-to-family physician ratio. The designation provides up to \$40,000 in free tuition from the Province for family physicians that agree to practice in under-served communities for two years or more.

"Although Halton Region's Physician Recruitment Program has been very successful to date, there is still plenty of work to be done," said Halton Region's Physician Recruitment Coordinator, Angela Sugden Praysner. "According to the Ministry's formula of one physician to every 1,380 residents, Burlington officially has 23 family physician vacancies, Halton Hills has six and Milton has four. Oakville, while not officially considered under-served, requires 10 additional family physicians."

Since January 2005, an additional four family physicians have located their practices in Halton, and several more are currently considering working in the community.

For more information on Halton Region's Physician Recruitment Program, call 905-825-6000, toll free 1-866-4HALTON or visit www.physicianopportunities.ca or www.region.halton.on.ca.



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