

Despite new doctors, town still has shortage

By RICHARD VIVIAN
The Champion

Despite the arrival of several new doctors in Milton this year, the community is still considered under serviced by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Including new doctors to town and those who've committed to come, Milton is still one doctor short of losing its under-serviced designation.

But once that last spot is filled, Milton will still actually be under-serviced because the current designation is based on a population of 32,000. Milton's unofficial population currently sits at about 38,000 residents.

"Now, when we fill this last spot, we'll go back and re-apply for under-serviced area designation based on the population at the time that we filled the last spot," said Cindy McDonell, chief operating officer at Milton District Hospital. "We'll start the process now so that we don't lose the momentum of recruitment."

Physician service designations are based on a ratio of 1,380 people to one physician — though many doctors see more patients.

Already this year, doctors Sujeewa Foneska, Joseph Yuh, Markus Schatzmann and Glen Hunter have joined the community. Dr. Hunter's return in July marked the re-opening of the obstetrics unit at Milton District Hospital. Previously, Dr. Hunter operated a family practice in town.

Two additional physicians are scheduled to open practices in town this fall.

A further two medical school students have committed to opening practices in town upon graduation, during the summers of 2003 and 2004.

As a designated under-serviced community, Milton is permitted to actively recruit

students at each of the five medical schools in the province. The ministry also offers tuition reimbursement programs for graduates who locate in under-serviced areas.

"It's been an amazing success," Ms McDonell said of the local recruitment efforts.

"In my opinion, it has gone better than we anticipated and I think there's a couple reasons for that. One of them is that we've had a very strong, multi-disciplinary approach. We've had physicians and hospital staff very actively recruiting. But also, we've had key people, volunteers within

the town community that have helped us with this."

Along with doctors Foneska and Yuh, several physicians currently operating in Milton are still accepting patients, including doctors Mustafa Kamouna, Markus Schatzmann and Michael Gilbert.

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