

Staff Report

Report To: City Council
Report From: Phil Eagleson, Fire Chief
Meeting Date: September 14, 2026
Report Code: CR-26-087
Subject: Memorandum of Understanding – Housing for Medical Students (Rural Ontario Medical Program)

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-26-087 respecting an amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding for housing for medical students, City Council directs staff to bring forward a by-law to authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute the amended Memorandum of Understanding with the County of Grey and the Rural Ontario Medical Program.

Highlights:

- An extension is required to the Memorandum of Understanding with the Rural Ontario Medical Program (ROMP) and the County of Grey to support accommodations for medical students and doctors in the City.

Vision 2050 - Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Fostering Mutually Beneficial & Respectful Relationships - Establishing, reconciling, and continually nurturing relationships that result in mutual benefit, trust and shared understanding.

Previous Report/Authority:

[CR-24-146 - Memorandum of Understanding - House Rental for Medical Students](#)

Background:

Access to suitable residential accommodations is an important component of attracting medical learners to Owen Sound and the broader Grey-Bruce region. Many residents in Grey and Bruce Counties do not have access to a family physician. At the same time, Ontario faces significant physician recruitment and retention pressures, with rural and smaller urban communities competing with jurisdictions across the province for a limited number of new physicians.

Medical learner placements are an important part of the local physician recruitment pipeline. Evidence and local experience indicate that medical students and residents who complete positive clinical placements, establish professional relationships, and become connected to the community are more likely to establish their practices locally following graduation. Research referenced by the National Society for Rural Physicians of Canada and the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario has found that more than 70 per cent of learners participating in rural family medicine programs remain in the local area when they develop strong community connections. ROMP has advised that the Owen Sound-area retention rate for learners who remain or return to practise locally is currently 93 per cent.

Brightshores Health System, as the regional Tier 1 hospital serving Grey-Bruce, is a key clinical training location for medical residents. However, the availability of short-term, furnished accommodation has limited the region's ability to accept all available learner placements. Every missed placement represents a lost opportunity to introduce a future physician to the community and local health-care system.

To address this barrier, a property in Owen Sound was secured to accommodate up to four medical residents completing placements through the ROMP. ROMP coordinates core and elective medical rotations across Ontario and assists communities in facilitating rural clinical training opportunities.

Over the past 24 months, 49 different doctors or future doctors have been housed in this property, and their stays have ranged from 4 weeks to 14 weeks.

Recently, Brightshores Health System has celebrated the hiring of 14 new doctors ([see news release](#)). This is wonderful news for primary healthcare in the region. Many of the new doctors stayed in the area and worked part-time

before making the decision to establish their careers here. If this partnership is extended, the hope is that more future physicians can have access to the accommodations and enjoy Owen Sound and the surrounding area.

This summer, the Province announced the opening of a new medical school focusing on family medicine ([see news release](#)). In future years, these medical learners are expected to be required to complete a rural rotation as part of their training. This presents an opportunity to welcome future doctors to the City, provided suitable accommodations are available to host them.

Analysis and Options:

Under the original arrangement, Grey County held the lease for the accommodation and administered monthly rent payments. Provincial learner-accommodation funding provided through ROMP covered the lease costs, with Grey County invoicing ROMP and using the received funds to pay the landlord. The agreement was established for a two-year term ending August 31, 2026.

As that term has now concluded, an amending agreement is required to continue the accommodation arrangement and avoid an interruption to resident placements in Owen Sound. The amending agreement establishes the framework for the participating organizations to continue supporting housing for medical residents, maintain clear administrative and financial responsibilities, and preserve a critical recruitment tool for the Grey-Bruce healthcare system.

Resource Alignment:

Financial Resources

The cost of the internet service provided by the City is approximately \$700 per year. The additional cost of staff time to remove snow and conduct inspections of the rental dwelling are minimal and are included in the operating budget.

Human Resources

N/A.

Time and Scheduling

N/A.

Technology and Infrastructure

N/A.

Climate and Environmental Impacts:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Communication and Engagement:

This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the meeting.

Report Developed in Consultation With:

County of Grey staff

Rural Ontario Medical Program staff

Attachments:

None.

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Phil Eagleson, Fire Chief at peagleson@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 2244.