

If you require this information in an alternate format, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at accessibility@northumberland.ca or 1-800-354-7050 ext. 2327



Report 2025-083

Report Title: Port Hope Walk-in Clinic Research Study
– Phase 2 Qualitative Data

Committee Name: Community Health

Committee Meeting Date: May 6, 2025

Prepared by: Glenn Dees
Director Health and Human Services
Community and Social Services

Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: May 21, 2025

Strategic Plan Priorities: ☒ Innovate for Service Excellence
☒ Ignite Economic Opportunity
☒ Foster a Thriving Community
☒ Propel Sustainable Growth
☒ Champion a Vibrant Future

Information Report

“That the Community Health Committee receive Report 2025-083 ‘Port Hope Walk-in Clinic Research Study – Phase 2 Qualitative Data’ for information; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council receive this report for information.”

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide qualitative data analysis to County Council from phase 2 of a research study conducted by Loyalist College on services provided by the Port Hope Walk-in Clinic.

Background

Prior to Covid, a Port Hope Walk-in Clinic was operational at 99 Toronto Road. The Clinic had operated for approximately 17 years on Ontario Street prior to relocating to Toronto Road in 2017. With the onset of Covid reducing patient visits and limited resourcing for doctors experiencing expanded practices and patient loads coupled with retirements, the Clinic was closed in 2020.

Recognizing the extent and growing number of individuals unrostered with physicians, the County Deputy Warden and Mayor of Port Hope, Olena Hankivsky, and Port Hope Councillor, Les Andrews had actively been pursuing options to reinstate the Clinic in collaboration with community partners.

At the County Council meeting of December 13, 2023, Council adopted the recommendation from the Community Health Committee meeting of November 27, 2023, being that County Council express support for the Port Hope Walk-in Clinic, given the 4,000 unrostered patients in Northumberland County and the ongoing challenges of Physician recruitment.

At the Council meeting of January 24, 2024, Council directed staff to investigate the feasibility of a one-year pilot to re-open the Clinic and to execute applicable agreements as warranted to operate the Clinic for a period of up to one year to the extent non-levy financing can be secured.

Correspondence from the Municipality of Port Hope was received at the Community Health Committee meeting on April 2, 2024 in the form of a Port Hope Council Resolution dated March 5, 2024 supporting and endorsing the re-opening of the Port Hope Walk-in Medical Clinic.

The desire to reestablish the Clinic is driven primarily by a need for accommodating individuals who are not rostered with a physician. The lack of accessible family medicine across Northumberland County has led to increased health risks for our residents due to delayed diagnosis and treatment. Many residents are currently without a primary care physician, adding strain on our healthcare system. With limited access to family physicians many are frequenting hospital emergency units or attending urgent care clinics in neighbouring jurisdictions such as Belleville and Bowmanville. Wait times for patients are extensive when visiting emergency units for primary care type services. With an increased burden on capacity at hospital emergency units this has an impact on County Paramedic Services from extended ambulance offload delays. This has a direct correlation to extending Paramedic response times and meeting Paramedic service level standards.

The inability for residents to access primary care for preventative treatments ultimately puts increased burden on the medical system and the ultimate health and wellbeing of the broader community. This is contrary to an effective continuum of health care allowing for an integrated system of care at all levels. In many respects delivery of the Northumberland Paramedics' Community Paramedicine Program is aligned and complimentary to services that would be provided by the Clinic within the continuum of health care. Preventative care programs provided by the paramedicine program support vulnerable community members and seniors in the community, while also helping to manage the high demand for emergency services, hospitals and ultimately clinics.

Ensuring access to family physicians is critical towards driving economic expansion within the County. The inability to have sufficient access to physicians as the community continues to grow is a clear detriment to effective workforce attraction and economic stimulation within Northumberland.

The location for the Clinic is at the same location and space on Toronto Road that the previous clinic last operated from (2017-2020). Subsequent to this it was used as a doctor's office/practice. The space was primarily unaltered and, therefore, there were minimal leasehold type improvements required. There are three exam rooms, a receptionist office, waiting room, and storage room. Further, much of the equipment and furnishings were still intact and useable.

The Clinic is doctor driven and patient visits are paid for by the Province of Ontario (OHIP).

In many aspects, the ability to provide a clinic for physicians to practice out of within the community is a benefit towards overall physician recruitment within Northumberland towards alleviating pressure on an overburdened health care system. Access to more physicians is critical for rostering County residents with family physicians for primary care services.

Although not a core service of the County, the Clinic is aligned with some services that the County provides and is integral to the health care continuum. The ability to reestablish the Clinic in an expeditious fashion does provide benefits to the County and all Northumberland residents. Transition of the service to a community partner will be pursued during the initial first year pilot.

More family doctors are working in groups through family health organizations (FHO's) in which a team of doctors and allied health professionals are available to their rostered patients including after-hours and weekend care. This should be the first source of seeking primary care for a rostered patient. In some instances, primary care physicians may have the ability to de-roster a patient particularly if visits to walk-in clinics are routine in nature. Ensuring visits are maintained through the primary physician or the FHO allows for continuity of care versus receiving care from a walk-in clinic in which medical records become fragmented with records and test results that are not centralized and necessarily shared.

While it may be convenient to see a walk-in doctor based on location or time of day, patients visiting the Clinic who are rostered are typically encouraged to see their own doctor for their recurring, acute and chronic needs.

Consultations

Prior to authorization from Council for staff to investigate the feasibility of re-opening the Clinic, staff met with the Northumberland County Deputy Warden Olena Hankivsky and Port Hope Councillor Les Andrews. They provided insight into the proposal to re-open the Clinic, actions already undertaken towards facilitating this and assistance being requested of the County.

Subsequent to Council's direction to pursue the re-opening of the Clinic, staff have engaged in numerous consultations with the following stakeholders and partners:

- Deputy Warden Olena Hankivsky
- Port Hope Councillor Les Andrews
- Port Hope and District Health Care Foundation
- Community Health Centre of Northumberland
- Loyalist College
- Northumberland Hills Hospital
- Landlord of 99 Toronto Road, Port Hope
- Software Provider for Electronic Medical Records System
- External Legal Services
- Insurance Provider
- Previous Walk-in Clinic Staff
- Bowmanville Urgent Care Clinic
- County services for Legal, IT and administrative logistical supports

Consultations for the recruitment of potential physicians leading up to the opening of the Clinic had been facilitated by the Deputy Warden and these efforts continue.

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

Risks have been assessed and reviewed by the County’s Municipal Solicitor in conjunction with an external law firm specializing in the health care sector as it pertains to the drafting of a Physicians Agreement and a Service Level Agreement with Community Health Centre Northumberland (CHCN) for the provision of nursing services at the Clinic.

Discussion / Options

The Clinic opened with a soft launch on August 17, 2025. Operating hours to the extent of availability of physicians and nurses are typically:

- Wednesdays and Fridays: 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- Saturdays and Sundays: 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The opening of the Clinic was realized through various community collaborations and formal partnerships. Funding was provided via contributions from various sources towards the one-year pilot as committed to date is outlined below:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| • Port Hope and District Health Care Foundation | \$75,000 |
| • Port Hope Rotary | \$35,000 |
| • Town of Cobourg | \$15,000 |
| • Loyalist College | \$10,000 |

Further to this, an additional \$187,500 was diverted by Council from the County 2025 budget towards financing the clinic for the continuation of operations.

A formal partnership was developed with the Community Health Centre of Northumberland (CHCN) for assisting with the opening and operations of the Clinic. The CHCN contributes significant experience and expertise in primary care service delivery, assisting with Clinic nursing services, patient information technology and implementation support during the pilot. The CHCN is colocated in the same building with the Port Hope Walk-in Clinic.

Through a formal activation working group comprised of County and CHCN staff, the support provided by the CHCN was integral to the opening of the Clinic for various activation tasks. There were numerous requirements for activation with the most challenging and time consuming being the implementation, configuration and training for a new stand-alone Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system housed solely on a fully independent network. Initially, the CHCN investigated the feasibility of sharing their instance of TELUSHealth PS Suite EMR in order to realize cost savings and for ease of set-up. Due to the complexity of data collection, privacy legislation, and ‘sunsetting’ phase of the current EMR solution it was determined that this was not possible. Through conversations with TELUSHealth, the procurement of their new EMR solution (Collaborative Health Record (CHR)) was negotiated at a 25% discount.

More recently, the County and CHCN collaborated with Loyalist College for the collection of data from the Clinic under a research project for reporting on key metrics towards evidence-based decision making for moving forward post-pilot period by measuring effectiveness and outcomes. The partnership was such that nursing students enrolled in the Qualitative & Quantitative Data Analysis course in the Nursing – Honours Bachelor of Science Program utilized non-identifiable

data from the Clinics EMR system for facilitating quantitative analysis as phase 1 of the research project. Phase 1 was presented to the Community Health Committee on March 4, 2025. Phase 2 findings are highlighted in the 'Applied Research Project Report Part 2 Patient Survey' (attached). This report incorporates qualitative data through thematic analysis to interpret patient survey data and derive meaningful insights.

The collaboration with Loyalist College for this project is one component of a broader partnership with the County. Initiatives currently underway with Loyalist College include the establishment of a PSW Living Classroom to be set up at the Golden Plough Lodge and nursing / PSW recruitment initiatives for staffing needs for the Golden Plough Lodge redevelopment project.

The Clinic continues to operate approaching the eight-month mark of the one-year pilot. The extent the Clinic is open towards contemplated hours of operation is fully dependent on physician availability and to a lesser extent nursing resources. Currently, there is a roster of seven physicians; however, availability can be limited. Physician recruitment initiatives continue, primarily driven by the Deputy Warden inclusive of a recent professional development event that included showcasing the Clinic resulting in a physician joining the clinic.

Financial Impact

There is no direct cost associated with the Loyalist College Research Study to the County; however, there is staff time involved in supporting the activities and with on-site visits with students and faculty at Loyalist College.

Member Municipality Impacts

All member municipalities benefit from the re-opening of the Port Hope Walk-in Clinic.

The ability to provide primary type care services alleviates pressure on an overburdened health care system.

The need to expand access to physicians is critical towards overall economic growth and providing for a sustainable workforce within all of Northumberland County.

Conclusion / Outcomes

That Council receives this report and the attached Loyalist College report for information.

Staff will provide further updates on the Clinic. Staff are engaging with Loyalist College for the possibility of an update under this research project with another cohort of students on both quantitative and qualitative data that would be brought forward to Council upon completion. This will allow for trend analysis and informed decision making by Council on clinic operations.

Attachments

1. Report 2025-083 ATTACH 1 'Port Hope Walk-in Clinic, Applied Research Project Report Part 2 Patient Survey (Loyalist College)'