

MEMRAMCOOK-TANTRAMAR COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

Community Update – 15 September 2023 Rural Health Action Group

Progress is continuing as the Rural Health Action Group (RHAG) works in collaboration with the Horizon Health Network to restore and improve health services in our region. RHAG is overseen by representatives from the Municipalities of Tantramar and Strait Shores; Sackville Memorial Hospital Foundation and Auxiliary; Mount Allison University and Student Union; and several local retired healthcare professionals. The RHAG is also supported through the Memramcook-Tantramar Community Task Force. The RHAG meets monthly, and committee work continues in between meetings.

Physician Recruitment – this is key to reaching the next stage of our community goals. We are reaching out to new physicians, developing new marketing resources, and establishing more local involvement in recruitment; thanks to the Town of Tantramar and Mount Allison University for resourcing a recent effort at a physicians' conference.

Primary Healthcare – we meet regularly with physicians and senior Horizon staff to establish a local medical clinic that fits local needs, and begins to fill the gaps due to physician departures. Phase One of this began in early September, when some higher-risk patients of Drs. Wall and Johnston were transferred to a new 3-day-a-week interim primary care service at the local medical centre. We expect this clinic to grow, so that all local patients eventually have a 'medical home', with access to a wide variety of healthcare services locally. We also expect this new type of primary care clinic to be more attractive for new physicians.

Emergency/Urgent Care services – we understand that shortages of physicians are the main issue here, and so improved physician recruitment (see above) is required.

Monitoring Beal University and hospital services – as this new function is allocated space at the Sackville Memorial Hospital and some medical services are being shifted, we are providing strong local feedback and recommendations.

Mental Health Services – these have moved out of the Sackville Memorial Hospital, and are now located downtown, next to Soper's Physiotherapy clinic.

Role of Firefighters in 911 calls - we are collaborating with other players to ensure that policies and processes are changed so that our local trained firefighters can be called for service.

Ambulance services – we met with Medavie and Ambulance New Brunswick, and conveyed our concerns about response times and other services. We also learned that other Atlantic provinces have huge incentives to attract and train paramedics and we don't, so we cannot fill our own vacancies. Letters are being written to the Department of Health with our recommendations.

John Higham and Pat Estabrooks
co-chairs, Rural Health Action Group