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## Funding for a self-standing medical office

Orphaned patients will have new opportunity for health care services in Eganville

By Debbi Christinck  
Staff Writer

**Eganville** -- Funding for a self-standing medical office in the village has brought a new wave of optimism to the community as orphaned patients can now find medical care close to home.

The Champlain Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) has provided base funding of almost \$300,000 annually for primary care services in Eganville which will see a nurse practitioner working in the community three days a week.

"We need this primary care access," Carole Devine-Conway, who chaired the local health care team, said. "There are people looking for care from new people moving to the community to people still orphaned by the retirement of Dr. (Brian) Good, to people who have to drive a long way for primary care."

The funding announcement last week was the result of a lot of hard work from the local community which began two years ago when she approached the Eganville and Area Community Development Group (EACDG) with a push for a designated health care committee. Working locally to find partnerships and a working plan, the group was able to work with the Whitewater Bromley Community Centre, which is under the umbrella of Lanark Renfrew Health and Community Services.

"Whitewater helped us write a proposal and we were successful in getting funding for Eganville," she said.

The funding is for a nurse practitioner working three days in Eganville and one day in Cobden, as well as a nurse and medical secretary.

"This is base funding, so we will receive it every year," she said.

This is also just the beginning, she feels, as the committee is committed to continue to work to ensure local primary health care needs are met.

"This is just a starting step," she said. "It opens the door to increase primary access."

Thanking the committee for their efforts, she said in the coming weeks hiring will take place and patients will be invited to roster with the Eganville clinic. Ms. Devine-Conway explained patients can roster

directly with this nurse practitioner. Since the nurse practitioner will work in conjunction with Whitewater, that person could also consult with a doctor there if there is an issue which might be outside their scope. This type of partnership is also bringing the communities together to find a solution that works so patients don't have to drive long distances for primary care access.

As these changes begin to happen, Ms. Devine-Conway said she wanted to especially thank Dr. Michael Petrini for his dedicated service to the community for 35 years.

"He has been a stalwart for this community," she said.

Dr. Petrini has not been taking new patients and the retirement of Dr. Good about a decade ago left many having to drive an hour or more to

see a doctor.

"And we know there is a tsunami coming," Ms. Devine-Conway said. "We have an aging population and there is an increased hardship for many people without public transportation to travel long distances for primary care."

Expressing her thanks as well to local Nurse Practitioner Kathy O'Connor, who works in Eganville through the

West Champlain Health Team but can only accept patients rostered there, Ms. Devine-Conway said all these services are needed in the community for the wide catchment area.

Noting this new funding could not have been possible without the support of Whitewater, she especially thanked John Jordan of the parent organization and Brenda Ross Powers at Whitewater for working col-

laboratively with the group, as well as the Champlain LHIN.

She also expressed thanks to John Yakabuski, MPP (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke) for his support and understanding of how important this issue is for the health and welfare of the community.

She said the committee worked closely with Mr. Yakabuski.

"He listened to our concerns and he continues to advocate for us in Toronto and we very much appreciate his ongoing support," she said.

As the committee celebrates this good news, they aren't planning on going anywhere soon, she added.

"Our committee has more work to do but this is an incredibly important foundation," she said.

### Boost To Municipality

"This is just fantastic news," Bonnechere Valley Mayor Jennifer Murphy said. "After 30 days of flooding and bad news, this is such a welcome announcement. I can't believe after all the meetings and work, it was really good news."

Thanking the hard work of Ms. Devine-Conway, as well as her fellow committee members Merv Buckwald, Preston O'Grady, Zig Mintha, Alison Collins and Katie Patterson, the mayor said it was worth the efforts.

"Everyone has done their part to make this happen," she said.

Mayor Murphy, who was also on the committee, said this is important for the future of Eganville, Bonnechere Valley and the surrounding area.

"To have a nurse practitioner in Eganville where patients can be rostered is huge," she said. "A nurse practitioner has a large scope of work they can do, so this is fantastic."

Where exactly the office will open is still unknown, but there will be a location found, she promised.

"We will find a place for them, no matter what," she said.

Mayor Murphy said this should help encourage people to move to the area.

"When you look at a community, you look at the school, library, recreation and health services," she said. "One thing we heard from our community development group was health care was a priority."



Taking on the champ!

It took more than strong political will for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MPP John Yakabuski to overcome the strength and experience of former Canadian Strongman Champion Hugo Girard. Mr. Girard was part of the BMR Group who were on hand during an open house on Saturday that showcased the new owners of the Griffith Building Supply store. The day-long event attracted hundreds of people and Mr. Yakabuski, who is also the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, said it was a thrill to challenge the former World and Canadian champion who ultimately won the match. Full coverage of the opening on page A11.

## Province investing \$71 million in broadband improvements

By Gerald Tracey  
News Editor

**Pembroke** -- Renfrew County will be a major benefactor from an announcement Friday the province is investing \$71 million towards improving mobile broadband and curing cellular dead zones in Eastern Ontario.

Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MPP John Yakabuski, who is also Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, was ecstatic with the news as was Renfrew County Warden Jennifer Murphy.

With the announcement, Ontario is committing \$71 million to the Eastern Ontario Regional Network's (EORN) project to virtually eliminate coverage gaps in the region. The public-private initiative requires

contributions from the federal government as well as private sector and municipal partners. Total value of the project is estimated at \$213 million.

"It is essential that proper infrastructure is in place to support public safety across the province, especially in my riding where cellular coverage is often lacking," Mr. Yakabuski said. "Our government is taking action to improve connectivity so that people can feel confident and safe, at home and on the road."

About 10 per cent of rural Eastern Ontario has no mobile broadband connection, leading to dropped calls, missed emergency services and a lack of opportunity.

Mr. Yakabuski described Friday's announcement as absolutely fantastic and especially since Premier

Doug Ford announced at a rally in Renfrew on May 9 last year, prior to the provincial election, that if elected his party would fund its share of the project.

Mr. Yakabuski said improved services are absolutely critical for people who live in rural areas.

The investment will be life-changing for every small and home-based business that doesn't have access to good internet or cell services, he said, adding it will allow them to be much more competitive in the world of business.

"This is wonderful news that it will be completed over the next few years," he said.

Warden Murphy, who is also mayor of Bonnechere Valley Township, described the announcement as

"unbelievable".

"After this month, I needed some wins," she said, referring to the flooding that has affected so many people in Renfrew County.

"It's fantastic news, such welcome news for all of us who have worked on it for so long," she said.

Warden Murphy said the project will be a great investment for Renfrew County and help to open up many new opportunities.

To date, the federal government has not committed to its share of the funding, but it is expected to be forthcoming.

Ontario's Minister of Infrastructure, Monte McNaughton, said investing in rural broadband infrastructure is critical for communities to engage in the growing digital economy, create

jobs and enjoy economic growth.

Currently, there are significant gaps in both the reach and capacity of mobile broadband networks across areas of rural Eastern Ontario. About 40 per cent of the area does not have access to high-definition services that allows streaming HD video; 20 per cent of the area does not have access to standard definition video, typical mobile app use and video app calling, and 10 per cent has no voice call service.

All members of the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus and most municipalities within the Eastern Ontario Mayor's Caucus have committed to contributing to the \$10 million municipal share. Mobile carriers, who will be selected through a competitive bidding process, are expected to

provide the balance of the funding.

Rural area gaps are the result of market failure because rural areas don't generate enough revenue for mobile carriers to build adequate services. The Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission recently designated both mobile and fixed broadband as basic services for all Canadians. The public-private partnership will reduce carriers' infrastructure costs, creating a stronger business case to improve services and meet the CRTC's basic service goals.

Many believe the improvements could unlock significant economic potential over 10 years, including more than 3,000 full-time job equivalents and more than \$420 million in private sector business revenues.

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