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Group presses to open community health centre for Peterborough

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A group proposing a new community health centre for Peterborough held an information session Thursday at the Peterborough Lions Community Centre to urge the provincial government to fund the proposal.

The proposed centre would serve about 6,000 marginalized and patients without family doctors in the community.

Ontario has 101 community health centres, but Peterborough has never had one despite its growing marginalized population, said Dr. Jim Shipley, a retired physician and director of the group.

“The only health care model the provincial government should be funding right now, to benefit the most people in Peterborough, is a community health centre,” Shipley said.

The local coalition has been campaigning for such as facility for Peterborough since the fall, he said, but has run into a funding barrier with the upfront cost of the proposed clinic.

“PtboCHC is asking for \$8.2 million to do the best job that we could. So, that’s a

big chunk of \$30 million the provincial government has said they’re going to spend each year, for two years,” he said. “That \$30 million across the province is mostly regarded as woefully inadequate.”

Despite the upfront cost, community health centres end up saving the government money in the long run, he said, and they reduce strain on emergency departments.

“You’re making a one stop hub for people to get comprehensive care. So, there’s upfront money, but the day doors open it starts saving the system money,” Shipley said. “And it helps with all those incredible backlogs that are just going to get worse.”

A Peterborough community health centre would particularly benefit marginalized communities, he said.

The Peterborough Ontario Health Team region has one of the highest levels of marginalization in the province, according to a press release from the Alliance for Healthier Communities, along with high levels of dependency, material deprivation and residential instability.

“The marginalized population in Peterborough, is significantly disproportionate to what it should be for a city our size, and they’re suffering hugely,” Shipley said. “The only fix for them is a CHC. There isn’t another model that would work.”

The closest CHC to Peterborough is currently in Lindsay, which makes it difficult for the elderly and those with financial or mental health issues to reach, he said.

“Not only would someone from Peterborough need to get rostered there, but for a lot of our marginalized people, the thought of finding a ride to a CHC that far away is impossible,” he said.

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From left, Dr. Dawn Lavell Harvard, director at the First Peoples House of Learning at Trent University and vice-chair of the Peterborough Community Health Centre, retired physician Dr. Jim Shipley, director of the Peterborough CHC, family physician Dr. Jaclyn Vanek and Michelle Carr, a patient for seven years at the Port Hope CHC, attend a meeting calling on the Ontario government to fund a community health centre held at the Peterborough Lions Community Centre on Thursday, May 25, 2023 in Peterborough, Ont. From left, Dr. Dawn Lavell Harvard, director at the First Peoples House of Learning at Trent University and vice-chair of the Peterborough Community Health Centre, retired physician Dr. Jim Shipley, director of the Peterborough CHC, family physician Dr. Jaclyn Vanek and Michelle Carr, a patient for seven years at the Port Hope CHC, attend a meeting calling on the Ontario government to fund a community health centre held at the Peterborough Lions Community Centre on Thursday, May 25, 2023 in Peterborough, Ont. From left, Dr. Dawn Lavell Harvard, director at the First Peoples House of Learning at Trent University and vice-chair of the Peterborough Community Health Centre, retired physician Dr. Jim Shipley, director of the Peterborough CHC, family physician Dr. Jaclyn Vanek and Michelle Carr, a patient for seven years at the Port Hope CHC, attend a meeting calling on the Ontario government to fund a community health centre held at the Peterborough Lions Community Centre on Thursday, May 25, 2023 in Peterborough, Ont. From left, Dr. Dawn Lavell Harvard, director at the First Peoples House of Learning at Trent University and vice-chair of the Peterborough Community Health Centre, retired physician Dr. Jim Shipley, director of the Peterborough CHC, family physician Dr. Jaclyn Vanek and Michelle Carr, a patient for seven years at the Port Hope CHC, attend a meeting calling on the Ontario government to fund a community health centre held at the Peterborough Lions Community Centre on Thursday, May 25, 2023 in Peterborough, Ont. From left, Dr. Dawn Lavell Harvard, director at the First Peoples House of Learning at Trent University and vice-chair of the Peterborough Community Health Centre, retired physician Dr. Jim Shipley, director of the Peterborough CHC, family physician Dr. Jaclyn Vanek and Michelle Carr, a patient for seven years at the Port Hope CHC, attend a meeting calling on the Ontario government to fund a community health centre held at the Peterborough Lions Community Centre on Thursday, May 25, 2023 in Peterborough, Ont.