

# A WELLNESS CENTRE IN COBOCONK: FEASIBILITY REPORT

**Prepared by:**

**THE COBOCONK, NORLAND & AREA  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

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The exploration of the Wellness Centre project has resulted in the formation of many community partners and much community support. The Chamber is excited to present this Feasibility Report to City Council and to the community.

## Executive Summary

The City of Kawartha Lakes consists of a combination of small rural & urban communities that represent one of the largest cities in Canada (by land mass). The City is a large part of the Haliburton – Kawartha Lakes – Brock provincial and federal ridings and has a diverse economy that relies on agriculture and tourism as its main economic drivers. The northern half of the City is served by Ross Memorial Hospital in Lindsay with overflow going to Haliburton Health Services in Minden.

Coboconk-Norland is the largest of the City of Kawartha Lakes communities in the north end of the City. It is located almost exactly half-way between the hospitals in Lindsay and Minden, which represents an approximately 30-minute drive to either facility. Winter weather can increase the travel time to these hospitals substantially.

The health care service offerings in the northern part of the City was undergoing considerable upheaval even before COVID-19, and now the situation has been further exacerbated by the pandemic. In 2016, the Coboconk Medical Centre was condemned and the building subsequently demolished with only a construction trailer acting as the office for the single practicing family doctor in the area. The doctor that was located Kirkfield has now relocated outside of the area, and as a result, the doctor in Coboconk is the only one practicing in the area. Many residents do not have access to a family doctor at this time, and with a larger than the provincial average population of seniors, this lack of access to health care is compounded.

The population can be described as a core of year-round residents, with a large influx of seasonal residents. This is a low-income area, with over 50% of the population over 50 years of age. All of these residents have a common need for good quality, year-round health care services within an easily accessible distance of their homes.

The current pandemic is having far-reaching impacts, one of which is a shift in thinking for many of the seniors in the area. Many ‘snowbirds’ are adjusting to a new reality and re-thinking their annual plans for winter. For many, the danger and uncertainty around travel means maintaining full-time residence in the area. Another shift that is taking shape is more people are starting to seek residence in more rural small-town settings rather than the more populous urban areas. It has become apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic that a great many jobs can be done remotely, away from the traditional office environment. Both of these shifts will further impact the demand for health care.

If the municipality is to embrace these new realities, our health care services infrastructure must be able to provide the services that current and future residents require and desire.

Through a recent research study, the Coboconk, Norland & Area Chamber of Commerce has shown a documented gap in health care services for residents. The research shows that the provision of family health services - in the form of Family Doctors, Nurse Practitioners, Lab Services, Dentist, Chiropractor, Physiotherapy, Community Health Services and a pharmacy - is needed to service the northern part of the City of Kawartha Lakes and the southern portion of the Haliburton Highlands.

As a result of immediate market requirements and emerging conditions, the Coboconk, Norland & Area Chamber of Commerce is spearheading the construction of a “Wellness Centre” in the central location of Coboconk. The location of the proposed Centre is on city-owned land where the historic Train Station now sits. The historic building has been integrated into the expansion plans for the Wellness Centre

design celebrating the local history. A key advantage to this site is the potential for future expansion for a Retirement Hub to provide retirement & assisted living facilities to serve the aging residents of our communities going forward.

There is no question that the creation of a Wellness Centre in Coboconk will spur further economic growth in the City of Kawartha Lakes. The Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative (responsible for the recruitment and retention of doctors in the area - estimates approximately \$500,000 - \$1,000,000 in economic development per year per physician in a community. That does not take into account the quick economic surge that will result in the construction of the Wellness Centre, and the allied health professionals that will be a part of the project long-term. Quality health care is a foundational piece of an economic growth plan for the area.

When the initial concept was presented to City Council, they tasked the Chamber with undertaking a Feasibility Study in partnership with City staff and the following report satisfies that mandate.

The following Feasibility Study presents the background, research, and conclusions. In brief:

- There is a demonstrated gap in care and there is a need for a Wellness Centre to serve the current and future population. The closest Emergency Departments usage statistics show that many are using emergency services as a substitute for primary care. We need to improve local access to health care services as soon as possible so emergency department resources are available for emergencies, especially if we are faced by a pandemic situation again in the future.
- Land acquisition represents a substantial cost to any project. The Legion Park parcel is owned by the City of Kawartha Lakes and is currently available to be improved for highest and best use. Services such as access, sewage disposal & hydro are readily available to this site.
- The refurbishment of the historic Train Station Building will give new purpose and profile to one of the main historic buildings in the community and will celebrate the history and heritage of this area of the province.
- With several studies and architectural drawings completed as part of the Feasibility Study, the construction of the Wellness Centre can be ready to commence within a short period of time. This project will serve as a lever to economic recovery for the area by providing much-needed jobs at a crucial time for this hard-hit region of the province.
- The overall preliminary budget is approximately \$6 million, subject to a more fulsome cost analysis and value-engineering review, which we expect will provide savings and a reduction in project cost.
- The Community is behind this project and, subject to funding from all three levels of government, is willing to commit to raising approximately \$1 million.

In summary, the Wellness Centre project is an opportunity for all levels of government to collaborate to bring much-needed services together in one place, to help attract new family doctors to the area, and to be a lever for new and critical economic growth. The Chamber and local community are committed to providing the energy required and the information needed to all potential partners in order to make the Wellness Centre a reality. The Wellness Centre is a valuable community initiative.

## Introduction

The communities of Coboconk and Norland are working to enhance medical and wellness services for the residents and visitors of the northern areas of the Kawartha Lakes. Structural issues with the former Coboconk Medical Centre building required the re-location of the present family physician into a portable building temporarily. The Coboconk, Norland & Area Chamber of Commerce spearheaded an initiative to create an opportunity for a new Wellness Centre to address the needs of the under-served northern communities of the Kawartha Lakes. By creating a Wellness Centre in Coboconk, two issues identified by the City are solved: a permanent facility will provide medical services, replacing the portable unit to which Council is currently committed; and an under-utilized City building is finding a purpose.

The objectives of this feasibility study were to determine:

- Health service gaps of our community;
- If and/or how a wellness centre offering primary care and allied professional care could address service gaps and increase the efficiency of the current system;
- A model for a wellness centre based on perceived gaps and provincial trends in care;
- Potential services and service delivery participants' interest in participating in the wellness centre health services delivery model and;
- The feasibility of a wellness centre, including the physical design of the facility, construction costs and the operating costs.

## Vision of the Wellness Centre

To provide quality medical and wellness services to the residents and visitors of the City of Kawartha Lakes, Ward One by establishing a permanent wellness centre in the historic Coboconk Train Station. The Wellness Centre will provide a hub for community health that will bring increased access to conventional medicine and allied health care services, as well as community organizations in an underserved geographic area.

By providing space for more primary care physicians and nurse practitioners, much needed after-hours care, mental health supports, blood lab, dental services, home and community care services, pre & post-operative care, chiropractic and physiotherapy services, the needs of people in this area will be better served and will help to alleviate the strain on current health care services offered in Lindsay and Minden. The number of people in this area without a local family doctor is significantly higher than the provincial average, and these residents must drive a minimum of 30 minutes to the nearest hospital and/or after-hours care clinic.

The case for bringing these services to the area from the human perspective is clear and many would argue equitable access to health care is our duty. There is additional data that clearly shows that the economic benefit of constructing a building to bring these services together in Coboconk will result in:

1. More, and better quality, year-round jobs;
2. More seniors staying in our communities longer, where they have the emotional support of their friends and family;
3. Attraction of more seasonal residents who then become permanent residents as they recognize their needs will be served in this community;
4. Attraction of families and professionals to re-locate to the area as they also recognize their needs will be served;

5. Greater prosperity for local businesses and;
6. Attraction of more investment to the area to help build the community for years to come.

Based on 3 community consultations (see page 5) and a Health Needs Assessment survey (Appendix A), the following table provides a summary of the proposed services to be housed in the Wellness Centre:

*Table 1: Proposed Services*

Proposed Essential Services	Other Planned Services	Community Partners
Primary Care (2-3 Doctors/Nurse Practitioner)	Community Meeting Space – small & large	Ross Memorial Hospital Services – Pre/Post Op
Walk-In Clinic Hours	Laboratory Services	Community Care Kawartha Lakes
Pharmacy	Senior Care Planning & Navigation	United Way Kawartha Lakes
Dentist & Hygienist	Medical Equipment	Ambulance
Mental Health Supports: Addictions, Dementia	Oxygen Services	Fire & Safety
Pain Management	Foot Care	Financial Supports
Pre-/Post-Operative Care	Optometrist	Boys & Girls Club of KL
Chiropractor, Massage, Physiotherapy	Hospice/Respite Care	Legal Supports
Nutrition/Dietician	Services for children	Alzheimer Society
Psychologist	Courier Services	John Howard Society
Naturopath	Affordable Senior Living - potential	
Telemedicine Capability		

There are many benefits to be recognized through the construction of a Wellness Centre in Coboconk, but the most important are these:

- An innovative, well-designed facility that will attract doctors and practitioners to serve the needs of permanent and seasonal residents in the northern area of the Kawartha Lakes – a Ministry of Health designated under-served area.
- The Wellness Centre will be part of a long-term strategy post-COVID-19 to ensure that the strain of dealing with non-emergencies in our local Emergency Departments is alleviated, allowing Emergency Departments to focus on the pandemic or emergency.
- The Wellness Centre will serve as a lever to significant economic development in the area, benefiting local business, residents, tourists, and the municipality.

## Methodology

The following outlines the methods used to develop this feasibility report.

### Public Consultations

Three Community Meetings have been held to test the interest and need for a wellness centre facility and to hear from the communities about the services needed in the area:

- May 29, 2018 – Almost 40 people representing 18 community and stakeholder groups attended the initial meeting held in Norland to help us answer the question: ‘is there interest from the community in pursuing a wellness centre, and should that wellness centre be located at the historic Train Station in Coboconk’. There was a unanimous agreement confirming the need for increased services in the community and for the CNACC to continue to develop the concept further. Representatives from the Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative (the organization that is mandated with the recruitment and retention of family physicians for the residents of Kawartha Lakes) and the Kawartha North Family Health Team attended and expressed their opinion that the need exists as well if this area was to attract ongoing health care professionals.
- July 13, 2019 – Almost 50 people joined at the Coboconk Train Station to hear an update about plans for the wellness centre and to have their questions answered. Representatives from the Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative were present and were kind enough to field the questions from the floor regarding doctor recruitment and retention for the new wellness centre.
- July 16, 2019 – More than 50 people joined at the Coboconk Train Station to hear an update about plans for the wellness centre and to have their questions answered.

### Best Practices Tour

Staff and volunteers of the CNACC interviewed and toured other medical facilities in the area to learn from the experience of others and to discuss the possibility of future partnerships. We thank all those who shared their experiences with us and who were so generous with their time and good wishes for this project:

- Omemee Medical Centre;
- Kawartha North Family Health Team – Fenelon Falls Location;
- Kawartha Lakes Family Health Team – Lindsay Location;
- Woodville Medical Centre and;
- Morton Community Health Care Centre in Lakefield.

### City Council and Staff Engagement

The support of both Council and City of Kawartha Lakes Staff (Community Development, Economic Development and the Building and Planning Departments) in exploring the possibility of a wellness centre in Coboconk has been much appreciated.

Our initial conversations with staff regarding the concept were positive and resulted in a deputation to Council in September 2018. That deputation resulted in a unanimous result with Council directing staff to continue working on the concept with the CNACC. Early in 2019, Council directed that a feasibility report be conducted to test the concept of a wellness centre in Coboconk and provided the funds to the CNACC to complete this work. In June 2019, CNACC attended a Pre-Consultation Meeting with City Staff that helped determine the scope of work required. City staff, the Mayor, and local Councillors have remained committed and very helpful in moving the process further to its conclusion.

## Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

The renovation of the Coboconk Train Station into a wellness centre is one that requires local engagement, energy, and partnership.

In particular, this project would not be possible without the partnership of the Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative who say: “KLHCI views this project as a way to complement the recruitment of family physicians to the City of Kawartha Lakes, particularly in the northern area of the City” and they “recognize that over 25,000 City residents do not have a family physician practicing within CKL.” (KLHCI Letter of Support, Appendix C)

To date, more than 25 stakeholder groups have been engaged in the process. Each group involved has indicated they are supportive and enthusiastic about proceeding with the proposed project. A list of the key stakeholders involved in this project is provided below.

*Table 3: Key Stakeholders*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Coboconk, Norland &amp; Area Chamber of Commerce</b></li> <li>● <b>City of Kawartha Lakes – Parks, Recreation and Culture</b></li> <li>● <b>City of Kawartha Lakes – Economic Development</b></li> <li>● <b>Coboconk Railway Station Restoration Committee</b></li> <li>● <b>Coboconk Medical Centre Trust</b></li> <li>● <b>Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative</b></li> <li>● <b>Ross Memorial Hospital</b></li> <li>● <b>Community Care of Kawartha Lakes</b></li> <li>● <b>City of Kawartha Lakes Family Health Team</b></li> <li>● <b>Kawartha North Family Health Team</b></li> <li>● <b>Kawartha Lakes Ontario Health Team</b></li> <li>● <b>Balsam Lake Association</b></li> <li>● <b>Shadow Lakes Association</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Four Mile Lake Association</b></li> <li>● <b>Moore Lake Association</b></li> <li>● <b>Peel Drive Association</b></li> <li>● <b>Hilton’s Point Cottage Association</b></li> <li>● <b>Residents of Rosedale</b></li> <li>● <b>Christ Church Coboconk</b></li> <li>● <b>Hope United Church Norland</b></li> <li>● <b>Norland Seniors Group</b></li> <li>● <b>Shedden Historical Society</b></li> <li>● <b>Coboconk &amp; District Lions Club</b></li> <li>● <b>Kawartha Lakes Civitan Club</b></li> <li>● <b>Coboconk &amp; Area Food Bank</b></li> <li>● <b>Coboconk New Horizons</b></li> <li>● <b>Local Businesses</b></li> </ul>
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## Needs and Services Available: Data Collection

Information was collected to help determine the needs of permanent and seasonal residents through the following methods:

- 3 Community Meetings – attendance of approximately 140 people;
- Health Care Assessment Survey – almost 460 responses;
- Health Service Inventory – results in Appendix B
- Interviews with other surrounding health care facilities managers;
- Data and Statistics demonstrating factors impacting care and need for care collected from Stats Canada, HHHS, Ross Memorial Hospital, Community Care Kawartha Lakes, City of Kawartha Lakes, Central East LHIN (presently 2020 part of East Health Care Region of Ontario).

# Health Needs Assessment in Northern Kawartha Lakes

## Health Needs Assessment Objectives

To assess the health needs of the population in northern Kawartha Lakes and inform the planning for a wellness centre, an analysis of the demographics and health needs of the population, current health service availability, and the gaps in care for those in the area was conducted. The results of the Health Needs Assessment survey are detailed in Appendix A.

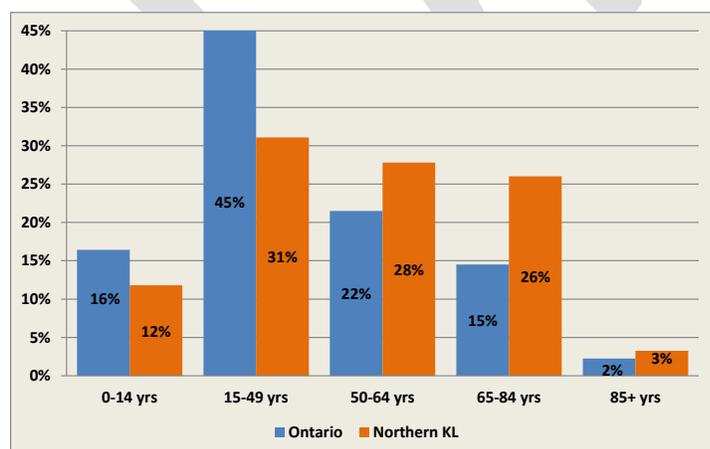
The Health Needs Assessment includes the following:

- A review of population health, health and social status, and health system utilization in the northern Kawartha Lakes and adjoining areas;
- An inventory of current health care services in northern Kawartha Lakes;
- Identifying gaps in primary care and other services through community engagement and consultation with key health care stakeholders;
- A community survey completed by more than 450 permanent and seasonal residents

## Demographics

According to the 2016 census, the population of the City of Kawartha Lakes is 75,400, with 28,800 people residing in the northern region, including Norland, Kinmount, Coboconk, Kirkfield, Fenelon Falls and Bobcaygeon. The population of the City of Kawartha Lakes is estimated to grow to 82,000 to 85,000 by 2026.<sup>1</sup>

Northern Kawartha Lakes has an older population than the Ontario average. The average age in this area is 49 years compared to 47 across the entire City of Kawartha Lakes and 41 in the province of Ontario. As shown in the figure below, a large percentage of the population in the northern region of Kawartha Lakes is aging (29% is 65 years and older compared to 17% across Ontario). The proportion of those 65 and older in this area increased from 22% in 2006 to 29% in 2016, with a steady growth projected in the older demographic over the next 20 years.<sup>2</sup> The health care requirements of a growing and aging population will put pressure on the already stretched services in the area and surrounding communities.



**Figure 1: Population distribution by age**

<sup>1</sup> Ontario Population Projections 2018-2046, Ontario Ministry of Finance, Office of Economic Policy, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Population projections to 2040, Aaron Mulcaster, 2017

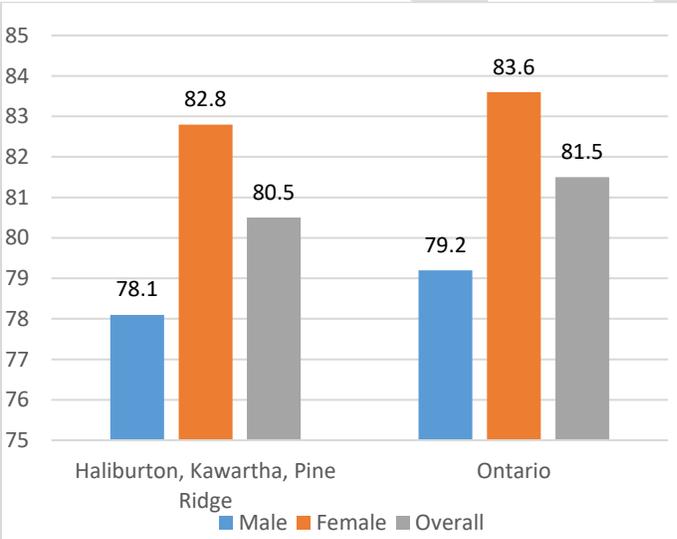
Compared to the province, more people of working age in this area are self-employed, and their incomes are generally lower. Almost one-quarter of those who are employed work in the trades, transport, equipment operations and related occupations compared to 13% across the province. Another 23% work in sales and service occupations and 7% work in health-related jobs. As well, fewer residents of working age are participating in the workforce. In northern Kawartha Lakes, the labour force participation rate<sup>3</sup> is approximately 55% compared to 65% in the province overall.

The median after-tax income in this area is approximately \$29,000; 14% of the population have an after-tax income less than \$10,000 and 20% take home between \$10,000 and \$19,999. Government transfers to area residents are relatively high. Based on the Ontario marginalization index, northern Kawartha Lakes is one of the most dependent regions in the province.<sup>4,5</sup> In the health needs survey, one-third of respondents living in our area reported difficulty making ends meet at the end of the month. These social and economic factors can contribute to higher rates of illness and disability in the community. As well, lower incomes in the area may pose greater challenges to people when trying to access health care, including issues related to rural transportation and accessing medications and uninsured services.

**Health Status**

**Overall Health Status**

According to Statistics Canada, 59% of residents in the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge health region reported very good or excellent health; 71% reported very good or excellent mental health. Based on the local health needs survey, 45% of respondents reported they were in either very good or excellent health; 14% reported fair or poor health. Life expectancy at birth is 80.5 years compared to 81.5 across the province. The infant mortality rate in this health region is 6.2 per 1,000 births compared to 5.1 per 1,000 in Ontario.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 2: Life expectancy**

<sup>3</sup> The proportion of working population in the age group 16 to 64 currently employed or seeking employment.  
<sup>4</sup> Dependency is based on the number of seniors 65 and older and young children relative to the working-age population and the labour force participation rate.  
<sup>5</sup> Matheson FI, van Ingen T. Ontario marginalization index. St. Michael’s Hospital, Public Health Ontario, 2018.  
<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. Health Profile, Catalogue no. 82-228-XWE. Released Ottawa, December 2013.

Regarding healthy lifestyles, in our health region – compared to the province – there are higher rates of smoking (24% versus 19%) and heavy drinking among men (32% versus 24%). A higher proportion of people in this health region spend their leisure time being physical active when compared to the province (58% versus 54%).

### Rurality

A rural community is defined as one “with a population of less than 30,000 that are greater than 30 minutes away from a community with a population of more than 30,000” (MOHLTC, 2011). Thus, our region is considered rural. Rural residents tend to have lower health status than their urban counterparts. Specifically, rural areas tend to have a shorter life expectancy, higher rates of disease and related mortality, and more residents in fair or poor health (MOHLTC, 2011).

### Chronic Disease

Senior populations are at higher risk for health issues and require greater medical services. Almost “three-quarters of Canadians over 65 have at least one chronic health condition” and 44% of health care spending is consumed by this demographic (CMA, 2013). Providing timely and quality services to seniors is a priority and it is important to ensure the capacity exists to serve this population in northern Kawartha Lakes, especially as the number of residents in this age demographic continues to grow.

Compared to Ontario rates, there are high rates of high blood pressure, heart disease, respiratory illnesses, diabetes, chronic pain and overweight or obesity in our health region (Table 2). There are higher incidence and mortality rates from cancer in this region than in Ontario, mainly attributable to lung cancer. There are also higher mortality rates than the province for cancer, heart disease, respiratory illnesses, unintentional injuries and suicide among men.<sup>7</sup> Those with chronic diseases need ongoing care from a regular primary care provider and would benefit greatly from a local wellness centre. Proactive and ongoing chronic disease management locally can improve the lives of residents and ease the burden on surrounding health care facilities and emergency services.

**Table 2: Rates of Chronic Conditions**

	Health region	Ontario
Overweight or obese (%)	60	53
Arthritis (%)	26	17
High blood pressure (%)	24	18
Moderate or severe pain or discomfort (%)	20	14
Asthma (%)	9	8
Diabetes (%)	8	7
Mood disorder (%)	6	8
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)(%)	5	4

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada. Health Profile. Catalogue no. 82-228-XWE. Released Ottawa, December 2013.

## Health System Utilization

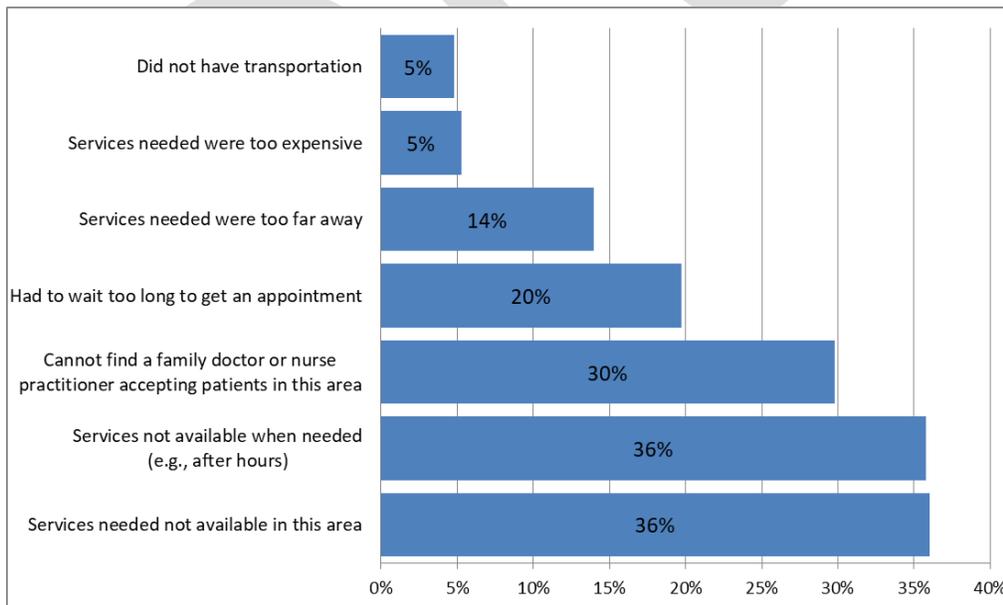
### Access to Care

The community is grateful to have a family doctor at the Coboconk Medical Centre, but many people in the area cannot find a family doctor or nurse practitioner close to home. The local doctor has a full patient load and no new patients can be supported. Additionally, there are no after-hours services in the immediate area. There is also insufficient specialty care, such as mental health, dental and rehabilitation services, in the area to meet the demand. An inventory of current health care services offered in the northern Kawartha Lakes area is provided in Appendix B. It includes family doctors, nurse practitioners, allied practitioners and other community health care services.

Over half of those who completed the health needs survey travel at least 30 minutes out of the community to see their main health care provider; many travel an hour or more. As well, nearly nine in ten reported that they or a family member travelled out of the community to get various types of health care services in the past year. Some travelled several times. By not having a health care provider in the area, many peoples' health care needs likely go unmet; 14% reported that having services too far away was a barrier to getting care and another 5% reported access challenges due to a lack of transportation. Many people also reported that not having after-hours and walk-in services available in the community is a barrier to accessing health care when they need it.

An aging, rural population needs health care close to home. Many residents do not have a car or do not have access to a transport by car, and there is currently no regular public transit for travel to medical appointments.

The following figure shows the top barriers that prevented access to health care reported by survey respondents.



**Figure 3: Top barriers to accessing health care**

## Home Care

A higher proportion of residents in the area receive home care than in the Central East region as a whole. In Central East, the overall rate is 36 for every 1,000 people. In Minden Hills, the rate is 62 per 1,000 people (235 per 1,000 for those 75 years and over) and in Kawartha Lakes it is 56 per 1,000 (282 per 1,000 for those 75 years and over).<sup>8</sup>

Many survey respondents reported that they require home care or are primary caregivers for someone who requires medical assistance and support with daily living, and many several residents are struggling to meet the health care needs of their loved ones at home. Over half of these people reported challenges getting the support they need. These challenges are compounded when there is not a local primary care provider and the waits for home care and long-term care placements are generally longer than the provincial average.

## Emergency Department Utilization

According to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, 20% of people in the City of Kawartha Lakes area visited the emergency department once in the past year, 13% two to four times and 2% five or more. These rates are higher than the overall provincial rates.<sup>9</sup> About one-third of emergency department visits to the Minden site of the Haliburton Highlands Health Services and Ross Memorial Hospital are by residents from the northern Kawartha area.<sup>10</sup> Based on the survey results, two-thirds of respondents reported that they or a family member went to the emergency department in the past year; of these, 67% went to Minden and 60% went to Ross Memorial in Lindsay.

Based on Ministry of Health and Long Term Care data, the rate of avoidable emergency department visits (also known as emergency visits for conditions best managed elsewhere) in Kawartha Lakes is two to three times higher than the overall rate in Ontario. About four out of 10 emergency department visits are relatively low acuity and are potentially avoidable. Even among patients with a regular primary care provider, the rate of potentially avoidable emergency department visits for is significantly higher than the provincial rate.<sup>11</sup>

In the Central East region of Ontario, the overall rate of visits best managed elsewhere is 10 for every 1,000 people. In Minden Hills, the rate is 135 per 1,000 people and in Kawartha Lakes it is 26 per 1,000.<sup>12</sup> Another way to measure the level of urgency of an emergency department visit is the Canadian Triage Acuity Scale (CTAS). CTAS levels 4 and 5 (defined as 'less urgent' and 'non-urgent') are high in this region; in 2019 they accounted for 74% of emergency department visits the Minden Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS) and 26% of visits at Ross Memorial Hospital. Only one-quarter of the survey respondents who went to the emergency department in the past year thought the problem could not have been addressed by a family doctor or other health care provider in the community. Six-in-ten thought the problem could have been addressed in the community instead and another 15% weren't sure.

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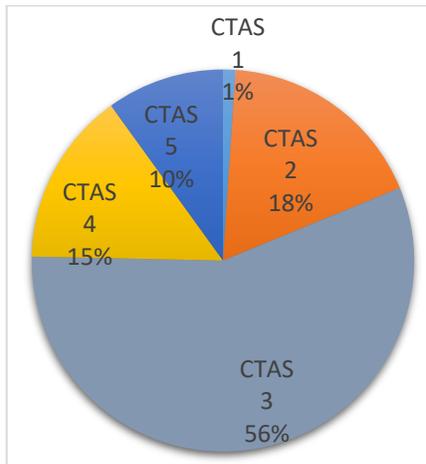
<sup>8</sup> Central East LHIN, 2020

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Health Analytics and Insights Branch, 2017/18

<sup>10</sup> Central East LHIN, 2020

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Health Analytics and Insights Branch, 2017/18

<sup>12</sup> Central East LHIN, 2020



**Figure 4: Level of emergency department visits to Ross Memorial for only those with a postal code beginning with KOM**

The measure of emergency department visits for “conditions best managed elsewhere” is important because it shows visits for concerns that could have been treated in primary care settings. When patients use the emergency department for conditions that can be managed in community settings, it may indicate that they do not have adequate or timely access to primary care because they do not have a primary care provider, they are unaware of the availability of their primary care provider, or their primary care provider was not available within a reasonable time. Examples of conditions that could be best managed in outside the emergency department include: sore throats, ear infections and urinary tract infections. An unnecessary visit to emergency department is an appropriate or efficient use of health care services. Reducing avoidable visits can contribute to reduced access and flow pressures in the ED and reduced costs to the system.

#### Hospitalizations

Another important measure is the rate of hospitalization for ambulatory care sensitive conditions (ACSC). ACSC are conditions where appropriate ambulatory care (care provided outside of hospital in the community or primary care) could have prevented or reduced the need for hospitalization. This care is for chronic conditions – such as congestive heart failure, diabetes, asthma, angina, epilepsy and hypertension – for which it is possible to prevent acute exacerbations and reduce the need for hospital admission through active management of the condition (including vaccinations, better self-management, disease management or case management, and lifestyle interventions). The measure of avoidable hospitalizations gives an indication of access to primary care in the community and the ability of the health care system to manage chronic conditions. Optimizing the management of such conditions in the community, including in the primary care setting, can contribute to improved patient health outcomes and more efficient resource utilization.

The rate of hospitalizations for ambulatory care sensitive conditions in this area is approximately 50% to 60% higher than the province.<sup>13</sup> In the Central East region of Ontario, the overall rate is 343 for every 100,000 people. The rate is 491 per 100,000 in Kawartha Lakes and 438 per 100,000 in Minden Hills.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Health Analytics and Insights Branch, 2017/18

## [Link to the Global Pandemic](#)

The Wellness Centre project was initially developed in response to a demonstrated gap in health care services in northern Kawartha Lakes, but the importance of the project has become even more pressing given the current health crisis that is happening on a global scale. While pandemics such as COVID-19 are rare, they are unpredictable and could occur at any time. COVID-19 shines a greater light on the gaps and issues in the health care system that need to be addressed immediately, as well as the need for a longer-term vision that supports communities in responding to health crises in the future.

It is especially important to augment services in the northern Kawartha Lakes given the population in the region is growing quickly and aging, with a steady growth projected in the older demographic over the next 20 years. An older population is at higher risk not only for chronic illnesses, but also for upper respiratory infections such as the COVID-19. Many of the health care needs of the current population are unmet, and a growing and aging population will place increasing pressure on the existing services even without a pandemic.

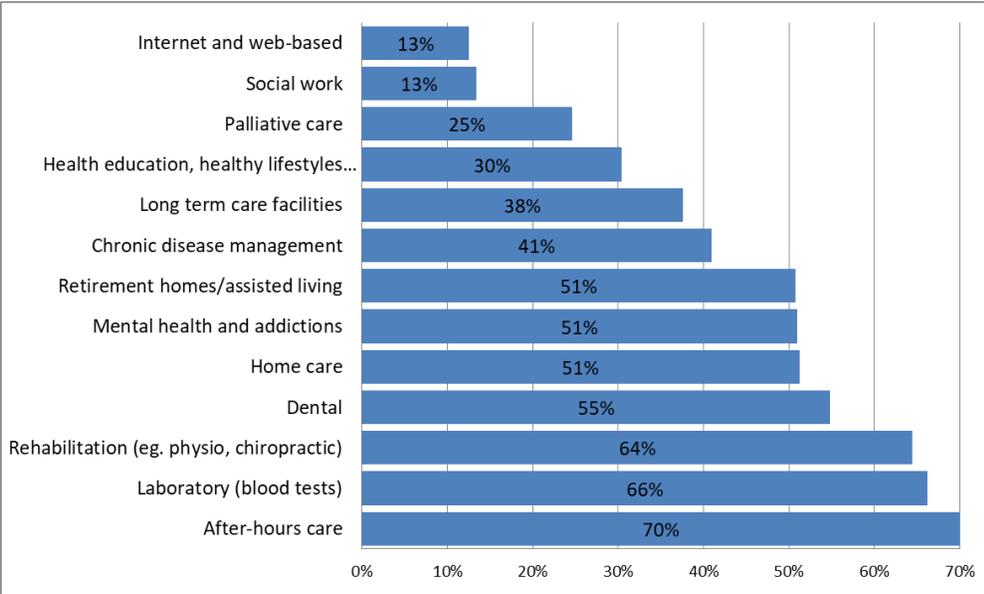
The pandemic may result in more pressure on local health services. Some older residents may select to travel less or to remain in the area during the winter. Additionally, the City of Kawartha Lakes, especially the northern areas, experiences a high influx of tourists and seasonal residents from urban areas, some of whom have chosen to wait out the pandemic by using their cottages earlier and longer than normal. It is also possible that more people consider permanently relocating to areas such as northern Kawartha Lakes. Our communities and health care facilities must be prepared to accommodate changing norms. It is crucial, now more than ever, that governments show their commitment to the long-term health and prosperity of rural communities like ours. By recognizing the needs of our communities and making the construction of the Wellness Centre a priority, we will all be better able to respond in the future.

## [The Local Picture in Summary](#)

Based on the health care needs and priorities identified by local residents, there is an obvious need for more local family doctors or nurse practitioners – as well as other health professionals in rehabilitation, mental health and addictions, chronic care, dental, palliative care, etc. The community is very grateful to have a local family doctor, but many residents in Ward One do not have access to a local City of Kawartha Lakes family doctor. Having care closer to home is likely to result in better access and health outcomes for residents, and fewer unnecessary emergency department and hospital admissions.

Northern Kawartha Lakes has a large seniors population and several other socio-economic factors, such a low income and unemployment that result in a population being at higher risk of illness and poor health outcomes and greater need of medical services. More than eight-in-ten survey respondents identified the seniors as a priority group needing health services and support in this community. With an aging, rural population, it is important to ensure ongoing equitable medical services in the area.

In addition to the importance of having a regular family doctor or nurse practitioner, having after-hours care (70%), a laboratory (66%) and rehabilitation services (64%) in the community were top priorities for survey respondents. Many also emphasized the need for after-hours care (which do not currently exist in Ward One) in the written comments section of the survey, where more than half also prioritized dental services, home care, mental health and addictions services, and retirement homes (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Top priorities for services in this community**

The lack of community-based health and social services leads to higher emergency department and hospitalization rates, especially in rural areas. Factors, such as few local health care providers, no after-hours services and long waits for home care and long-term care, likely contribute to the high rates of emergency department visits (mainly to Minden and Lindsay) by area residents, many of which are for concerns that are better managed elsewhere. A report on emergency department utilization trends in Ontario, reported that “the extent to which Ontarians use emergency departments for low-acuity conditions appears to be related at least partially to a problem in another part of the health system: lack of timely access to primary care” (Health Quality Ontario, 2016).

Clearly there is a lack of access to primary care services in our area and this is placing unnecessary strain on services in surrounding communities. The proposed wellness centre located in Coboconk could help shift service demand and utilization away from emergency departments and hospital admissions by proactively addressing health care issues in the community.

## Options Assessment

A model for a community wellness centre based on perceived gaps and provincial trends in primary care and wellness is described below. It outlines:

- the rationale for building a wellness centre;
- the services to be provided and;
- based on these services, a high-level space requirement for the physical layout of the building - which is also used to inform a financial feasibility assessment for construction and operating costs.

### Core Components in Analysis of Options

This feasibility report was framed around the following core components in ensuring a wellness centre was needed and could be sustained in Coboconk and at the preferred site of the Train Station in Legion Park:

- Program delivery needs;
- Location preferences, walkability, parking;
- Future expansion potential;
- Potential for other complementary services;
- Estimates for construction costs, and possible funding/financing scenarios; and
- Projections for long-term sustainability.

### Provincial Trends

The Wellness Centre model is in line with provincial trends as the Ontario government transitions to a more team-based approach to care through the Ontario Health Teams model. “The Ontario Health Team model will build on (...) innovation, scale up integration beyond a handful of sectors to include the full continuum of care, and extend the benefits of more integrated and accessible care across the entire province. The priority is to transform the way health care is provided and funded across Ontario – through an integrated model of care that is focused on improving outcomes and experiences for patients, grounded in the experience and expertise of front line health care providers, and that works for patients across the full continuum of their care journey” (*Ontario Health Teams: Guidance for Health Care Providers and Organizations 2019*).

Provincial trends show more funding for care focused on seniors and increasing access to quality health care in rural communities. Easing the burden on emergency rooms is of high priority to the Ontario government. For example, in 2019 the provincial government committed to help seniors keep active, healthy, safe, independent, and socially connected in their own communities by investing \$14.1 million to support more than 300 Seniors Active Living Centre programs in communities across the province (Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, 2019).

In 2013, Ontario’s Action Plan for Seniors was launched with three overarching goals: to help seniors be healthier and stay at home longer, to promote senior friendly communities that enhance wellbeing and participation, and to help seniors live safely, independently, and with dignity (Aging with Confidence, 2017). The provincial government seems to be interested in Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) at this time, and the potential for this type of development seems positive with the Wellness Centre as the catalyst for making it happen.

## Wellness Centre Model in Coboconk

Based on perceived gaps and provincial trends in primary care, a model has been developed for a Wellness Centre in Coboconk to increase the availability of primary care and health services, along with other allied practitioner services to those people residing in the northern areas of Kawartha Lakes. The proposed model will provide the following:

- Increased availability of doctor/nurse practitioner services and other wellness services in the community, including after-hours care;
- Reduced pressure on the emergency departments in surrounding hospitals – an issue now more important than ever before the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Consistency with the community’s desire to have all primary care services centralized in one place;
- Consistency with the desire of the City and Council to find a permanent place of practice for the current family doctor in Coboconk;
- Consistency with the desire of the City and Council to increase the usability and revenue potential of the current Train Station building in Coboconk;
- Consistency with the KLHCI’s desire to have attractive, functional spaces for the recruitment of doctors;
- Consistency with the province of Ontario’s desire to build team-based care opportunities and increase access to quality care in rural areas;
- Consistency with the desire of community physicians to work together with other doctors and disciplines to provide primary care, while reducing the overhead costs associated with independent practices;
- A core team of health care service providers that is based on and supports the needs of the population (e.g. an aging population with a higher prevalence of chronic health problems) and;
- Consistency with the desire of the community to envision the opportunity for complementary development, like seniors housing and physical recreation opportunities.

## Potential Site Options

During the course of the community meetings and other investigations, several potential sites for a wellness centre were explored. These sites included:

1. The site of the former Coboconk Medical Centre – although having the benefits of being City property and having a high walk-ability score, future foundation issues and insufficient space for building, parking, and future expansion ruled out this possibility.
2. The site of the former Coboconk school in the centre of town – despite having a high walk-ability score, the drawbacks of being private property (and therefore adding significant cost to the construction of the building) and insufficient space for building, parking, and future expansion ruled out this possibility.
3. The current OPP station on County Road 48 outside of Coboconk – the fact that this building is not currently available for sale, as well as insufficient space for building, parking, and future expansion ruled out this possibility. Its distance from a town is also a drawback.
4. The Coboconk Train Station and Legion Park property – this property has the benefit of being City-owned (reducing costs), close to town, part of a recreation park with programming potential, large available areas for expansion and parking, large development potential behind the existing train station for complementary services and construction, such as seniors living. This property

scored lower on walkability than some of the potential sites, and plans will incorporate the desire for this moving forward.

### Recommended Site Option

The site of the existing Coboconk Train Station demonstrates the most benefit to the community. It is proposed that the original train station building be preserved, and celebrated, while being expanded to accommodate the services required by the community. This proposal solves two issues: it provides a permanent facility for the provision of medical and wellness services in an under-served population, and it provides a new use for the under-utilized train station building. The potential for future expansion of services exists and is a key consideration for choosing this site.

The Coboconk Train Station is located at the north end of Coboconk in Legion Park. The facility is 4,446 square feet in size and is owned by the City of Kawartha Lakes. There are three floors in the facility; a basement, main and top floor. Currently, only the basement floor is used by the community and is rented out as a community facility for various meetings and functions. This floor includes a kitchen and a meeting space. The utilization of the facility is low.

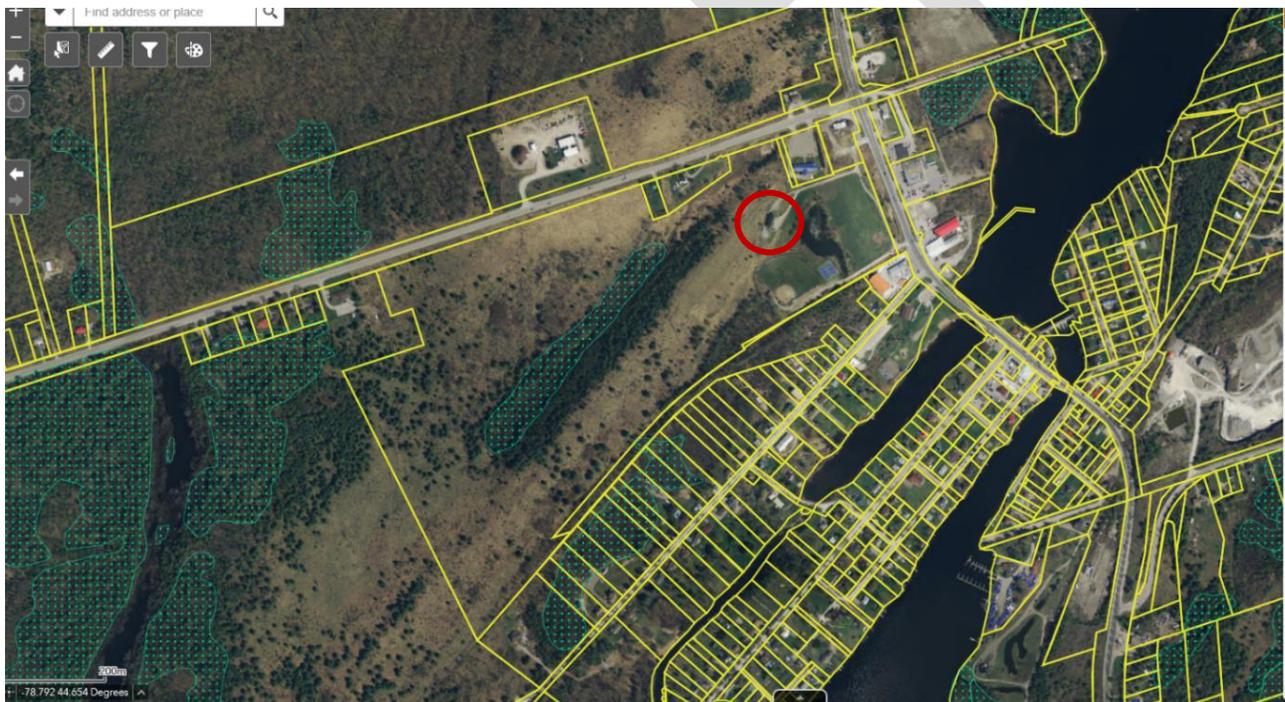


Figure 6: Site Photo: Entire Parcel of Land where Train Station is located

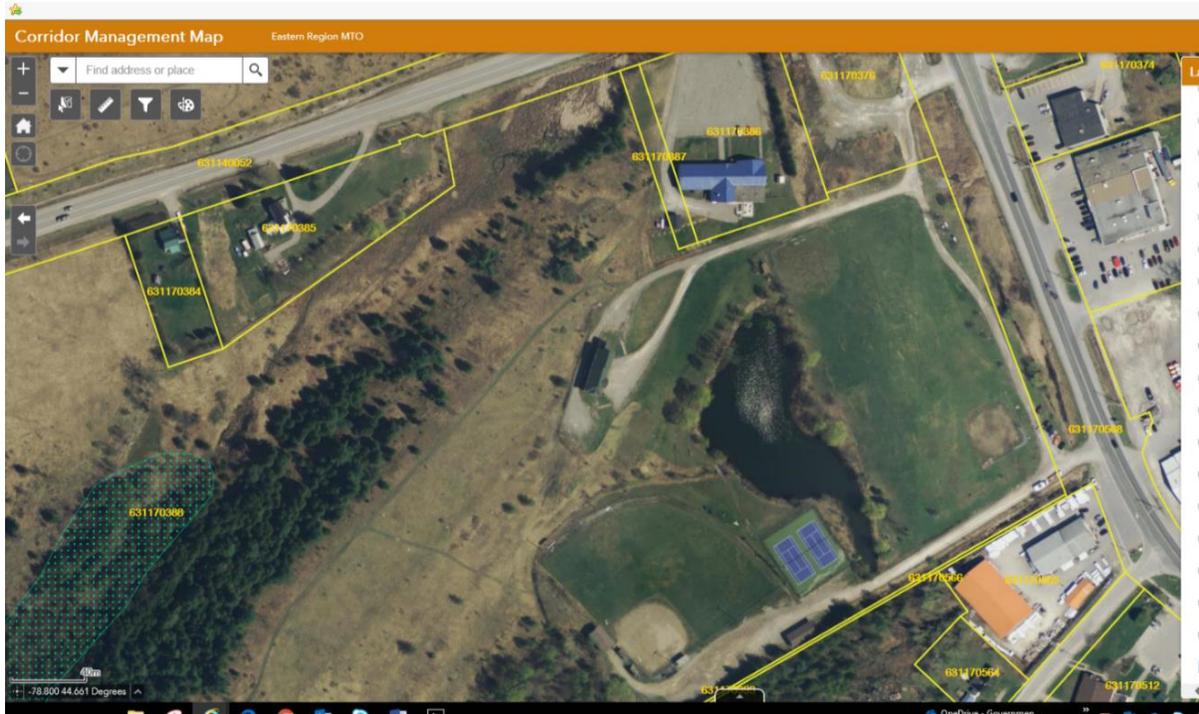


Figure 7: Site Photo: Zoomed in on Train Station building

## Site Assessment

To determine the feasibility of renovating the Coboconk Train Station and expanding it with new construction, several studies have been conducted (see list below). All studies agree that there are no impediments to moving forward with this project.

- Structural Engineering Report, March 2020 – by ARUP (Appendix D);
- Environmental Assessment (Building), October 2019 – by Pinchin (Appendix E);
- Topographical Study on the parcel of land where the Train Station is located, July 2019 – by Coe Fisher Cameron (Appendix F); and
- Facility Condition Assessment (Building), April 2016 – by Altus Group Ltd (Appendix G).

## Responding to the Communities' Needs

### Celebrating Local History

There is a long history connected to the Coboconk Train Station. Restoration, renovation and revitalization of this facility will enable this local history to be preserved and celebrated.

The original Coboconk Train Station was believed to have been built in 1872 and served as the terminus of the Toronto-Nipissing Railway (Cooper, 2009). The railway transported grain and firewood from the northern points on the track into Toronto (Cooper, 2008). In 1908, the original building was hit by lightning and destroyed. However, a second station was built to replace the first and continued to operate until 1965 (Cooper, 2009). After the railway discontinued operation, the Coboconk Train Station continued to be used by the community and was moved to what is now Legion Park in Coboconk.

As part of the reconstruction of the Coboconk Train Station for medical and wellness services, a portion of the facility will be dedicated to showcasing the history of the facility with historical displays throughout the building, allowing patients, residents and visitors the opportunity to celebrate the historic impact of the building on their community for so many years.

### The Building Design

ERA Architects Inc., renowned experts in bringing new life and purpose to historic buildings in small rural towns, have provided architectural drawings that respect the history and original purpose of the building while providing modern, efficient space custom-designed for the practitioners in the building and increasing the capacity to serve the residents of the northern area of Kawartha Lakes. In response to community consultations and stakeholder interviews, ERA has designed a space to accommodate the services needed and celebrate our local history.

The main floor of the original Train Station will be renovated to serve as reception, office space, and waiting areas for the Wellness Centre. The feeling and purpose of this historic space will be preserved; where the passengers waited to purchase their train tickets and board the train is where they will spend some time enjoying historic exhibits while waiting for their appointment.

New construction to the west of the original train station will expand the ability to offer the services of physicians and allied professionals, thus increasing the attractiveness for doctors to practise in the area. Partnerships with the Coboconk Medical Trust Association and the Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative will help to attract new doctors to the space. By renovating this space and attracting more and specialized medical and wellness services to the Coboconk area, the community will be better equipped to meet the needs of the rural, aging population in a locally accessible area. Renovating this facility will also have impacts for the residents of neighbouring communities, increasing their access to medical and health services as well. Two size options have been developed – financial considerations will be part of the decision-making process between the two options. The total designed space that ideally meets the needs of doctors and patients is 17,200 sf. A smaller option exists at 14,000 sf. Excerpts from ERA's design proposal are below. The full design package is Appendix H.

# SITE PLAN



Driveway  
from Hwy 35



7 | COBOCONK WELLNESS CENTRE | Design Feasibility



Figure 8: Site Plan

# EXTERIOR VIEWS

View from north-west approach



12 | COBOCONK WELLNESS CENTRE | Design Feasibility



# EXTERIOR VIEWS

View from south parking lot



11 | COBOCONK WELLNESS CENTRE | Design Feasibility



*Figures 9 and 10: Exterior Views from North and South*

# Proposed

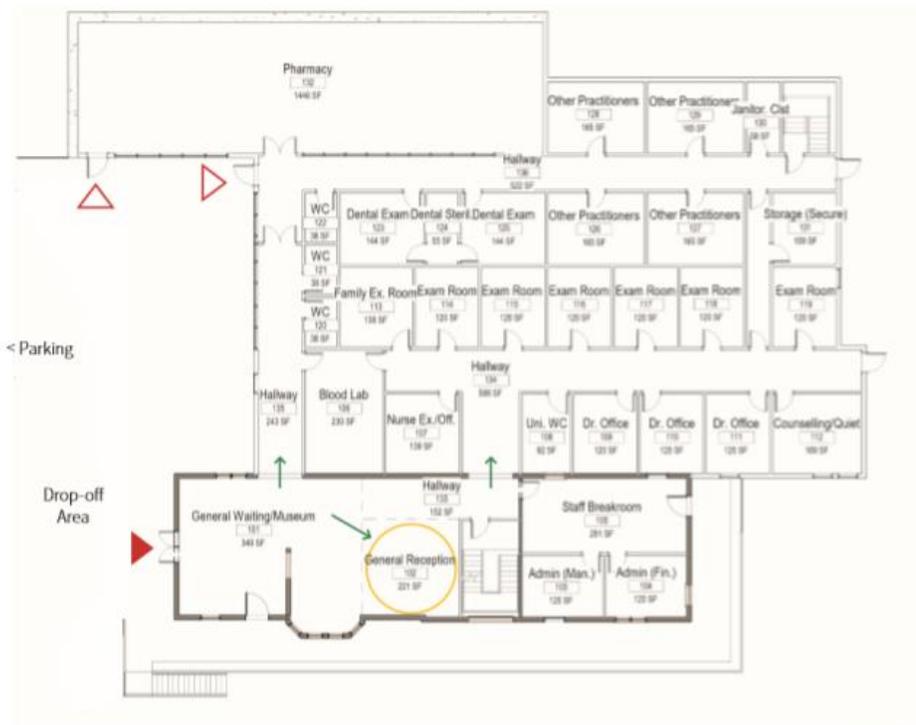
## Main Level

- ▲ Main Entrance
- △ Secondary Entrance
- Main Reception
- ↑ Access Point

Main Level GFA  
8,157 ft<sup>2</sup>/758 m<sup>2</sup>



8 | COBOCONK WELLNESS CENTRE | Design Feasibility



# Proposed

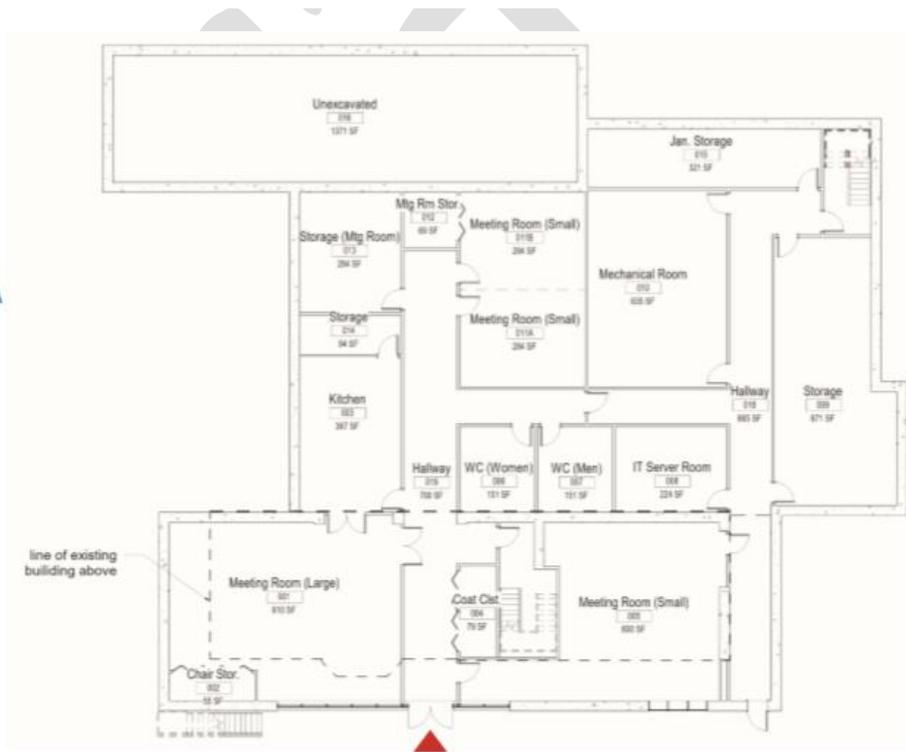
## Lower Level

- ▲ Main Entrance

Lower Level GFA  
9,523 ft<sup>2</sup>/885 m<sup>2</sup>



9 | COBOCONK WELLNESS CENTRE | Design Feasibility



Figures 11 and 12: Ground Floor Plan and Basement Floor Plan

## Financial Modelling

### Construction Phase

A multi-tiered funding strategy will be pursued to secure sufficient funding to construct the Wellness Centre. The plan calls for the development of funding proposals to each level of government targeted to different areas of focus with the new building. A list of 20 different possible funding programs has been compiled. A summary of the proposed funding approaches follows:

*Scenario #1:* This strategy relies on successful approaches to each level of government for their investment in the Wellness Centre, emphasizing the particular features of the new building that are of interest to the particular funding stream along with a component of local fundraising. For example, there are current federal funding programs in the areas of economic development in rural communities as well as arts, heritage and culture funding (for the redevelopment of the historic train station portion of the building). Provincial funding streams most suitable for the project are through infrastructure funding and/or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. In this case, a Memorandum of Understanding would need to be signed between the Wellness Centre Committee (or CNACC) and another body (such as the Kawartha North Family Health Team, who has indicated an interest in partnership) in order to co-apply to the MOHLTC for the capital and operating funding for the medical doctor's portion of the building. In scenario #1, the municipality would be invited to participate through budget support - as was previously allocated to the re-building of a Medical Centre in Coboconk back in 2018 – along with some cost avoidance measures, such as development charges, permit fees, etc. Community Fundraising comprises a significant portion of the strategy at approximately 17-25%, as it does in each scenario. A specific fundraising strategy to raise this portion of the funds needed will endeavour to engage with resident and seasonal residents through fun events, donation drives, and other fundraising activities.

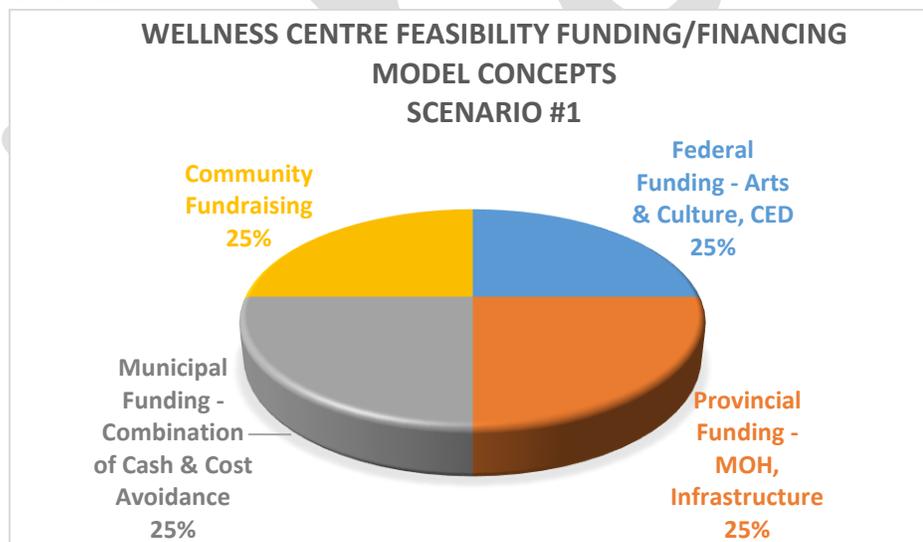


Figure 13: Funding/Financing Model, Concept #1

*Scenario #2:* This strategy takes into account the current uncertainty around provincial funding programs and relies on securing a mortgage/financing to replace the province’s support discussed in Scenario #1, thus impacting the longer-term operation of the Wellness Centre as it works to repay this loan.

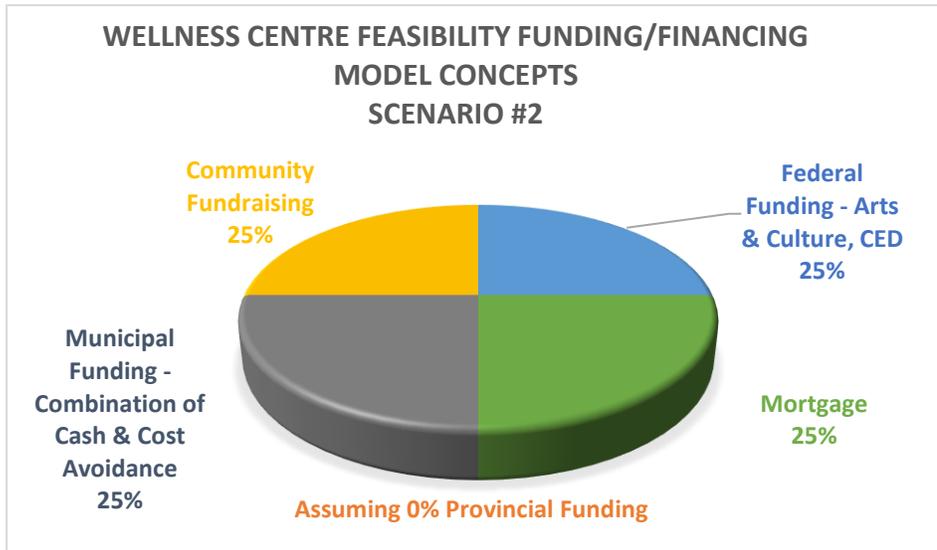


Figure 14: Funding/Financing Model, Concept #2

### Development and Ownership Options

There are two development and ownership options for this building project; in both cases, the property and building remain under City ownership and managed by a Volunteer Management Board or other designated volunteer group.

Option #1, the City opts to manage the construction of the building.

Option #2, the Chamber or Volunteer Management Board manages the construction of the building, abiding by City policies. This feasibility report is based on the selection of option #2.

### Construction Timing and Costs

A detailed costing study of the project will be conducted once Council has approved the feasibility report and requested that the project move forward. At this time, ERA has provided some guidance on the cost to build the new Wellness Centre.

Table 4: Cost and Timeframe Projections

	Square Footage	Cost to Build	Time to Build	Forecasted Start Date	Forecasted Completion Date
Ideal Building Size to meet Community needs	17,200 sf	\$7.1 M	14 months	March 2021	May 2022
Scaled Back Building Size to meet most Community Needs	14,000 sf	\$6 M	14 months	March 2021	May 2022

## Operating Model

Through this proposal, the City of Kawartha Lakes will continue to own the property and building. The CNACC or a designated Volunteer Management Board (VMB) will oversee the renovations and construction of the building and then manage the building and property once construction is complete. There is already an existing agreement between the City and the CNACC to manage the Train Station and the Legion Park properties, so an amendment to that agreement extending management over the new building and the rest of the land parcel would be pursued.

Once the building is constructed, there will be two options available to the VMB to manage the primary care areas (those areas eligible for MOHLTC funding) of the building:

- 1) Enter into an agreement with the Kawartha North Family Health Team to expand their mandate to include the Coboconk site (they currently have sites in Fenelon Falls and Bobcaygeon).
- 2) The VMB manages all the tenants.

## Operations & Sustainability

There are multiple operating models that are possible to pursue for the Wellness Centre. When the best operating model is determined with key stakeholders, a detailed and accurate operating and cash flow budget can be presented. Due to the recent and anticipated restructuring of the health care delivery system in Ontario, it is not prudent to forecast available operating funds from any level of government or government entity at this time.

The Wellness Centre project represents a major improvement to available health care services in an under-served area of the province with an increasingly vulnerable population. The Chamber's major focus at this time is to ensure the development and construction costs of the building are secured in such a manner as to eliminate any long-term financial burden on the municipality.

The Chamber has had extensive input from current health care providers within the area and are pleased with their level of enthusiasm as they have communicated their desire to be a part of the Wellness Centre once built – thus enabling the building to operate in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

We have also had input from private enterprises that are willing and able to lease space within the Wellness Centre to provide health care services, for example: pharmacy, medical supply companies, and lab services.

With regards to ensuring long term operating sustainability without significant annual operating support from the municipality, one available option is that the currently undeveloped land of the Legion Park parcel be allowed to be developed in a prudent manner that will provide revenue that could be directed to a CHEST-like fund, with the interest on the principal used to offset any operating budget shortages of the Wellness Centre.

## Physician Recruitment Strategies

It will be important to partner with the Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative under both options described above in the successful recruitment of family doctors to the new wellness centre. The CNACC has worked closely with this group from the beginning of this feasibility project in order to ensure the building holds attractive features for potential doctors in order to make their job as easy as possible. The CNACC will continue to work closely with this key group to help encourage new doctors to join the wellness centre by highlighting the positive aspects of working in this community and helping to identify attractive features and opportunities for not only the doctor, but their family as well.

Also important will be to share resources and possibly services with the surrounding rural medical centres. The intent of the wellness centre is to enhance services for everyone. There may be some partnership opportunities available between these other medical centres and the wellness centre, which may be appealing in the recruitment of doctors to the area.

Draft

## Enhanced Services & Planning for the Future

### Legion Park Recreation & Fitness

The Coboconk Train Station sits in Legion Park, an 86-acre property owned by the City of Kawartha Lakes. The property includes abundant green space, a baseball diamond, and two tennis courts.

As with the management and operation of the Train Station building, an agreement has been signed between the municipality and the Coboconk, Norland & Area Chamber of Commerce to manage and operate the entirety of Legion Park, including the sports fields. This provides a great opportunity for enhanced services in Coboconk, specifically as they relate to recreation. Currently, there are very few organized fitness and recreation programs that exist in the Coboconk area. Similar to medical services, organized fitness and recreation opportunities exist in larger centres outside of Coboconk. The lack of fitness and recreation opportunities leads to a less active population, which can in turn cause increased health concerns. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC 2018) recognizes that physical activity is important for maintaining good health; however, many Canadians are not active enough in their everyday lives to benefit their health. This is especially common in older adults; only 14% of those aged 65-79 meet the Canadian physical activity guidelines (PHAC, 2018). Currently, a lack of physical activity ranks fourth in the top risk factors leading to premature death (PHAC, 2018). This project, and the new management of Legion Park, will help to address the lack of physical activity programming in Coboconk by enabling baseball, tennis, and various other outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g. yoga, walking clubs) to be organized locally and help keep the population active.

Through this project proposal, not only will a permanent facility be established for the provision of medical and wellness services, but community-led proactive health measures, including enhanced fitness and recreation services, will be coordinated by using the green space and sports facilities in Legion Park. By facilitating increased use of Legion Park and its associated facilities, programming can be offered that keeps the population active, contributing to an overall healthier population.

### Planning for the Future of our Seniors

In addition to the Train Station and Legion Park property, there exists a significant portion of the parcel of land behind the Train Station that is currently undeveloped. There are several proposed uses for this land made by the community, including enhancing snowmobile trails and parking, walking trails, and other nature-focused activities. One of the most exciting ideas to come along with the concept of a Wellness Centre is the complementary development of seniors housing behind the Train Station. The possibility of this type of development has created a lot of excitement within the community – both from private developers and those excited to see it happen for their own benefit. There are currently no options for a someone who cannot live in their own home any longer – they must leave the community and the people they have known for all their lives to move to Lindsay, Fenelon, or even farther away.

Seniors who are forced to move from their communities, and therefore their support systems, are at a higher risk of detriments to their health and well being. Seniors who experience social isolation are at a greater risk of experiencing:

- Reduced social skills;
- Elder abuse, including financial and physical abuse;
- Negative health behaviours such as remaining sedentary and not eating well;
- A higher likelihood of falls and;
- Have a four-to-five times great risk of hospitalization.

The psychological and cognitive health of seniors is also affected by social isolation. According to the research conducted by the National Seniors Council on the social isolation of seniors, 1 in 4 seniors lives with a mental health problem (e.g. depression, anxiety or dementia) or illness, and 10 -15% of adults 65 years or older and living in their community suffer from depression. Comparatively, the percentage of seniors in residential care who have showed symptoms of depression is higher at 44%. Approximately 50% of people over the age of 80 report feeling lonely, and men over the age of 80 have the highest suicide rate of all age groups.

Research shows that there are several factors that contribute to the increasing risk of seniors becoming socially isolated including:

- living alone;
- being age 80 or older;
- having compromised health status, including having multiple chronic health problems;
- having no children or contact with family;
- lacking access to transportation;
- living with low income; and,
- changing family structures, younger people migrating for work and leaving seniors behind, and location of residence (e.g. urban, rural and remote).

## Alignment with Local Priorities

The need for the Wellness Centre in Coboconk is not only reflected in the statistics and voices of the community, but also in the priorities set by local government. The 2020-2023 City of Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan sets the Vision for Kawartha Lakes: Thriving and Growing Communities Within a Natural Environment and its Mission: To deliver the highest standard of municipal services while creating a healthy and sustainable future for all Kawartha Lakes' residents and businesses. The Wellness Centre in Coboconk will help Kawartha Lakes deliver on this Vision and Mission, specifically as it relates to Goal #1 – A Vibrant and Growing Economy, Goal #2 - An Exceptional Quality of Life, and Goal #4 – Good Government.

*Goal 1: A Vibrant and Growing Economy* will be supported by ensuring a strong core in the community, and leveraging local business ambassadors and talents as well as leveraging the strengths of the local business group (the Coboconk, Norland & Area Chamber of Commerce) in fundraising, project development and execution, building partnerships, and reach into the community. The attraction of new professionals, the creation of new jobs, and the increase of new services will help to attract both business and people to the City of Kawartha Lakes. All of these factors will contribute to the Progress Indicators for the Goal, as identified in the Strategy document, in particular: median household income, percentage of floor space occupied for retail and commercial businesses, number of jobs in the community compared to the provincial forecast.

*Goal 2: An Exceptional Quality of Life* will be supported by helping to recruit medical and health practitioners, encouraging innovative programs through all emergency services and partners to ensure community safety and wellness, and of course, by fulfilling the goal of partnering to establish a wellness centre in Coboconk. The Wellness Centre will also provide opportunities to build social infrastructure in the northern communities, and partnership building has already begun with Kawartha Lakes community-based organizations to begin offering their services from the Wellness Centre in Coboconk. Goal 2 will also be supported through Community Building – enhancing community involvement, fostering civic pride, and celebrating the heritage and culture aspects of the original train station.

*Goal 4: Good Government* will also be supported by the Wellness Centre project. The Wellness Centre will preserve the original train station and bring it a new sustainability model. It will ensure the municipal asset will be well-maintained and its value significantly increased.

## Economic Impacts

The Wellness Centre will generate significant economic benefits for the community and also the municipality as a whole. Not only will the Wellness Centre create jobs during renovation and construction, there will be a maintained positive economic impact as new doctors and other practitioners, support staff, and community organizations are engaged, and new residents and families find it an attractive place to settle with good access to medical care.

There are several other factors in the economic case to proceed with the Wellness Centre, such as: Business Attraction, Retention of our Youth, Increasing our School-Aged Population, Attracting other Professionals.

*Attraction of Business:* The City of Kawartha Lakes is interested in building its base of businesses for a variety of reasons, including increasing the tax base. Businesses need workers, and workers need access to convenient and basic services such as health care.

*Retention of our Youth:* The issue of losing our youth after university/college has been a long-standing one for the Kawartha Lakes. In order to retain our youth, there needs to be good, year-round jobs as well as a good level of services for them to stay to raise their families.

*Attraction of Other Professionals:* During the COVID-19 pandemic, more people and more companies are realizing that working from home or remotely is an option. Many people are talking about relocating to a more rural setting to live and raise their families. With the Eastern Ontario Regional Network's project to ensure high speed broadband and cellular services are available throughout Kawartha Lakes, the possibility of attracting more professionals to the area is better than ever before.

*Increasing our School-Aged Population:* A healthy community needs to have a good distribution of all age groups. Kawartha Lakes has a larger than average population of seniors and a lower than average population of children. In order to fill our schools, convenient and basic health care services are needed.

Apart from the positive impact on the people of our communities, the documented economic impact of having a doctor in a community is significant. The Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative estimates approximately \$500,000 - \$1,000,000 in economic development/year/physician in a community.

Overall, the Wellness Centre will result in:

- Good quality, year-round jobs;
- Retention of seniors in our community;
- Attraction of new retirees as well as families and professionals;
- Attraction of new investment and;
- Long term positive impact on local businesses.

## Background: History of the Coboconk Medical Centre

The building that housed the Coboconk Medical Centre was first built by the Township of Bexley, now a part of the City of Kawartha Lakes, in 1974. The facility was approximately 4,400 square feet in size and was located at 21 Grandy Road in the centre of Coboconk. This building was specifically built for the purpose of housing a medical centre and continued to operate as a medical centre until it was demolished in 2018.

The facility was owned by the City of Kawartha Lakes. Operation and maintenance of the building was performed by the City's Building and Property Division within Community Services. Lease agreements were established for two doctors to operate out of the facility. Since 1992, Dr. Warsi has provided family medical care to 3,000 patients out of the Coboconk Medical Centre. From 2003 – 2016, Dr. Chung also provided dental care for 500 patients. Currently, the Coboconk Medical Centre continues to have one family doctor, leaving many families and senior citizens without access to a local doctor.

In September of 2016, during a routine inspection of the property by the City of Kawartha Lakes, initial problems with the Coboconk Medical Centre building were identified. Brick was seen to be coming away from the wall, suggesting a structural issue. To further investigate and examine the property, the City retained AMR Engineering Limited. AMR confirmed that structural issues with the building were forcing the walls of the building out of alignment, causing movement of the wall, breakage of metal ties, and cracking of mortar joints and masonry units. Ultimately, AMR determined that these issues were affecting the integrity of the building and advised that the "building be vacated immediately and remain vacated until remedial works have been completed." This statement was echoed by the City's insurer, Frank Cowan Company, who recommended that an "alternative location for the medical centre be pursued immediately."

Recognizing the need to maintain the services of the Coboconk Medical Centre in the community, an alternative operating arrangement was implemented while more permanent options for the medical centre were evaluated. In 2017, the City installed a temporary facility (portable modular building) in the parking lot adjacent to the building. The temporary facility is 2,100 square feet. Dr. Warsi continues to offer medical services, operating out of the temporary facility. There is no available space in these temporary accommodations for additional Primary Care providers and other allied health services.

On February 13, 2018, at the City of Kawartha Lakes Council Meeting, a decision was made to demolish the old Coboconk Medical Centre. Staff members were also directed to investigate the cost of erecting a permanent medical centre facility in Coboconk, as well as the possibility of developing a grant program to support medical service provision in the City. The costs of erecting a permanent medical centre in Coboconk were presented to Council in April of 2018. The costs were \$1,277,710 for a 3,500 square foot facility (an ideal facility) or \$912,130 for a 2,600 square foot (reduced) facility.

The municipality and community are currently challenged to deliver an appropriate solution to provide ongoing medical services in Coboconk for the area.

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