

Local Government Community Healthcare Support Policies for Consideration

Introduction

The following set of generic policies can be adapted and adopted by local governments to create a formal policy foundation for actions to support the local healthcare system elements, including healthcare workers.

There are a range of policy statements that a local government can adopt to build this foundation for action, including statements in the Official Community Plan (OCP), as well as in other policy documents, which will be unique to each local government.

The following set of draft policy statements for local governments can be modified to create additional policy documents for social planning, housing, transportation, and others.

Official Community Plan Policies

An OCP typically includes information and statements of intent and policy that can address healthcare and healthcare workers in the community.

Community information, opportunities and challenges

OCPs typically begin with a chapter about the community that addresses key challenges and opportunities for the community to address with subsequent policies and priorities.

- Information about the healthcare system and its facts / challenges can be included in this chapter to frame the challenge and set the stage for subsequent policies. Information on healthcare, where data is available, might include:
 - *Hospitals and clinics, generally and per capita.*
 - *Percentage of residents attached to a family doctor.*
 - *General demographics and predictions of healthcare demand.*
 - *Public health statistics*
 - *Comparisons of your community's statistics with others or averages.*
- Information on the challenges the community is facing regarding healthcare, emergency workers, facilities and related matters can be included here, to increase the visibility and rationale for why it is important to include supportive policies.

Sustainability frameworks

Many communities now include sections on sustainability, climate change and other related matters. Sustainability typically includes three pillars – social, economic and environmental considerations.

- Acknowledging the importance of healthcare easily fits into the social dimension of sustainability and policies to address climate change.
- A draft policy statement might include:

- *Healthcare is a cornerstone of a healthy and sustainable community, and while the Canadian healthcare system is largely the purview of the provincial and federal governments, there are many actions we can take in our community to support the healthcare system by supporting healthcare facilities, addressing needs our healthcare and emergency workers face in housing, education, transportation, and others. As our community faces issues of climate change and other challenges, we need a healthy and robust healthcare system to support the resilience of our community.*

Vision

Most OCPs include a section outlining key elements of its vision and core commitments.

- A commitment to take action to support local healthcare systems and workers can easily fit into this section.
- A draft vision statement for healthcare might include:

We will have a strong healthcare and emergency response system to ensure our residents are healthy and have access to a robust emergency response capacity. We will have healthcare services available in every neighbourhood and have leading edge health facilities in our region. Our community will attract, support and retain doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers. **Community well-being, safety and emergency preparedness**

Most OCPs include a section that addresses community and social well-being and services, and many include sections that address safety and emergency resilience.

- Draft policies for community well-being that address healthcare might include:
 - *Our community is committed to maintaining and growing the provision of healthcare and emergency response services in our community to ensure our residents have access to the healthcare they need, and a robust response capacity for emergencies.*
 - *Our local government supports the wellbeing of healthcare and emergency personnel by using its policies, plans, resources, jurisdictional powers and ability to mobilize resources and stakeholders to improve healthcare and emergency personnel's quality of life and ensure a robust healthcare system for our community.*
 - *Ensure our community has excellent facilities and service capacity to respond to emergencies and invest in making our community attractive to healthcare and emergency workers.*
 - *Advocate to increase healthcare services and facilities to serve seniors, children, and other vulnerable populations.*
 - *Advocate and take action to ensure every resident in our community is attached to a family physician.*
 - *Develop knowledge and internal capacity (eg: A healthcare committee) within the local government, in partnership with others, to monitor and advise on what our community needs and what actions are required to meet those needs.*

Land use and growth management

All OCPs have overarching sections addressing land use and growth management. They contain important policies for decisions on individual developments.

- Draft policies for land use and growth that address healthcare might include:
 - *Advocate to the provincial government and the Health Authority to ensure healthcare facilities and services grow at a rate equal to population growth in all neighbourhoods, with an eye to matching healthcare services to the demographics of each neighbourhood.*
 - *Advocate to the provincial government to develop additional health care facilities (various – eg: Hospital) to meet growing the growing needs of community*
 - *Support the development of additional clinics and healthcare services in every neighbourhood.*
 - *Support the development of additional childcare facilities throughout all areas of the city.*

Housing

Most OCPs have a section focused on housing policies, especially in BC where Housing Needs Reports are now a cornerstone of OCP policies.

- Draft policies for housing that support healthcare workers might include:
 - *Pursue all available opportunities to provide affordable housing for healthcare workers, including targeted housing in housing agreements in new developments, Community Contributions by developers, and others.*
 - *Consider density bonusing and tax or fee rebates to encourage the inclusion of healthcare-worker targeted housing or healthcare facility / clinic spaces in new developments.*
 - *Work with healthcare organizations and non-profit and private sector housing developers to support healthcare workers who have housing challenges.*
 - *Support the development of healthcare worker targeted housing adjacent to, or integrated into sites for new major healthcare facilities.*

Transportation

Every OCP contains a section devoted to transportation, and while it is not a major element of supporting healthcare workers, there are elements that can be addressed.

- Draft policies for transportation that support healthcare workers might include:
 - *Support programs that assist in providing affordable transportation to healthcare workers.*
 - *Advocate for generous transit service connecting to major healthcare facilities to support healthcare worker use of transit for their shifts both day and night.*
 - *Support adequate parking around major healthcare facilities.*
 - *Consider parking fee relaxations for healthcare workers at the locations where they work.*

Economic development

Every OCP contains a section addressing a diversity of policies that support economic development.

- Draft policies for economic development that support healthcare workers might include:
 - *Support continual expansion of healthcare facilities in our community as a key employer, and a critical criterion for why people choose to live in a community.*
 - *Support the provision of attainable housing, childcare, and other amenities/resources for healthcare workers to ensure the community's healthcare system is strong.*
 - *Recruit healthcare companies, service organizations, and workers to our community to build a robust healthcare economy.*

OCP implementation

Many OCPs contain a section outlining how key priorities of the OCP will be implemented.

- Draft policies for OCP implementation that support healthcare might include:
 - *Develop a Community Healthcare Support Strategy that outlines how our community can support healthcare services and workers. Elements of that Strategy may include:*
 - *Establishing a Healthcare Committee with representatives of healthcare organizations and partners.*
 - *Monitoring the community's healthcare performance and challenges and developing strategies respond accordingly.*
 - *Advocate to the provincial government and Health Authority to provide resources for the development of facilities, and expansion of services. .*
 - *Community engagement and communication on local healthcare needs, issues, and opportunities, and actions the local government is taking.*
 - *Working with the development industry to support attainable housing for healthcare workers as well as for the development of clinics and other healthcare services and facilities.*
 - *Working with businesses and organizations to help monitor and respond to the needs of healthcare workers.*
 - *Develop a healthcare worker attraction, support, and retention plan.*
 - *Working with research and education facilities to support innovation and reduce the implications of education costs on the next generation of healthcare and emergency personnel.*
 - *Working with BC Transit and parking companies to support reduced transportation costs for healthcare and emergency personnel.*
 - *Supporting philanthropic and fundraising efforts to support healthcare and emergency personnel and facilities.*
 - *Others*