



AGENDA ITEM

Town of Eckville – Nurse Practitioner Program

March 24, 2022

BACKGROUND

At the invitation of the Town of Eckville, Reeve Shepherd, Councillor Kreil and the County Manager met with representatives of the Town of Eckville on January 26, 2022 to discuss the Town's proposal to establish a Nurse Practitioner program through the Wolf Creek Primary Care Network. The purpose of this program would be to provide medical services to Eckville and area residents. Following the meeting a tour of the Eckville Community Health Centre, which is where the Nurse Practitioner service would operate from, was provided. Council received an oral report of this meeting at their January 31st regular Council meeting.

Following this report, Council directed the County Manager to arrange for a presentation on the Nurse Practitioner program and the logistics of it being implemented in the Town of Eckville. Jaime LaLiberte of the Wolf Creek Primary Care Network provided this presentation, virtually, at the February 28, 2022 Council meeting. Town of Eckville elected officials and staff, as well as members of the Eckville Health Resources Committee also attended the meeting, in-person and virtually. A copy of Ms. LaLiberte's presentation is attached. Following the presentation Council approved a resolution to accept the presentation for information.

At the March 10, 2022 Council passed a resolution to direct the County Manager to prepare a report and recommendation for Council's consideration at a future Council meeting regarding Lacombe County's participation in the Nurse Practitioner program proposed by the Town of Eckville.

The formal request from the Town of Eckville is that Lacombe County provide an annual funding contribution of \$33,500, over a three-year term, in order to offset costs incurred towards administrative and technical resources required to support a Nurse Practitioner for the Town of Eckville and surrounding area.

As such, action requested of Council is to make a decision regarding the Town of Eckville's request.



ANALYSIS

As requested by Lacombe County the Town of Eckville has provided the following information regarding the proposed Nurse Practitioner Program:

Program cost and Town of Eckville support

The total financial support that the Town of Eckville, as the applicant, will be required to provide is \$55,000.00 for a Medical Office Assistant & \$12,000.00 for Electronic Medical Records Software, for a total of \$67,000.00 per year or \$201,000.00 for three years.

The Town of Eckville has committed to an annual funding contribution of up to \$33,500 towards administrative and technical resources required in support of an application for a Nurse Practitioner.

What are the next steps?

The Town of Eckville will submit their Final Application Presentation, which has been prepared by the Eckville Health Resources Committee, to Wolf Creek Primary Care Network (Wolf Creek PCN) within the next few weeks.

It is the Town's assumption that Wolf Creek PCN will review and give final approval to the Town's Final Application shortly after it is received in their offices. When Alberta Health Care (AHS) notifies the Wolf Creek PCN that new Nurse Practitioner grant funding is available, it is the Town's understanding that Wolf Creek PCN will then submit the Town of Eckville Final Application document to AHS for their consideration and hopefully their approval.

Program implementation timelines

Based on the Town's discussions with the Wolf Creek PCN it is assumed that approval should be given within a month or so of the funding application deadline. A formal agreement would then have to be signed between the Town of Eckville and the Wolf Creek PCN. Once the agreement is in place, Wolf Creek PCN, would then proceed with the hiring of a suitable Nurse Practitioner and Medical Assistant.

It should be noted that the Nurse Practitioner and Medical Assistant will be formally employed by the Wolf Creek PCN. The Town of Eckville's primary roles will be to 1) provide adequate clinic space and the equipment needed for the Nurse Practitioner to operate, and 2) to provide the \$67,000.00 funding required to pay for the Medical Assistant and the Medical Records Software.

Other potential partners

In the event that Lacombe County decides not to formally partner with the Town of Eckville, the Town is strongly considering proceeding on their own as the sole applicant in this Nurse Practitioner application, however, the Town of Eckville is planning to approach Red Deer County and Clearwater County for funding assistance for the proposed three-year term of the AHS grant funding.

The Town of Eckville is also planning to solicit both private and corporate funding for the project. The Town is currently researching the possibility of creating its own Health Foundation Trust which would take back the funds that are currently being held in Eckville's name by the Red Deer Regional Health Foundation.

The Town is also looking at the possibility of creating a Community Foundation which would provide for a broader range of projects that could be funded. For example, this type of foundation may allow for donations to be used for operating the Nurse Practitioner project.

Expected demand in the community

Based on the final draft of the Application Proposal which has been prepared by the Eckville Health Resources Committee, the Town expects that there is sufficient demand for the service to support a full time Nurse Practitioner in Eckville and the surrounding rural community.

Depending upon the demand on the proposed Nurse Practitioner's services the Town hopes to be able to provide services to other communities such as Benalto and Bentley. It should also be noted that it will take some time for the Nurse Practitioner to be recognized and accepted by the community and to develop a full panel of patients.

Where is revenue generated from the program allocated to?:

Alberta Health Services (AHS) would be providing the grant funding to pay the salary and benefits for the proposed Nurse Practitioner and no other fees for service will be charged to or paid by AHS.

For the patients who might be committed to see the Nurse Practitioner as their Family Health Care Provider and become part of the Nurse Practitioner's "Patient Panel" based on the current rate of \$62.00 per year for each patient the maximum funds that the Wolf Creek PCN could receive would be \$31,000.00 per year. It is the Town's understanding that any such funds received by Wolf Creek PCN would be credited to the Eckville Nurse Practitioner Project and would reduce the required contribution by the Town of Eckville accordingly.

Projection of if and when the program might be self-sustaining

Based on the Town's discussions with the Wolf Creek PCN it is unlikely that the Eckville Nurse Practitioner project will be self-sustaining.

The amount of municipal funding required could be reduced significantly if) the program experiences high utilization, 2) there is strong local and corporate funding support, and 3) the AHS Nurse Practitioner Grant Program continues.

Specifics of the agreement between Wolf Creek PCN and Town of Eckville

It is the Town's understanding that the Wolf Creek PCN is just entering the final stages of their first Municipal and First Nations Nurse Practitioner project and the formal agreement is not yet finalized. The Town expects to be able to receive a draft agreement between the Town of Eckville and Wolf Creek PCN soon.

Capital required for program implementation and associated funding sources for such capital:

The Town of Eckville has a lease with Alberta Health Services (AHS) for office space in the Eckville Health Care Centre which should provide adequate space for the proposed Nurse Practitioner Project. Should additional space be required the Town is confident that the agreement can be amended accordingly.

Any capital requirements for the proposed Nurse Practitioner Project will be provided by the Town of Eckville. These capital requirements would be funded through the Eckville Health Trust funds or through other Town revenues.

It has been Lacombe County Council's position in the past that health care is a provincial government responsibility. Based on this philosophy, previous Councils:

1. Lobbied the Province of Alberta to take over responsibility for the provision of ground ambulance services from municipalities.
2. In 2014 supported the dissolution of the Lacombe Municipal Ambulance Service Association which was an ambulance service owned and operated by the County and Town that provided ambulance services through a contract with Alberta Health Services.
3. In 2013 denied a request from the Town of Sylvan Lake for a \$2,000 contribution to the Sylvan Lake & Area Urgent Care Committee for the



preparation of a business plan to support urgent care services in the Town of Sylvan Lake.

4. In 2028 denied a request from STARS Air Ambulance for annual funding of \$2.00 per capita.
5. In 2018 denied a request from the Sylvan Lake Urgent Care Committee for a financial contribution of \$35,000 for the purchase of medical equipment.

Pro's of Supporting Eckville Nurse Practitioner Program

1. Improved access to medical services for Eckville and area residents
2. Potentially allows Eckville and area seniors to stay in their homes longer by avoiding the need for them to move to communities where medical services are available
3. Assists with the sustainability of the Town of Eckville

Con's of Supporting Eckville Nurse Practitioner Program

1. Impact on Lacombe County annual operating budget
2. May set a precedent for the County to financially support medical services in other communities

Alternatives:

1. Deny the request for \$33,500 in annual funding for a three-year term.
2. Deny the request for \$33,500 in annual funding and agree to consider a contribution towards capital requirements.
3. Deny the request for \$33,500 in annual funding and agree to consider entering into an arrangement with the Town of Eckville for the provision of a handi-van service for the purpose of transporting Eckville and area residents to communities that offer medical services.
4. Approve the request for \$33,500 in annual funding for a three-year term.
5. Approve \$10,000 in annual funding for a three-year term. (Administration Recommendation).
6. Take other action(s) as determined by Council.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no provisions in the County's 2022 interim operating budget to support this initiative. Should Council wish to support it provisions will be made in the County's final 2022 operating budget which will be presented to Council for consideration of approval at their May 12, 2022 meeting.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Section 3 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) states the purposes of a municipality are: 1) to provide good government, 2) to provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the municipality, and 3) to develop and maintain safe and viable communities.
2. Section 180(1) of the MGA states that Council may only act by resolution or bylaw.
3. Section 248(1)(a) of the MGA states that a municipality may only make an expenditure that is included in an operating budget, interim operating budget or capital budget unless otherwise authorized by Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the following resolution:

That Lacombe County participate in the Nurse Practitioner Program proposed by the Town of Eckville and contribute \$10,000 in annual funding towards this program for a three-year period.

PREPARED BY: Tim Timmons, County Manager





REVIEWED BY: Tim Timmons, County Manager