

## Committee Begins Plans for Fundraising

June 14, 2008 – The Town of The Blue Mountain -- The task of attracting new physicians to the Meaford and the Town of the Blue Mountains has made significant progress with the forming of a fund raising committee under the North East Grey Health Clinics Inc. (NEGHI). The NEGHI mandate is to recruit new family doctors to the two municipalities.

This group is made up of community minded residents from both communities who have formed a not-for-profit board that will raise funds, build and operate self supporting Community Family Health Centres in each community with the doctors having privileges and providing services at the Meaford Hospital. The recruitment experience of family doctors has made the recruitment committee acutely aware of this area's lack of a competitive edge in attracting new doctors. It is very important to new doctors to have facilities available so they can practice together in a supportive environment. Today's family physicians are seeking a turnkey operation where the administrative and business functions are offered without a need for the doctor to be accountable for the operation of the clinic.

The catchment area served by the Meaford General Hospital has been deemed to be under-serviced by four doctors, by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Also in a study that was completed about two years ago, 1500 people in the area responded that they did not have a doctor. Additional data indicates the 55+ population in this area is expected to increase by more than 40 percent over the next 10 years creating a greater need for family physicians. The viability of the Meaford Hospital is at stake if the services of family physicians are not available to sustain both the inpatient service and the Emergency Department. All family physicians coming into the Family Health Centres will be required to seek privileges and provide services at the Meaford Hospital.

With the population growth in Blue Mountains being greater than Meaford at the present time and two physicians in Clarksburg recently retiring the first Community Family Health Centre will be built in the Blue Mountains where the need is greatest. Once that health centre has been completed work towards a centre in Meaford will start.

Both municipal councils have provided seed money to help the project get started and Grey Bruce Health Services has agreed to provide any funds raised by the sale of the current Thornbury Medical Clinic building towards the campaign. In addition the Meaford Hospital Foundation, the Meaford Hospital Auxiliary and a number of service clubs have indicated their support.

Two very viable site plans are currently under consideration for the first Family Health Centre in the Blue Mountains and will be announced in the near future. The overall vision of the committee is that the municipalities of Meaford and the Blue Mountains will have new community health centres staffed with family physicians and health care professionals within the next five years.

The committee cannot guarantee that new doctors will be attracted to the area if the Family Health Centres are built. But it is very unlikely this area would be seriously considered by new doctors if there are not new facilities constructed. The committee is also aware that if there is not a new clinic available in the next two years it may be difficult to keep doctors that are here. Neighbouring communities such as Wasaga Beach, Southampton and Hanover have been successful in attracting new doctors once new and fully equipped family health centres were established. Dundalk is currently seeking physicians from the same pool and so is every region in Canada.

Wayne McFarlane Chair of the Community Family Health Centres Fundraising Committee recently said, "We are committed to taking a proactive position to assure our mission is completed in a timely and effective manner. With the current and rapidly growing population base in our area, we have no choice."

-30-

For further information please contact:

Wayne McFarlane Chairman of the Community Family Health Centres Fundraising Committee at 519-599-2181 or email: [wmcfarlane@rogers.com](mailto:wmcfarlane@rogers.com)

or

Desmond von Teichman Vice Chairman at 705-444-7063 or email: [desmond@lushrealty.com](mailto:desmond@lushrealty.com)