

# Huron County delegation asks for provincial financing for Gateway and HealthKick at AMO conference

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Trying to generate provincial financial support for two healthcare initiatives Huron County has supported over the past five years was one of the aims of Huron East Deputy-Mayor Joe Steffler when he attended the AMO (Association of Municipalities of Ontario) conference in Ottawa last week.

Representing the County of Huron, Steffler was part of a delegation presenting to Minister of Rural Affairs Jeff Leal asking for provincial funding for both Gateway Rural Health Research Institute and HealthKick Huron.

"We at the county have funded both to this point but healthcare isn't a local responsibility and that's the point we wanted to bring home. We're hoping for provincial funding for both," said Steffler. "We've brought them to this point, the seeds have been planted. So, why don't you (the province) nourish them."

Huron County provided a five-year \$500,000 grant to Gateway accompanied by in-kind support through the promotion of the research institute's programs and partnerships. During that time, memoranda of understanding have been signed with the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy, Georgian College and Western University in London, two health promotion companies have been attracted to expand their business locally and three physicians set up practices in

the region, accomplishments listed by the county is its presentation.

"Much has been accomplished through this support; however, healthcare research and education is not a municipally-mandated responsibility. The time has come where rural healthcare initiatives such as Gateway RHRI justify the need for provincial support," said the presentation.

Huron County also provided funding of close to \$400,000 for HealthKick over the past three years with additional grants totaling \$180,000 until 2015 during which time the organization has strengthened the rural healthcare sector through career development, training and workforce development solutions.

The presentation pointed out

that 21 Registered Practical Nurses graduated from a Georgian College program initiated by HealthKick and 17 of the grads continued to work locally.

"Both programs have gone beyond proving their worth so it's time for the province to step up to the plate. As the first rural research institute in Canada, Gateway could really help everyone," said Steffler.