

## Lemke to spearhead doctor recruitment campaign

Steve Newman

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Norm Lemke has just retired after a distinguished career in municipal politics. Now he's looking to spearhead success on the medical front.

The recently-retired chief administrative officer of Renfrew County was introduced July 14 as the Renfrew and Area Health Services Village Board's new business development officer.

His main mandate, for now, is to lead the recruitment process for badly-needed family physicians in the area.

"Success is imminent," said Lemke shortly after being introduced by board member and Admaston-Bromley Mayor Raye-Anne Briscoe, as the board's business development officer.

Renfrew Mayor Sandi Heins, who is the health services board president, later called Lemke an excellent choice for the job.

She noted he has extensive contacts with different levels of government and his outgoing nature is a natural fit for the part-time contract.

"He's a heck of a guy who gets things done," she added.

The introduction of Lemke came shortly before Hastings County CAO Jim Pine spoke about his county's successful rural family physician recruitment program. The lengthy July 14 presentation took place at the Admaston-Bromley municipal office.

Hastings' program, which got underway in 2006, offers large financial incentives to recruits in exchange for commitments to practising family medicine for five years or more in the county.

### NON-COMMITAL

As for how many of Hastings County's best practices might be adopted, Lemke was non-committal, especially knowing Hastings has up to \$300,000 available each year as financial incentives for recruited doctors.

"It's important to look at best practices ... but there are a lot of best practices out there," said Lemke. "Jim Pine has done a tremendous job in creating a program that has worked for them.

"Those elements may be successful here." However, Lemke says the local recruitment strategy can't shift into a higher gear until a detailed business plan is completed, possibly by the end of July.



**Mandate to find doctors.** Norm Lemke has been hired as the Renfrew & Area Health Services Board's business development officer. *Steve Newman*

Whatever approach is taken locally, Lemke says crucial elements are already in place, namely the committed support from the local hospital, businesses and municipalities.

Greater Madawaska, Admaston-Bromley, Renfrew and Horton have each committed \$25,000 to family doctor recruitment for each of the next four years. Business commitments have yet to be announced.

"With that degree of commitment, nothing is impossible," said Lemke.

"Success, lots of success," is mostly what he says he's after. "And all the components are there for success."

While the focus is on finding doctors, Heins says recruitment will expand in coming years to recruit other healthcare expertise.

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