



Building community health together.

**Greater Hamilton Health Network
Physician Recruitment Program
2023/24 Annual Report**

Attention: City of Hamilton, Public Health Committee

2023/24 marked the inaugural year for the Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program which previously operated under the City of Hamilton's Physician Recruitment and Retention Steering Committee. The transition of the program into the Greater Hamilton Health Network has been an overwhelming success, resulting in greater operational efficiency, collaboration, and brand recognition.

As part of this transition the program was successful in rebranding all marketing and advertising materials, creating a physician recruitment section on the Greater Hamilton Health Network's website, and completing the transfer of all existing program funding and staff contracts. In addition to this integration, the program was successful in securing funding from Haldimand County to allow an expansion of physician recruitment services to the County and an increased level of service to all program stakeholders including the City of Hamilton.

Last year the Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program played a key role in the creation of the Southern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance as well as the broader Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance. These alliances pool regional resources in an effort to reduce the costs associated with the recruitment of internationally educated family physicians, allowing for increased advertising at a reduced cost to the program. In 2023/24 the Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program attended a recruitment event in the United Kingdom as a representative of Southern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance, resulting in the potential recruitment of number of candidates who are currently working with the program to relocate to the Hamilton and Haldimand area to practice.

In addition to direct physician recruitment the alliances foster a coordinated approach in advocating for family medicine in Ontario (and Canada). Acting as the regional chair for Southern Ontario on the Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance's current board of directors, the Director of the Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program works to ensure that the interests of Hamilton, Haldimand, and all of Southern Ontario influence the direction of any alliance initiatives.

The Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program continued to demonstrate effectiveness in recruiting physicians to Hamilton last year, with a total of 27 permanent and 45 temporary (locum) family physicians recruited to provide care for patients in the area.

The Physician Recruitment Program is excited to build upon the unprecedented growth and innovation experienced in 2023/24 for years to come.

Key Performance Indicators for 2023/24

Recruitment and Retention Activities

Recruitment Conferences

The Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program attended a number of local, national, and international recruitment conferences in 2023/24 to advertise Family Medicine opportunities in Hamilton. These events included:

- International Congress on Academic Medicine (Quebec City) – April 2023
- American Academy of Family Physicians National Conference (Kansas City) – July/August 2023
- Fédération Des Médecins Résidentes Du Québec Career Day (Montreal) – September 2023
- McMaster Kitchener-Waterloo Family Medicine Resident Career Day (Kitchener) – September 2023
- Royal College of General Practitioners Conference (Glasgow) – October 2023
- Canadian Society of Physician Recruitment Repatriation Event (Dublin) – October 2023
- Western University Family Medicine Resident Retreat (Grand Bend) – February 2024
- Career MD Recruitment Event (Boston) – March 2024

Presentations

The Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program acts as a resource to local family physicians and healthcare partners and presents on a variety of topics impacting family medicine to various stakeholders. In 2023/24, the program presented at a number of local events including:

- Stonechurch Family Health Centre Resident Presentation (July 2023)
 - Attendees included 2nd year family medicine residents training at the McMaster Family Health Team's Stonechurch Family Health Centre
 - Topics included how to find opportunities after residency, remuneration, obtaining an independent license, and types of family medicine opportunities available
- McMaster Family Practice Resident Presentation (February 2024)

- Attendees included 1st and 2nd year family medicine residents training at the McMaster Family Health Team's McMaster Family Practice.
- Topics included how to find opportunities after residency, remuneration, obtaining an independent license, and types of family medicine opportunities available
- McMaster Family Medicine Residency Central Block 7 Event (February 2024)
 - Attendees included 1st and 2nd year family medicine residents training at various McMaster University sites.
 - Topics included information on next steps after residency, the local family medicine landscape, what to look for in practice opportunities, and primary care payment models
- The Hamilton Family Health Team's Annual Succession Planning Forum (March 2024)
 - Event open to both HFHT and non-HFHT physicians
 - Topics included preparing for retirement, how to find a successor, the family medicine landscape, and legislative obligations associated with retiring from family practice

Other Outreach

In addition to attending both virtual and in-person recruitment events and presentations, the Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program continued to advertise family medicine opportunities in Hamilton through various platforms including:

- HealthForceOntario's HFOJobs website
- Family Medicine Job Opportunities Group on Facebook
- The newly created Southern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance's job board
- Cherry Health website
- The Canadian Society of Physician Recruitment's job board.

Program staff also utilized an extensive network of community recruiters, local healthcare providers, industry experts, and community partners to attract (via referrals) and retain family physicians in Hamilton.

Recruitment Figures

The Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program was successful in supporting the recruitment of 26 permanent family physicians to traditional practice settings (including community health centres) in the Hamilton area in 2023/24. While many of the new permanent family physicians took over practices for retiring/departing physicians, this recruitment constitutes a net increase of 3 permanent family physicians practicing in Hamilton since 2022/23. As of March 31, 2024 there were 366 active permanent family physicians providing care in traditional family practices in Hamilton.

The program also supported the needs of the community and the retention of local family physicians through the recruitment of 45 temporary (locum) physicians in 2023/24. These locum physicians were integral in supporting patient care in the community, preventing burnout amongst permanent family physicians and providing coverage for leaves and vacations.

In addition to supporting recruitment at traditional family practices the program recruited 16 family physicians to provide care in a variety of non-traditional practice settings including family medicine hospitalist and emergency medicine roles (at HHS and SJHH sites), long-term care facilities, McMaster's Student Wellness Centre, the De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre.

Physician Departures

Despite the program's above-noted success in replacing any lost capacity, each year a number of family physicians leave their practice in Hamilton for a variety of reasons. 2023/24 was no exception, with 23 departures recorded due to the following:

- 6 physicians left to pursue other types of practice (academic/research or locum positions)
- 9 physicians retired
- 7 physicians moved to a location outside of Hamilton
- 1 physician passed away

Despite this loss of 23 physicians, the Physician Recruitment Program's successful recruitment of 26 physicians in 2023/24 constitutes a net gain of 3 active physicians practicing in Hamilton year over year.

Breakdown of Family Medicine Coverage by Community in Hamilton

The below chart outlines the number of active permanent family physicians practicing throughout the various communities in Hamilton, as well as the estimated shortage of physicians in each community as of March 31, 2024. The most recent (2021) census data was used to determine the population of each community, and a Ministry of Health estimate of 1,380 patients per physician was used to determine gaps in coverage.

While primary care coverage has improved in many areas of the city (particularly in Dundas and lower Hamilton), shortages persist in others, most notably on the Hamilton Mountain and in Glanbrook.

Table 1: Number of Active Family Physicians by Community (as of March 31, 2024)

Community	Ancaster	Dundas	Flamborough (Waterdown & Carlisle)	Glanbrook (Mount Hope & Binbrook)	Hamilton (Lower and Upper)	Hamilton (Lower)	Hamilton (Upper)	Stoney Creek	Total
Census 2021 Population	43,485	24,155	46,865	35,075	343,205	186,920	156,285	76,570	569,355
Ministry of Health Ratio (Doctor to Population)	32	18	34	25	248	135	113	55	413
Actual # of Active Physicians in Community	26	22	27	3	241	140	101	47	366
Shortage (# Doctors)	Yes (-6)	No (+4)	Yes (-7)	Yes (-22)	Yes (-7)	No (+5)	Yes (-12)	Yes (-8)	Yes (-47)

A breakdown of the recruitment landscape and any challenges associated with each community is outlined below:

Ancaster

Family medicine coverage in Ancaster remains consistent, with an estimated shortage of 6 physicians. This shortage remains unchanged since 2022 and constitutes an improvement from an estimated shortage of 9 physicians as of 2021. New physicians often cite the community's desirable housing and education as reasons for selecting Ancaster, but the relatively high cost of housing continues to act as potential barrier to recruitment.

Dundas

Family medicine coverage in Dundas remains strong, with an estimated surplus of approximately 4 physicians (unchanged since 2021). Physicians cite Dundas' small-town charm, quaint housing and access to greenspace among their top reasons for selecting this community. The main challenges associated with recruitment to this area are the relatively high price of housing and the lack of unattached patients (meaning it would take a new physician a long time to build up a practice).

Flamborough (including Waterdown and Carlisle)

Flamborough has a shortage of an estimated 7 family physicians as of March 2024 compared to a shortage of an estimated 9 physicians in 2022. Physicians cite desirable family housing and proximity to Burlington/Oakville as their primary reasons for selecting Flamborough (and in particular Waterdown). The main challenge associated with family medicine coverage in this community is keeping up with population growth. Between 2016 and 2021 (dates when official census data is available) the population of Flamborough increased by 9.8% compared to an average growth of 7.4% across the City of Hamilton during this same time period.

Glanbrook (including Mount Hope and Binbrook)

Glanbrook continues to experience a significant shortage of an estimated 22 family physicians as of March 2024. While this constitutes a slight improvement compared to a shortage of an estimated 23 physicians in 2022, challenges continue to exist. Population growth has exploded in Glanbrook, increasing by ~17.5% between 2016 and 2021 based on available census data. In addition to the population growth, other challenges include a lack of established clinic space suitable for the creation

of large group practices, competition from other rural communities in Ontario (often with higher RIO scores and access to provincial incentives that are not available to Glanbrook), and a relatively small pool of candidates interested in more rural practice in Ontario. It is important to note; however, that many patients residing in Glanbrook are currently accessing primary care on the Hamilton Mountain or in Stoney Creek, as many of these practices are a 10-15 minute drive from Glanbrook.

Hamilton Mountain

Access to primary care coverage is improving on the Hamilton Mountain, with a current estimated shortage of 12 physicians constituting a decrease compared to a shortage of 17 physicians in 2022. In addition to new recruitment, part of this increase in primary care capacity is the result of the relocation of family practices from other parts of Hamilton (predominantly lower Hamilton) to the Hamilton Mountain. Physicians cite access to suitable group practice space, the ability to build a roster, and access to amenities like shopping and restaurants as their primary reasons for practicing on the Hamilton Mountain.

Lower Hamilton

Despite a net decrease in physician coverage in lower Hamilton compared to 2022, coverage in this area remains strong, with an estimated surplus of 5 physicians practicing in lower Hamilton. Despite the overall strength in primary care coverage in this area, pockets of underserved areas remain. Physicians often cite the ability to take over an established patient roster and access to priority patient populations as their reason for choosing to practice in lower Hamilton. Physicians who have left this area typically cite traffic/congestion, lack of space with sufficient parking, and the opportunity to practice in newer (often larger) spaces elsewhere in the city as their primary reasons for leaving.

Stoney Creek

Stoney Creek experienced a net increase of 1 physician since 2022, bringing the estimated shortage in the area down to 8 physicians compared to a shortage of 9 in 2022. Despite this slight improvement, primary care shortages in the area are expected to increase when updated census data is made available due to rapid population growth. Stoney Creek's population grew ~10.22% between 2016 to 2022, second only to Glanbrook. Physicians often cite desirable (and relatively affordable) housing and access to amenities as primary reasons for locating in Stoney Creek. The main challenge associated with primary care coverage in this area is keeping up with population growth.

Addressing Challenges to Recruitment

The Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment program recognizes the challenges associated with recruitment outlined above, and is working to address these issues through a variety of approaches including:

- Direct recruitment support
 - Helping to replace lost capacity from retirements and physician departures
 - Working with clinic owners to advertise for vacant medical space
- Supporting the development of large Primary Health Care Centres
 - Working with private developers and partners in the community (predominantly the Hamilton Family Health Team) to move forward projects aimed at the development of large, multidisciplinary healthcare centres in high needs areas of the city
- Advocating for changes to provincial and national policies that negatively impact primary care recruitment
 - Working with recruiters across Ontario and Canada to advocate for changes to immigration policies that could allow for greater recruitment of internationally trained physicians
- Working with partners in the community to develop physician mapping tools that could better identify gaps in coverage and steer future clinic development
- Connecting developers, clinic managers, and healthcare providers to foster the creation of new clinics throughout the city

New Physician Contacts

The Greater Hamilton Health Network's Physician Recruitment Program had an extremely successful year in 2023/24, and in addition to the recruitment figures outlined above the program made connections with 78 new family physicians. While these new contacts were not necessarily recruited in 2023/24, many have been added to the program's notification lists for future opportunities, expanding the pool of future candidates looking to practice family medicine and increasing the program's ability to respond to more urgent vacancies moving forward.

Financials

Gross Revenue

In FY 2023/24 (April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024), the GHHN Physician Recruitment Program accrued a total of **\$460,795.57 in funding** from the following sources:

- \$264,017.77 in reserve funds previously held by the City of Hamilton for “Hamilton Physicians” transferred into the new GHHN Physician Recruitment Program
- \$2,437.70 in funds from previous expense account for “Hamilton Physicians” transferred into the new GHHN Physician Recruitment Program
- \$14,340.10 earned as Investment Income on reserve funds
- \$25,000.00 in annual contributions from the Hamilton Family Health Team
- \$20,000.00 in annual contributions from St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton
- \$25,000.00 in annual contributions from McMaster University’s Faculty of Health Sciences
- \$20,000.00 in annual contributions from Hamilton Health Sciences
- \$75,000.00 in annual contributions from the City of Hamilton
- \$15,000.00 in annual contributions from McMaster’s Department of Family Medicine

The program historically maintains reserve funds to prevent delays in payroll and the continued issuance of staff contracts without annual delays while confirming funding.

Operating Expenses

In FY 2023/24 (April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024), the GHHN Physician Recruitment Program accrued **\$193,737 in operating expenses** attributable to the following expenditures:

- \$148,187 in staff salaries including pension, benefits, EI, and CPP contributions: ~76.5% of total annual operating expenses
- \$45,550 in operational costs: ~23.5% of total annual operating expenses broken down as follows:
 - \$98 in printing charges
 - \$19,625 in general supplies including:
 - Marketing materials for conferences (banners, branded promotional items)
 - General office supplies
 - Supplies for and charges related to shipping of conference materials
 - IT/Software purchases and licenses
 - Equipment purchases (printers, monitors, keyboards etc.)
 - Memberships (CASPR, Southern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance etc.)
 - \$17,539 in conference costs (booth and registration fees)

- \$8,288 in staff travel expenses
 - Flights to/from conferences
 - Mileage
 - Accommodations for staff attending conferences
 - Meals while attending conferences
 - Other miscellaneous travel costs for attending conferences (taxis etc.)

Total Gains/Losses

After removal of the transfer of “Hamilton Physicians” reserve funds and closure of previous “Hamilton Physicians” expense account, the Greater Hamilton Health Network’s Physician Recruitment Program secured a total of \$194,340.10 in new funding for 2023/24 and accrued a total of \$193,737 in expenditures during this period constituting a net gain of \$603.10 in funding which has been added to the program’s existing reserve funds (for a total reserve of \$267,058.57 as of April 1, 2024).

2024/25 Budget

Anticipated Revenue

For 2024/25 the Greater Hamilton Health Network’s Physician Recruitment Program **anticipates a total of \$318,000 in funding contributions** from the following partners:

- \$75,000 from the City of Hamilton
- \$123,000 from Haldimand County
- \$30,000 from the Hamilton Family Health Team
- \$15,000 from McMaster’s Department of Family Medicine
- \$25,000 from McMaster’s Faculty of Health Sciences
- \$25,000 from Hamilton Health Sciences
- \$25,000 from St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton

Anticipated Operational Costs

For 2024/25 the Greater Hamilton Health Network’s Physician Recruitment Program **anticipates a total of \$315,212.61 in operating expenses** and a net surplus of approximately \$2,787.39 this year.

- \$231,712.61 staff salaries including pension, benefits, EI, and CPP contributions: ~73.5% of total annual operating expenses



- Increase in staff salaries related to the addition of new staff (Physician Recruitment Coordinator) to support increased workload associated with Haldimand County recruitment
- \$83,500 in operational costs: ~26.5% of total annual operating expenses broken down as follows:
 - \$500 in printing charges
 - \$20,000 in general supplies including:
 - Marketing materials for conferences (banners, branded promotional items)
 - General office supplies
 - Supplies for and charges related to shipping of conference materials
 - IT/Software purchases and licenses
 - Equipment purchases (printers, monitors, keyboards etc.)
 - Memberships (CASPR, Southern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance etc.)
 - \$20,000 in I.T and/or project support costs
 - Potential to update database
 - Potential to develop app for family medicine opportunities
 - Automating notifications
 - \$25,000 in conference costs (booth and registration fees)
 - Additional conferences added with addition of new staff
 - \$18,000 in staff travel expenses
 - Additional costs associated with addition of new staff
 - Flights to/from conferences
 - Mileage
 - Accommodations for staff attending conferences
 - Meals while attending conferences
 - Other miscellaneous travel costs for attending conferences (taxi etc.)