

GREY BRUCE/OWEN SOUND REGIONAL PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT & RETENTION TASKFORCE REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

April 12, 2024

- 1) Stakeholders – including family practitioners and local municipal recruiters - involved in primary care physician recruitment and retention in Grey and Bruce counties identified the priority for a regional recruitment approach in the April 2019 Grey Bruce Health Forum Report prepared by the South West LHIN and HealthForceOntario, as well as by regional stakeholders who participated in the taskforce consultations in 2023, with consulting services provided by [Kevin Kirkpatrick](#). The 2023 Taskforce Report, including a communications strategy prepared by creative director [Jim Diorio](#), is included with this Executive Summary.
- 2) OHT estimates there are currently **more than 30,000 people in Grey and Bruce counties who don't have a primary care provider**. Grey County is predicted to grow by **over 12,000 households** in the next 25 years. Bruce County is forecast to increase by **8,600 households by 2046**. These projections for population growth suggest **an additional 40 new primary care physicians** will be needed, on top of retirements and other reasons that a physician might leave a practice. Planning therefore must be about not only replacing physicians who leave but also anticipating and developing the capacity to provide primary care to residents and supporting a key driver of economic development – timely access to primary care.
- 3) A regional approach will help us realize our collective potential to optimize what's already being done and fill in some of the gaps. The regional approach to marketing and communications strategies promotes a broader range of career options for candidates and reflects the dynamic appeal of a highly respected multi-centre regional healthcare system, located in an area of abundant natural beauty, arts and Indigenous culture within commuting distance of Canada's major urban centres, ultimately increasing the likelihood of attracting many more highly qualified individuals.
- 4) A regional approach will incorporate administrative and management functions, communications/branding/marketing, potential recruit management, documentation, retention, event management and promotion including specific recruitment activities, evaluation and reporting.
- 5) In Ontario, **regional recruitment approaches have been successfully implemented** in the Niagara Region, Guelph Wellington, Kitchener-Waterloo, and elsewhere. In Southern Ontario, 17 community physician recruitment programs are working together to attract Canadians studying abroad and doctors from the UK, US, Ireland, and Australia. This is facilitated by simplified licensing and repatriation processes to help physicians hoping to work in these regions.

- 6) A regional approach will **enhance efficiency, create synergies, increase the regional profile and improve outcomes** while reducing overall costs of primary care physician recruitment in Grey Bruce.
- 7) The regional approach **will not replace existing municipal recruiters**. A regional approach will consolidate the common activities in a central hub, thereby supporting municipal recruiters to focus on their specific municipal recruitment activities, as discussed and recommended by regional recruiters from Grey Bruce who participated in the 2023 Taskforce consultations.
- 8) Who will provide integration and coordination with existing recruitment and retention efforts? In the January 30, 2024, OHT Partnership Table Briefing Note, the **Grey Bruce Ontario Health Team** proposed a Primary Care Physician Recruitment, Retention and Practice Transitions Framework, which will support planned initiatives of regional recruitment but does not provide funding, leadership or administrative support. **Funding, governance structure, leadership, administration and project implementation will be discussed at the May 1st meeting of potential funders.**
- 9) **Who will fund the estimated annual cost of \$150,000-\$200,000?** Recommendations are that costs be shared across the municipalities and counties on a prorated basis. The proposed non-profit structure to sustain the implementation of a long-term regional recruitment and retention strategy will enable additional grant funding, and accept funding and donations from individuals, businesses, and foundations who are passionate about primary healthcare accessibility, and who have provided funding support to local efforts over the past 20 years.
- 10) **Next steps: On Wed. May 1st, 2024**, the Grey Bruce/Owen Sound Physician Recruitment and Retention Taskforce is hosting a meeting, facilitated by Georgian College, Community Impact Lab Network, Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship for potential supporters. The purpose of the meeting is to explore developing a sustainable, stand-alone not for profit entity that supports physician recruiting in the region and can solicit community investment.

The question that is being asked by constituents is:

IF NOT NOW, WHEN? IF NOT YOU, WHO?