



Elgin - St. Thomas Health Recruitment Partnership

Strategic Plan

2025-2028

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About the Health Recruitment Partnership



Our Mission

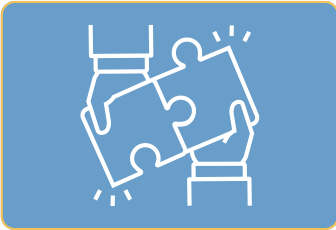
Our mission is to recruit and retain dedicated family physicians and nurse practitioners by fostering strong, long-lasting relationships through innovative programs and incentives. We aim to enhance the health and well-being of our community by integrating skilled healthcare professionals into our region, ensuring that every family has access to quality medical care.



Our Vision

Our vision is to cultivate a thriving healthcare community in St Thomas and Elgin County, dedicated to attracting and retaining committed physicians and nurse practitioners who deliver exceptional patient care. We aim to ensure every resident has access to primary health care by developing creative, successful solutions and programs. We strive to enhance the well-being and satisfaction of our healthcare providers through strong partnerships, resources, and supports that make our community a desirable and sustainable place for physicians to live and practice, ultimately improving the health and quality of life for all residents.

Our Values



Collaboration

Foster a spirit of teamwork and open communication among all stakeholders to ensure a unified approach to recruitment and retention.



Advocacy

To speak, write, recommend, and defend the causes identified to the HRP from Members, Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Local Medical Students/Residents, & Community Stakeholders etc. and to act as an intercessor or mediator to assist with communicating issues and bringing about resolutions to challenges.



Integrity

Maintain transparency and honesty in all recruitment practices to build trust with candidates and the community.



Innovation

Encourage creative solutions and the adoption of new technologies and methodologies to attract and retain top talent.



Commitment

Demonstrate support to our existing family physicians through recognition, acknowledgement and appreciation programs for their long-term dedication to their profession and the community.



Inclusivity

Promote diversity and ensure equitable opportunities for all candidates, regardless of their background.





Challenges



Balancing Public & Private Interests

Ensuring that corporate partnerships align with community healthcare priorities without compromising accessibility.



Implementing Immediate Workforce Solutions

While recruitment strategies are strong, filling current gaps with locum coverage and temporary staffing remains a challenge.



Maintaining Sustainable Municipal Investment

Ensuring municipalities can continuously support healthcare infrastructure without overextending budgets.



Streamlining Healthcare Administration

Successfully implementing AI-driven and centralized administrative processes requires strong governance and training.

Current Recruitment Initiatives



Highlights

Since the initiation of the financial incentive in 2008, 34 family doctors have received the grant.

To date, \$1,123,280 has been awarded.

The Health Recruitment Partnership, via the Health Recruiter position, has recruited over 80% of the current physician workforce in Elgin County.

HRP Financial Incentive Funding Program

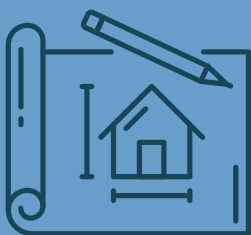
- Initiated in 2008.
- The financial incentive consists of a grant of \$33,000.
- Available for up to four (4) new physicians annually and paid upfront for those starting a practice or replacing a retiring physician.
- The grant funds must be used to enhance the new or existing practice and requires the physician to commit to practicing in Elgin County for a minimum of 4 years.

Current Recruitment *Initiatives*

Administered by the
St. Thomas Elgin
Home Builder's
Association
(STEHBA)

Incentives include:

- Discount to Build a new home or clinic
- Rental of home (if available)
- Upgrades
- Free ancillary products i.e. architectural drawings, etc.



Discount to Build
Program

Administered by
Geerlinks Home
Hardware Building
Centre (St. Thomas)

*Incentives include
discounts on the
following items for both
new builds or existing
homes:*

- Window coverings
- Appliances
- Furniture



Builders Program

Administered by the
Elgin-St. Thomas
Health Recruitment
Partnership

*This scholarship
awards \$1,000 per
year for up to 10
individuals who are
enrolled in a CFPC
accredited medical
school and be in
pursuit of a career in
family medicine.*

Applicants must be a
resident of the County
of Elgin or the City of
St. Thomas.



HRP Student
Scholarship Program

Our Local Context

Elgin County is facing a critical shortage of primary care physicians. Local governments have continued to work collaboratively to attract more doctors to our region. In our community, the average recruitment time is 18-24 months. In 2023/2024, no family physicians were recruited, however, there were no physician retirements.



Of the 50 Elgin Family physicians, 14% are over the age of 65. Those over 65 enroll just over 7,357 patients in their practice.



Approximately 20,000 Elgin County residents have no family doctor.



Elgin needs to attract approximately 14 physicians to meet the standard of 1 doctor for every 1,380 patients.

Provincial Challenges

-  Between July 2022 - June 2023, Ontario Emergency Rooms closed 203 times in 23 hospitals.
-  While primary care is not a municipal responsibility, public health and EMS are strained when patients lack access to family doctors.
-  Over 1.7 million Ontarians have a family doctor 65 years or older; in less than 24 months, 25%, or 425,000 people, will be without a family doctor (OMA).
-  Primary care shortages impact community health and well-being, forcing patients to rely on walk-in clinics or ER visits

Community Insights: Informing the Strategy

The **Health Recruitment Partnership Symposium event**, held in January 2025, brought together key stakeholders—including healthcare professionals, municipal leaders, educators, and community members—to discuss the pressing challenge of family physician recruitment and retention in Elgin-St. Thomas. The event served as a platform for sharing experiences, challenges, and potential solutions to strengthen local primary healthcare services.

What we heard: Priority Areas



Recruitment & Retention Supports

- Financial Supports
- Work-Life Balance
- Mentorship



Expansion of Models of Care

- Nurse Practitioner Expansion
- Public-Private Partnerships



Medical Training & Residency Pathways

- Local Training
- Targeted Recruitment
- Exposure Initiatives



Healthcare Infrastructure: Municipal Role

- Municipal Investments
- Facility Development
- Partnership Solutions



Administrative Efficiency & Modernization

- Reducing Administrative Burden
- Innovative Clinic Models



Addressing Workforce & Coverage Needs

- Locum/Temporary Supports
- Retention of Existing Healthcare Workers

Priority Areas:

Action Plan



Recruitment & Retention Supports

- Enhance the activities of the health recruiter to ensure physicians are visited annually
- Increase acknowledgement, supports, and promotion of preceptorships
- Provide system navigation for childcare, camps, programming, etc. to support physicians and their families
- Collaborate with local businesses and community partners to develop a welcome basket (to include local goods and gift cards, community information and resources, etc.)
- Promote and provide navigation support for physicians interested in accessing financial grants and loans offered by the Elgin Business Resource Centre (EBRC) and City Community Improvement Program (CIP)



Expansion of Models of Care

- Nurse Practitioner Expansion
 - Market and promote available clinics via new HRP webpage
 - Increase advocacy efforts to ensure NP's can practice to full scope
- Support and encourage a cooperative relationship between Elgin County and St. Thomas Communications and Media teams
- Public Private Partnerships
 - Act as a collaboration conduit to facilitate partnership opportunities with community stakeholders (Economic Development Corp, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)



Medical Training & Residency Pathways

- Discovery Week: Continue supporting this initiative and explore ways to target recruitment
- Longitudinal Clerkship (Sarnia Pilot Project)
 - Maintain contacts and explore support needs with STEGH staff
- Explore options to support increased mentorship opportunities

Priority Areas:

Action Plan



Healthcare Infrastructure: Municipal Role

- Advocate at the Provincial level for different types of clinic models, including municipally run clinics
- Explore and develop a business case/plan for a local municipally operated clinic and facility development
- Investigate opportunities to provide clinic leasing opportunities for new graduates with a scheduled tiered lease agreement



Administrative Efficiency & Modernization

- Explore opportunities for providing municipal staff support by way of administrative staff for physician led clinics, including support for human resources, recruitment, and full benefit packages
- Develop skeletal business plan, with coordination and support from EBRC including marketing of opportunities, wrap around administrative supports, and points of contact
- Ensure committee remains up to date on timely Provincial incentives, supports, and programs to allow for increased advocacy work and ability to respond and adapt to modernized legislation



Addressing Workforce & Coverage Needs

- Improve connections and relationship to SCHULICH
- Establish and maintain an updated list of locums on new HRP webpage
- Increase visibility with Health Recruiter role
- Establish a process for recognizing retiring doctors with a Council letter and certificate



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