



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 25-119**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Craig Desjardins, Director, Office of Strategy, Innovation & Partnerships
Resource Staff: Dajana Turkovic, Workforce Development Analyst
Date of Meeting: April 1, 2025
Subject: Annual Update on Family Physician Recruitment

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 4. Foster a Caring and Inclusive Community

Goal: 4.3 Increase access to healthcare professionals and services.

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the outcomes of the City's efforts to attract and retain family physicians in Kingston and to request an additional investment of up to \$600,000 for 2025 to support ongoing family physician recruitment. Council will be aware that the City has approved a total \$3 million over the last couple of years to address unattached patients in the community, as detailed in [Report Number 24-045](#) (Update on Family Physician/Primary Care Recruitment Efforts in Kingston).

Since the launch of the City's recruitment incentive program in early 2022, 25 family physicians have been attracted to Kingston. Of these, eight are net new doctors who have rostered approximately 8,100 previously unattached patients. The remaining 17 physicians replaced retiring or departing doctors, thereby preventing 14,500 attached patients from losing access to primary care for a total impact of 22,600 patients attached or retained.

2024 was a busy and successful year for physician recruitment, including the launch of the Primary Care Clinic Grant. This grant encouraged local clinics to review their operations and propose solutions to improve efficiency. As a result, 5 clinics have added approximately 6,000 new patients to their rosters without recruiting additional physicians. The clinic grant also

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supported two clinics in retaining 5,700 patients, bringing the combined impact of this program to 11,700 patients attached and retained.

The City also joined the Eastern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance (EOPRA) as a co-founding member in 2024. This collaboration has expanded the City's reach beyond Canada, connecting the corporation with international family physicians looking to relocate. Additionally, the City received a grant from the Government of Ontario to support the attraction of bilingual family physicians to support Kingston's Francophone population. The marketing campaign has resulted in two bilingual family physicians being attracted.

With current and anticipated commitments to physicians and clinics, as well as very modest program expenses for marketing, recruitment events, and relocation support, the program has now committed the majority of the current \$3 million budget resulting in 14,100 unattached patients being rostered and supporting the retention of 20,200 patients.

Staff is aware of several family physicians planning to retire in the next three years and have identified six to seven family physician prospects interested in either taking over a practice or helping expand care at one of Kingston's clinics in 2025.

While accurate data from the Ministry of Health on unattached patients in Kingston lags by at least a year, estimates put the current figure at less than 9,000. In discussions with the local Ontario Health Team (OHT), they estimate we will have all Kingston unattached patients rostered by the end of 2025. The focus of programs could then shift to maintenance (replacement of retiring physicians) and see the City reduce financial and staff resourcing commitments.

City staff recognize that healthcare services are a provincial responsibility and that municipalities do not receive funding to finance healthcare services. Unfortunately, municipalities have been pressured to address these health care challenges as they have local economic and social impacts. The recent provincial announcement of more than \$1.8 billion to support the creation of the health home model of primary care, currently piloted in Kingston, across the province underscores the need for municipal participation in this important public policy issue.

Recommendation:

That Council approve the allocation of up to \$600,000 from the Working Fund Reserve to support the continued delivery of the Kingston Family Physician Recruitment Program and Clinic Grant Program; and

That Council direct staff to apply for funding opportunities for projects that support the recruitment of family physicians; and

That the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute return for service agreements and Clinic Grant Agreements with family physicians and clinics as part of the City's family physician programs in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal Services.

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Background

The previous City Council approved funding of \$2 million over eight years for the development of a family physician recruitment program, as detailed in [Report Number 24-045](#). In January 2024, this Council approved an additional \$1 million in top-up funds, which have allowed for the continuation of existing recruitment efforts and supported the introduction of a new clinic grant initiative to connect unattached residents with family physicians.

The existing incentive program includes a \$100,000 payment over five years in exchange for a Return of Service Agreement and provides relocation support through the City's NEST* Program (formerly the Dual Career Support Program). Over the past three years, staff have worked with community partners to successfully attract 25 family doctors, with six additional physicians expected to be signed in 2025. While attracting family physicians is the primary goal, several other processes and program supports have been implemented to ensure ongoing success. These include:

- Creation of a family physician advisory group, comprising local doctors, clinic managers, healthcare advocates, and the Kingston Chamber of Commerce.
- Development of landing pages and attraction marketing campaigns in French and English.
- Building a strong relationship with the Queen's University Family Medicine Residency Program.
- Partnering on the creation of the Periwinkle Model (Midtown Clinic) of primary care.
- Ongoing evaluation of the program's efficacy through interviews and extensive secondary research conducted by researchers at St. Lawrence College and Queen's University.

Initiatives Completed and Underway:

The development of Kingston's Family Physician Recruitment Program to address unattached patients was based on best practices adopted from other communities, engagement with local family physicians and clinics, and support from the Queen's University Family Medicine Residency Program. Initiatives that have been completed or are currently underway include:

Creation of a bilingual physician talent attraction portal

This portal, which includes video testimonials from local family physicians, can be found at <https://kingston.possiblemadehere.org/physicians/>. It is reviewed and updated regularly. In 2024, the City applied for and received a Francophone Community Grant from the Ministry of Francophone Affairs. This \$28,000 grant enabled the City to significantly expand marketing efforts to attract bilingual physicians, purchase swag for events, and host three recruitment events for Queen's family medicine residents. Additionally, the City was able to offset some of the program's administrative costs using the grant funding.

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Implementation of the recruitment incentive program

This program includes a \$100,000 financial component paid out over five years and access to the [NEST* Program](#). To date, local clinics have successfully recruited 25 physicians, either as replacements for exiting physicians or as new additions. Recruitment is ongoing, and the City anticipates adding another six physicians in 2025. While the program has been successful in ensuring that Kingstonians do not lose access to primary care and in reducing the number of unattached patients on the Healthcare Connect list, physician shortages will continue to be challenging as more physicians approach retirement.

Creation of the Family Physician Recruitment Working Group

This group, with representation from local primary care stakeholders including physicians, clinic managers, the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce, and the Francophone community, has been instrumental in developing the recruitment program and clinic grant. It continues to provide feedback and guidance on new initiatives. As a result, the City has been able to host recruitment events at minimal cost, triage inquiries to connect interested physicians with suitable opportunities, and gain insight into the needs of the local physician community to better support them. The Primary Care Clinic Grant described in this document was developed with the insights and expertise of this group.

Closer collaborations with Queen's University and SEAMO (Southeastern Ontario Academic Medical Organization)

Through the relationships with the Family Medicine Residency Program, the City has been able to connect with current residents and host several networking events that have created awareness of the recruitment program, enabled residents to connect with local physicians and clinics, and supported relationship development in primary care. The City continues to nurture this relationship through regular communication and check-ins. In February 2024, staff attended the Queen's University Family Medicine recruitment fair to support local family physicians and clinic representatives. City staff also hosted two events and sponsored one. In 2025, the City has already hosted one networking event and aims to continue engaging with residents at Queen's from their arrival in first year until graduation. More recently, and as a direct result of the work with EOPRA, staff have been able to connect SEAMO with several medical specialist physicians interested in relocating to Kingston.

Partnering on the Creation of the Periwinkle Model of Primary Care

The City was a key partner in developing the Periwinkle Model, originally proposed by Dr. Jane Philpott. The City funded the development of a business plan and committed to supporting the recruitment of family physicians for the clinic. Funding for the implementation of the Periwinkle Model was approved by the province in early 2024, and the clinic has been operational since July as the Midtown Health Home, with a planned relocation to 309 Queen Mary Road in January 2026. Midtown serves as the provincial pilot of the interdisciplinary and person-centric healthcare model, focused on ensuring Ontarians have access to quality team-based primary care close to home, as outlined in the Periwinkle business plan. The model was designed to be

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scalable, and additional Health Home sites have already been added, one in Napanee and one in East Kingston, with the Ontario Health Team (OHT) planning for more. The recent provincial announcement of \$1.8 billion to support the creation of health homes across Ontario indicates the province's support of this model currently piloted in Kingston. Kingston is a pioneer in the primary care space, and the need for municipal participation in this important public policy issue remains both urgent and consistent.

Launch of the Primary Care Clinic Grant

Several local clinics indicated they could take on more patients with sufficient allied health and administrative supports but lacked the upfront funding to get started. The Clinic Grant Program was developed in response to this and launched in May 2024. It offered up to \$100,000 to clinics with concrete plans to expand patient rosters and enhance care accessibility through technology, administrative support, and allied professionals. Proposed projects had to demonstrate sustainability and commitment to patient access and retention, focusing on new patient attachment through Healthcare Connect, accessibility of care through same-day appointments and after-hours clinics, and the reduction of pressure on urgent and emergency care services. After a rigorous review process, seven grants were awarded between September and December 2024. Participating clinics agreed to attach an additional 1,000–1,200 patients beyond those added through other municipally funded incentives. In addition to successfully reducing the number of unattached patients in the community, grant funds also supported the establishment of the East End Health Home, which has cleared the Healthcare Connect List in the East End of Kingston and plans further expansions in 2025.

Independent Project Assessments

1. In collaboration with the Health Innovation and Life Science (HIYGK Project) grant-funded project, the City completed an independent assessment of the Family Physician Recruitment Program in 2023. Through one-on-one interviews, researchers connected with the first cohort of physicians who received the incentive and gathered valuable insights into how we can tailor the program to meet the needs of our target demographic. More information can be found in the Analysis section of this report.
2. In January 2025, the City began working with the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies to review and assess the effectiveness of the family physician recruitment program through the program's Community-Based Programming and Evaluation course. The report will be presented in Q2 2025.

2025 Initiatives:

Promotion of Healthcare Connect

In collaboration with the FLA Ontario Health Team (OHT), City staff are working on expanding a bilingual educational engagement campaign to promote the use of Healthcare Connect (HCC) in the region. HCC is a provincial program that refers residents without a primary care provider to physicians and nurse practitioners who are accepting new patients in their community.

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Unfortunately, ongoing shortages in primary care have resulted in understaffing, excessively long wait times, and general disappointment with the program. However, HCC remains the best tool for tracking unattached patients and connecting them with care when it becomes available. The success of the physician recruitment efforts has led to movement on the HCC list, and it is currently used by several local primary care clinics to build out rosters. It is therefore essential that unattached Kingstonians get on the list. This will once again be primarily a social media campaign, focusing on raising awareness, demystifying the registration and connection process, and answering frequently asked questions through a dedicated landing page.

Continued Engagement with EOPRA Initiatives

In 2024, the City of Kingston joined EOPRA (Eastern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance), one of five regional alliances under OPRA (Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance). As a member, the City gains access to a database of candidates recruited at international and domestic recruitment fairs and conferences, including both primary care providers and specialists. One family physician referred through the group is currently interviewing with a local clinic and several specialists are currently in conversation with Queen's University. In 2025, staff will continue to engage with EOPRA initiatives by attending monthly meetings, participating in recruitment events when feasible, and supporting the planning of future initiatives.

Development of an Updated Family Physician Supply Plan

Several local clinics have indicated anticipated retirements in the next three to five years. To prepare, the City needs to gain a better understanding of the current workforce, identify anticipated gaps in primary care, and develop strategies to address them.

Greater Focus on International Recruitment

Changes in licensure requirements for physicians from the United Kingdom, the United States, Ireland, and Australia have resulted in increased interest from international physicians. City staff are developing a process to support these physicians as they visit Kingston and get to know the community through partnerships with local organizations. Additionally, staff are working on a process to support clinics interested in international recruitment but unfamiliar with the intricacies of the LMIA (Labour Market Impact Assessment) process.

Focus on Data-Driven Analysis and Decision-Making

The City is co-leading the development of GIS (geographic information system) applications with the OHT and ESRI Health (the City's GIS platform provider) to improve the processes of designing of health homes and optimization of the assignment of unattached patients. A more data-driven methodology will allow for greater efficiency and scaling of the health home model to the rest of the Province.

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Explore Interdisciplinary Care Models Including Changes to Nurse Practitioner Billing

Staff will continue to work with primary care stakeholders to identify and implement innovative programs that support an interdisciplinary care model for primary care in the community. This includes anticipated changes to billing eligibility for Nurse Practitioners which could present an opportunity improve outcomes of our programs.

Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations

Staff continue to work with other project partners including the OHT, physician clinics, and family physicians to address the primary care access needs of barriered and underserved populations including Francophone, indigenous, senior and high-risk health populations.

Financial Considerations

Staff are recommending that up to \$600,000 be allocated from the Working Fund Reserve to support the ongoing family physicians and clinic improvements initiatives to reduce unattached patients. The Working Fund Reserve is recommended as a funding source, as health care services are not a municipal responsibility and should not be funded as an ongoing municipal expenditure. The Working Fund Reserve will have a remaining balance of approximately \$8.3M.

Contacts:

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Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

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Exhibits Attached:

None