

**Kelly Lush**

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**From:** Kelly Lush  
**Sent:** December 6, 2024 11:18 AM  
**To:** Kelly Lush  
**Subject:** FW: Ontario Adding 100 New Family Doctors in Rural and Northern Communities

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**From:** Ontario News <[newsroom@ontario.ca](mailto:newsroom@ontario.ca)>  
**Sent:** December 5, 2024 3:05 PM  
**To:** Jennifer White <[jwhite@huronkinloss.com](mailto:jwhite@huronkinloss.com)>  
**Subject:** Ontario Adding 100 New Family Doctors in Rural and Northern Communities



## NEWS RELEASE

# Ontario Adding 100 New Family Doctors in Rural and Northern Communities

Practice Ready Ontario program will connect more than 120,000 people to primary care in 2025

**December 05, 2024**  
[Ministry of Health](#)

PALMERSTON — The Ontario government is continuing to create new pathways to connect more people to primary care in the province by breaking down barriers for 100 internationally trained family physicians to practice medicine in a rural or northern community in 2025. Through the Practice Ready Ontario program, foreign-trained doctors can become licensed more quickly and connect an additional 120,000 people to care, where and when they need it.

“Our government is continuing to take bold and innovative action to ensure everyone who wants a primary care provider can connect to one,” said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “Through the Practice Ready Ontario program, we are taking another step to connect more people to world-class primary care right in their own communities, now and for years to come.”

The province launched the [Practice Ready Ontario](#) program in 2023 to bring more internationally trained physicians into Ontario’s health care workforce faster by removing the requirement to complete unnecessary re-education programs. Starting in

2025, up to 100 internationally trained physicians with training in family medicine who have completed their field assessment will begin practicing as a family doctor in northern and rural communities.

Each internationally educated physician who participates in the program is required to complete a 12-week assessment to ensure they have the skills and competencies needed to practice in Ontario. This program also requires physicians to complete a three-year return of service as a family doctor in a rural or northern community. To ensure they are prepared for their return of service, the assessment includes training in all aspects of rural family medicine across a variety of practice settings. This includes an office, hospital, emergency department, and long-term care and home care settings.

The new Practice Ready Ontario program builds on the considerable investments the government is making to close the gap for the remaining 10 per cent of people who want to connect to a primary care provider, including increasing the number of [primary health care teams](#) and making the largest [expansion of medical schools](#) in over a decade.

As announced in the [2024 Fall Economic Statement](#), the province is investing an estimated \$88 million over three years to expand [Learn and Stay](#) grants for 1,360 eligible undergraduate students who commit to practice family medicine with a full roster of patients once they graduate. It is estimated the total investment will connect an additional 1.36 million people to primary care based on average attachment rates for family doctors. The funding will cover all tuition and other direct educational costs like books, supplies and equipment in exchange for a term of service as a physician in any community across Ontario.

Through [Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care](#), the Ontario government continues to take bold and decisive action to grow the province's highly-skilled health care workforce and ensure people and their families have access to high-quality care closer to home for generations to come.

## Quick Facts

- Only candidates who met the registration requirements and safeguards set by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) were selected to participate in the program. These safeguards are based on national Practice Ready Assessment Standards established by the Medical Council of Canada.
- Ontario leads the country in how many people benefit from a long-term, stable relationship with a family doctor or primary care provider. Since 2018, more than 15,000 physicians have joined the health care system, including a nearly 10 per cent increase in family doctors.
- Ontario has opened two new medical schools and expanded medical school seats adding 260 undergraduate seats plus 80 undergraduate seats from York

University as well as 449 postgrad positions plus 102 postgrad positions from York University.

- The province recently [appointed Dr. Jane Philpott](#) to lead the government's Primary Care Action Team with a mandate of connecting everyone to primary care within five years.
- The Ontario government's historic expansion of interprofessional primary care teams is connecting 330,000 more people across the province to primary care. Through the [2024 Budget](#) the province is investing an additional \$546 million to connect 600,000 additional people to primary care.
- Touchstone Institute is working with the Government of Ontario and the CPSO and others to administer the Practice Ready Ontario program.

## Quotes

"This is another example of our government working to expand primary care access in rural Ontario. Whether it is family physicians or nurse practitioners, we are ensuring more people in Ontario have access to the care they need, closer to home. It is great to see local organizations like Minto Mapleton Family Health Team leading this charge."

**- Matthew Rae**  
**MPP for Perth-Wellington**

"This important initiative continues to demonstrate our government's commitment to ensuring rural and northern communities have the supports they need, close to home. By way of the Practice Ready Ontario program, we are ensuring more people and families have access to necessary primary care in their communities, all the while recognizing and appreciating the international training and medical expertise of individuals who choose to make Ontario their home."

**- Lisa Thompson**  
**Minister of Rural Affairs**

"We are so excited to have been matched with an internationally trained physician through the Practice Ready Ontario program. Dr. Luzinga's expertise and commitment will be a huge asset in meeting the healthcare needs of our growing and aging community. This opportunity will ensure more people in our community will have access to a primary care provider, strengthening health outcomes and supporting our commitment to accessible, team-based, quality care."

**- Elizabeth Boyne**  
**Administrator for Minto Mapleton Family Health Organization**

"The Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) supports the Government of Ontario's continued effort to expand primary care access through the Practice Ready Ontario Program. This program expansion will increase the availability of family doctors in

Ontario and improve access to care in many communities that face unique challenges in recruiting physicians. Improving access to primary care, including family medicine, means greater focus on prevention, less pressure on hospitals in rural and remote parts of Ontario and better health outcomes for patients."

**- Anthony Dale**  
**President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association**

"The Practice Ready Ontario initiative expedites the integration of internationally trained physicians into Ontario's health care system, allowing them to provide much-needed care to Ontarians faster. It's encouraging to hear that more internationally trained family physicians will be able to begin practicing in rural and Northern communities where the needs are immense."

**- Deepy Sur**  
**CEO, Ontario College of Family Physicians**

"Creating more opportunities for internationally educated physicians to practice family medicine in Ontario will help ensure every Ontarian has a family doctor and timely access to specialists. Many qualified internationally trained physicians would like to practise in Ontario but face unnecessary barriers to getting their licence. We are pleased to see the additional investment in this program, which will help provide care for unattached and underserved communities. We look forward to continuing to work with the government to build on this success by expanding and further strengthening the program."

**- Kimberly Moran**  
**CEO, Ontario Medical Association**

"Practice Ready Ontario's success reflects Touchstone Institute's 20 years of dedication to supporting internationally trained physicians. This program is a powerful solution that makes a real difference in underserved communities. We thank our partners and the government for their leadership in expanding this vital initiative."

**- Nicole Beben**  
**Chief Executive Officer, Touchstone Institute**

## **Additional Resources**

- [Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care](#)
- [Ontario Doing Even More to Grow its Health Care Workforce](#)

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