

Interim Report Family Physician Recruitment Working Group

Robert Johnston on behalf of the Working Group

October 6, 2025

What we know....

**There is a distinct
gap in healthcare
coverage in our area;
community
members view this
as a top priority**

Community surveys have revealed areas related to healthcare access are the top priority among residents – outpacing all other areas by a significant margin

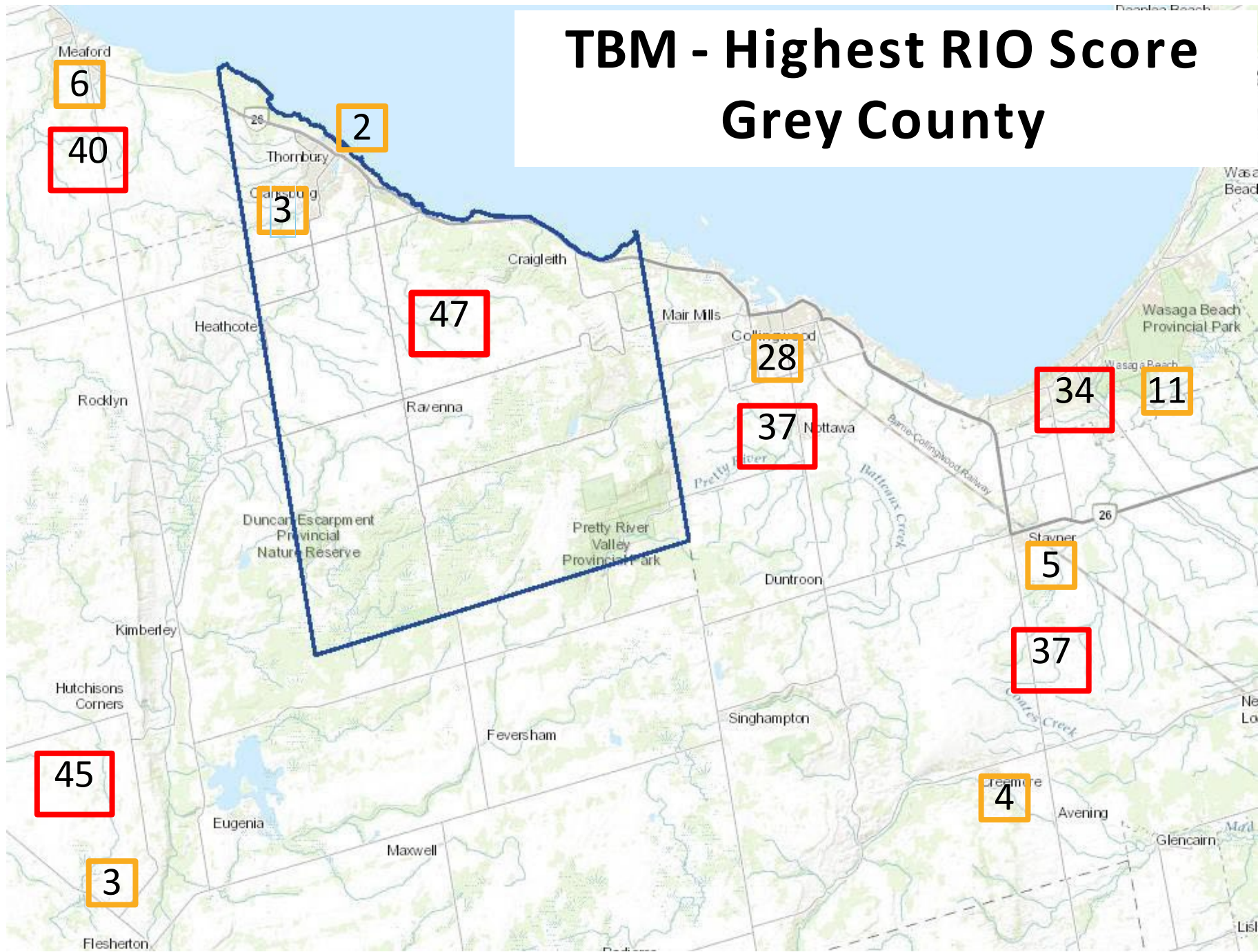
- In 2024, 81% of survey respondents rated *attracting and retaining family doctors* as a high priority for this term of council
- And 78% felt *increased access to family healthcare* should be a high priority for next term of council

Government Data supports that this is not just a perceived gap, but a gap that is particularly significant in our immediate area; presenting unique opportunities for funding and support.

TBM - Highest RIO Score Grey County

Family
Physicians

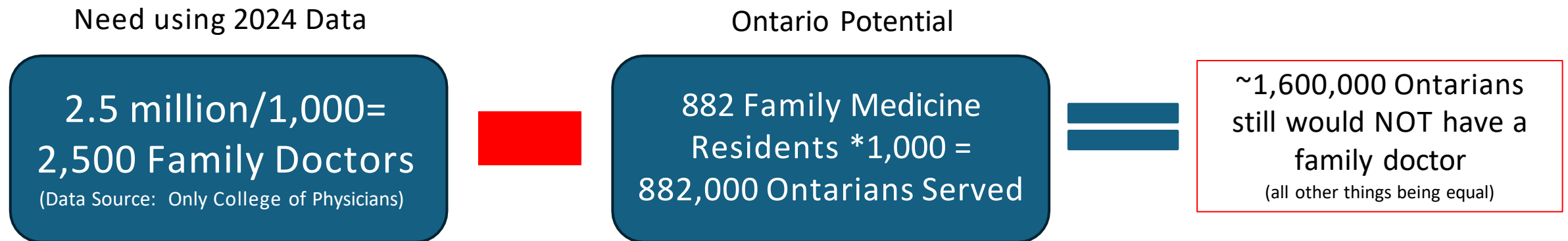
RIO
Score



**The gap is widespread and will
not be easy to fill**

Family Physician Gap

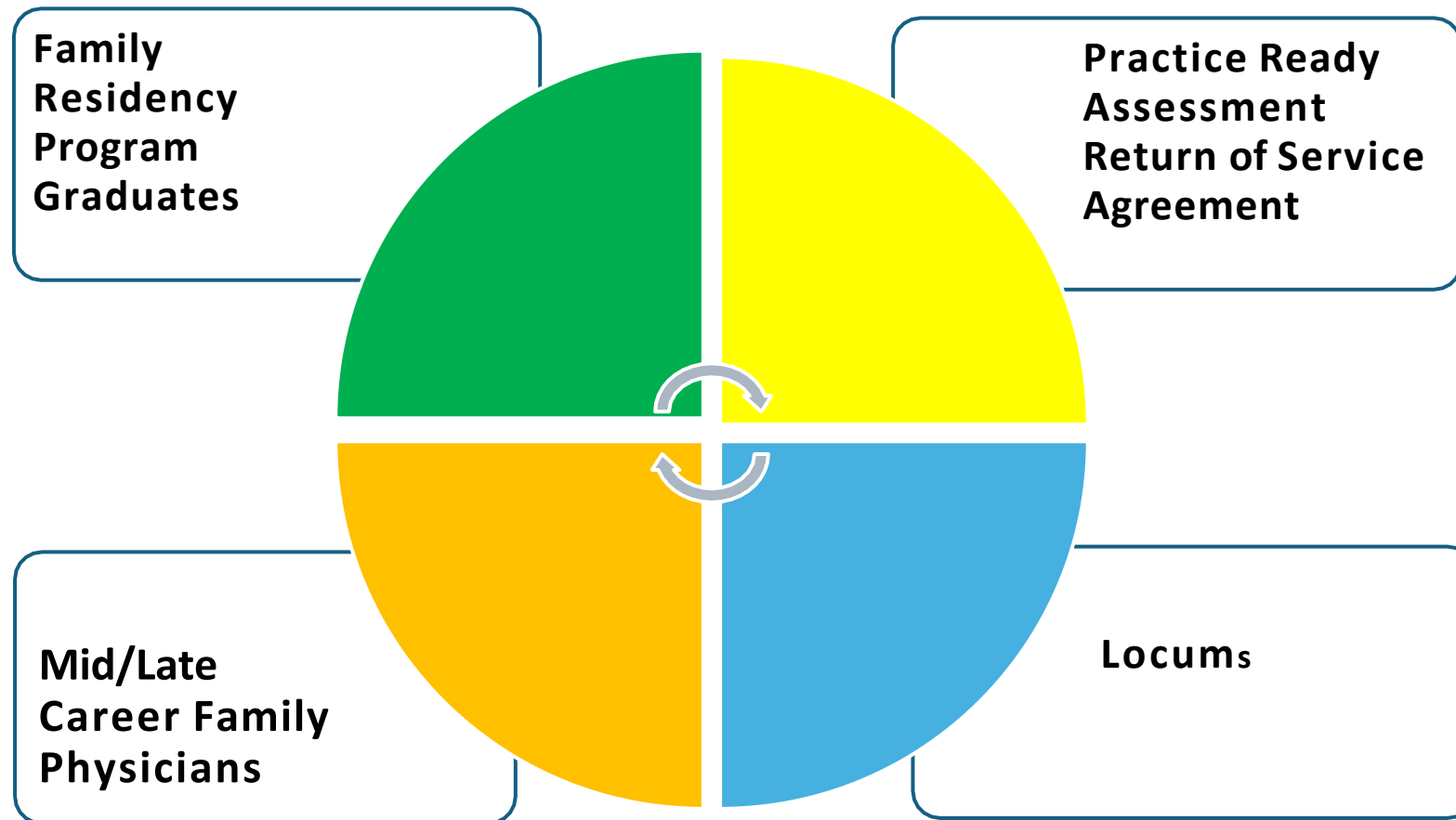
Assuming an average roster size of 1,000 patients. The rate of new Family Physicians is unable to close the gap. This does NOT take into consideration a widening number of Ontarians without a family physician which is increasing at a rate faster than population growth.



This basic calculations also assumes that all doctors leaving their province of training would come to Ontario. Highlighting that the gap would be even larger than shown above.

Our current plan/approach...

Develop Strategies for Physician Recruitment



Family Medicine Residencies (2025)

Data Source: <https://www.carms.ca/>

	Positioned Filled 2025 (1st and 2nd Iteration)	Total positions by Province	Retention Rate within Province	Size of Opportunity for Ontario (N=)
Memorial University of Newfoundland	35	120	Less than 40%	72
Dalhousie University	85		Less than 40%	
Université Laval	116			
Université de Sherbrooke	101	484	85% or higher	66
Université de Montréal	159			
McGill University	108			
University of Ottawa	84			
Queen's University	75			
NOSM University	49			
University of Toronto	185	631	80% or higher	505
Toronto Metropolitan University	49			
McMaster University	103			
Western University	86			
University of Manitoba	80	141	~60%	56
University of Saskatchewan	61			
University of Alberta	69			
University of Calgary	92	365	~50%	183
University of British Columbia	204			
Total	1741		Total Potential for Ontario	882

Ontario represents the greatest opportunity in terms of size for recruitment.

Four Universities to pay attention to:

- 1) **McMaster** has a connection to this region – it feeds specific residencies
- 2) **U of T** has the largest size of opportunity
- 3) **Toronto Metropolitan** is running a new program this year
- 4) **Western University** has potential for our area

Early Days with Return of Service . . .

- Dr Bali has started her practice at the Blue Mountains Community Health Centre. She is also providing patient care services at the Meaford Hospital. Her priority is taking patients who do not have a family physician in Ontario. She is also providing patient care services at the Meaford Hospital
- The Working Group is involved with another local Family Physician from the same local Family Health Organization in recruiting another Return of Service.

Based on Research Factors Influencing Successful Recruitment and Retention are:

- Team Based Care, Family Health Teams
- Local Physician Leadership to support recruitment and mentoring etc.
- Family considerations
- Community marketing and onboarding
- Financial Incentives and Housing
- Current and future clinic space
- Working collaboratively with the Rural Ontario Medical Program (ROMP) based in Collingwood

**What happens in the
meantime...**

Call for Proposals for Interprofessional Primary Care Teams

- Next call for Interprofessional Primary Care Teams is open and due date is November 14, 2025
- The working group is actively engaged in this process...

Ontario



Importance of Healthcare Resource Information being available to Residents and Visitors

- Examples of some include:
 - Emergency Departments;
 - Walk in clinics
 - Local resources, i.e. Nurse Practitioners, Pharmacists
 - Virtual services
 - 24/7 Helplines

**What is needed to move
forward...**

Our Ask of Council Today....

- \$100,000 for consideration in 2026 budget year
- \$10,000 expenditure for local physician leadership from the dedicated reserve
- Include a Physician Recruitment page within the Town website
- Designated town contact to respond to inquires from potential medical candidates by phone, or email through the above website
- Approve the *Accessing Primary Care/Walk-in Clinic/Emergency Care Locally for Residents of The Blue Mountains* information for publication on the town website
- To extend the FPRWG to October 2026 (end of this term of Council)

Thank you and Questions

Appendix

Accessing Primary Care/Walk-in Clinic/Emergency Care Locally for Residents of The Blue Mountains

In 2024 the Residential Satisfaction Survey again stated the highest priority initiatives for respondents was 'Attracting and retaining Family Doctors (81%), an increase from the 2022 survey where 78% of respondents indicated that they considered the attraction and retention of family doctors to be of the highest priority. Most recently, our Strategic Plan Survey 2025 revealed when asked 'Where would you like to see the Town focus its attention over the next several years?' Health Care access at 53% ranked 5th out of 25 items.

Please find below an information sheet regarding access to primary care/Walk-in Clinic/Emergency Care for residents of The Blue Mountains prepared by the Family Physician Recruitment Working Group.

Health811 (formerly Telehealth Ontario)

Health811 (formerly Telehealth Ontario) is a free, secure, and confidential service that provides health advice and information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can access it by calling **811** or visiting the [Health811 website](#). This service is an easy way to get connected to care you or your loved ones need, but it does not replace your other touch point with your health care provider. In a medical emergency call 911 immediately.

Collingwood General and Marine Hospital

Collingwood General and Marine Hospital (CGMH) takes pride in its inspired team of healthcare professionals who are committed to delivering high-quality care through innovation, collaboration, and strong partnerships. CGMH proudly serves over 74,000 permanent residents and welcomes millions of visitors annually across Collingwood, Clearview Township, the Town of The Blue Mountains and Wasaga Beach. CGMH offers a comprehensive range of services, including 24/7 Emergency Department care, General Medicine, Internal Medicine, General Surgery, Orthopaedics, Critical Care, Obstetrics, and various specialty clinics.

CGMH's [ED Fast Track Program](#) lets you prebook emergency department (ED) visit arrival times for minor lacerations, urinary tract infections, skin infections and rashes, minor fractures, colds and flu.

CGMH (including its 24/7 Emergency Department) is located at 459 Hume Street, Collingwood, Ontario, L9Y 1W9. Visit cgmh.on.ca for more information.

Brightshores Health System as supplied by Brightshores Communications department

Brightshores Health System operates six hospitals in one of Ontario's largest geographic regions, we serve a predominantly rural population of 175,000 residents, thousands of seasonal residents and more than two million annual tourists.

Our dedicated team of 2,100+ staff, 250+ physicians and 1,000+ volunteers delivers a full range of services, including 24/7 emergency care at every hospital site. The continuous development of specialty programs in cancer, stroke, kidney disease and more ensures patients receive quality care and support within our regional network of hospitals across Grey Bruce.

The virtual urgent care services offered in Grey Bruce are now through [Urgent Care Ontario | Get A Virtual Urgent Care Appointment](#) this link and a description from their website wo

Brightshores Meaford Hospital (24/7 Emergency Department) is located at 229 Nelson St W, Meaford, ON N4L 1A3

Collingwood After Hours Clinic

<https://southgeorgianbayoht.ca/after-hours-clinics/>

The Collingwood After Hours Clinic is a walk in style clinic for South Georgian Bay residents who need medical advice about a healthcare concern AND cannot access their own Doctor or Nurse Practitioner. The Collingwood After Hours Clinic is operated by our local Family Physicians and is located at 186 Erie Street, Suite 100A, Collingwood, ON, L9Y 4T3, 705-445-9711 for information about clinic opening hours and services.

Health Care Connect, Ontario Government's agency for Finding a Family Physician locally

[https://hcc3.hcc.moh.gov.on.ca/HCCWeb/faces/layoutHCCHomePage.xhtml?sW=1280&sH=720&btype=Netscape&bver=5.0%20\(Windows%20NT%2010.0;%20Win64;%20x64\)%20AppleWebKit/537.36%20\(KHTML,%20like%20Gecko\)%20Chrome/137.0.0.0%20Safari/537.36&ajax=y](https://hcc3.hcc.moh.gov.on.ca/HCCWeb/faces/layoutHCCHomePage.xhtml?sW=1280&sH=720&btype=Netscape&bver=5.0%20(Windows%20NT%2010.0;%20Win64;%20x64)%20AppleWebKit/537.36%20(KHTML,%20like%20Gecko)%20Chrome/137.0.0.0%20Safari/537.36&ajax=y)

Health Care Connect assists you with your search for a family health care provider. You must have a valid OHIP card to be part of the program.

Health Care Connect is here to help, but it doesn't guarantee that a family health care provider will be found. You are urged to keep searching on your own for a provider. Be sure to contact your Care Connector if you move, find a doctor or if there are changes in your health needs.

You will be referred to a family physician or a nurse practitioner in your community once one is found. You are then responsible for calling to book an appointment.

More information about Health Care Connect is available by means of their Frequency Asked Questions, please click on this link: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-family-doctor-or-nurse-practitioner>

Local Nurse Practitioners in Private Practice, some services are OHIP funded

Nurse Practitioners assess, diagnose, treat and monitor a wide range of health problems using an evidence-based approach to their practice. OHIP covers diagnostics, lab work, and specialist referrals. Private Nurse Practitioners cannot bill OHIP for their time though this is scheduled to change in 2026.

Melody Fox is currently in private practice at Blue Mountains Community Health Centre, 78 King Street East, Thornbury and book online through. <https://melodyfoxnp.com/>

Lindsay Myles, is currently in private practice, seeing patients virtually and in person, booked online through <https://www.mountainmetabolic.care/>

Pharmacist OHIP Covered Services (confirmed with Pharmacists at Pharmasave)

Pharmacists can access and potentially prescribe certain medication to treat the following common ailments:

- Acid reflux (gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD))
- Acne
- Canker sores
- Cold sores (herpes labialis)
- Dermatitis (atopic, eczema, allergic and contact)
- Diaper rash
- Hay fever (allergic rhinitis)
- Hemorrhoids
- Impetigo
- Insect bites and hives
- Menstrual cramps (dysmenorrhea)
- Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy
- Oral thrush (candidal stomatitis)
- Parasitic worms (pinworms and threadworms)
- Pink eye (conjunctivitis; bacterial, allergic and viral)
- Sprains and strains (musculoskeletal)
- Tick bites (post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent lyme disease)
- Urinary tract infections (UTIs)

- Yeast infections

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/pharmacies>

Ontarians seeking care should visit their local pharmacist and bring their health card.

MedsCheck Program

If you are taking multiple medications, the MedsCheck Program, available at most pharmacies, helps ensure that you are getting the most benefit from your medications and that you are taking them as prescribed.

- Anyone taking a minimum of three medications and who has an Ontario health card is eligible for the MedsCheck Program.

Smoking Cessation Program

- If you want to quit smoking, you might be eligible to receive one-on-one support and counselling from a pharmacist as part of the Smoking Cessation Program.
- Anyone who is eligible for the Ontario Drug Benefit plan can enroll in the Smoking Cessation program. It involves completing a readiness assessment and consultation, as well as a year of counselling sessions. The Smoking Cessation Program is part of the Smoke Free Ontario Strategy.

Virtual Services covered by OHIP

Maple, Telus and **Rocket Doctor** offer OHIP-covered Family Physician consultations to Ontario residents with a valid OHIP health card. Eligible patients may need to complete an intake form to commence the process.

- <https://www.getmaple.ca/contact-us/#>
- <https://www.telus.com/en/health/my-care>
- <https://rocketdoctor.ca/online-doctor-in-ontario/>

Naturopathic Medicine - OHIP does not fund any services

Dr. Patrice Butterfield

A Naturopathic Doctor based in Thornbury, diagnoses with treatment drawing from a number of modalities (therapies) tailored to the individual. Treatments may include clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, homeopathic medicine, physical treatments, acupuncture and Asian medicine, and lifestyle counselling. Naturopathic medicine is a distinct form of primary health care. OHIP does not cover any services. Appointments can be made by means of this website: <https://patricebutterfield.ca>

Cancer Screening – direct bookings and OHIP funded

Here is information about direct bookings for mammograms, colonoscopy/FIT tests, pap smears.

- If you are 40-74 and have not had a screening mammogram in the last 2 years, you can contact the Ontario Breast Program at the Collingwood Hospital yourself at 705-444-8670. You can also book an appointment for a mammogram by calling 1-800-668-9304 or visiting the [Ontario Breast Screening Program Locations Website](#).
- If you are 50-74 with no first-degree relative (parent, sibling or child) with a history of colorectal cancer, you can obtain a Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) by contacting Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-828-9213
- If you require a cervical cancer screening test, the South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team runs semi-regular cervical screening clinics for individuals who do not have a family doctor. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Mole Mobile

Created by Melanoma Canada to bring awareness to the importance of getting checked for skin cancer

<https://melanomnetwork.akaraisin.com/ui/molemobile/ontario>

Vaccine Clinic – OHIP funding would need to be confirmed with the clinic

There is a Vaccine Clinic at 78 King Street East, Thornbury hours at time of publishing are 8-3pm Monday to Thursday, and 8-12pm on Fridays or call 519-599-2732

Mental Health Services

211 is a helpline that easily connects people to the social services, programs and community supports they need.

The 211 helpline is answered by real people 24/7. Service is available in 150+ languages. Text is also available 24/7. Live chat service is available Monday to Friday from 7am-9pm.

<https://211ontario.ca/chat/>

If you or someone you know is **thinking of suicide** – call **911** or go to your **nearest hospital**.

Suicide Help Line:

In crisis? 988 is here to help. Call or text 988 toll-free, anytime.

Farmer Wellness Initiative:

1-866-267-6255, available 24/7 to provide Ontario farmers, farm families, farm employees, and spouses and dependents of farm employees with free, unlimited mental health counselling, specific to the unique challenges that can be experienced by the agricultural community.

DRAFT

Government Data - Rural Index Ontario (RIO) Reflects our Need

Government data indicates the unique service gap for Family Physician and the high level of residents without a local Family Physician in TBM. Potentially 4,000 residents do not have a local family physician, and 2,000 are unattached.

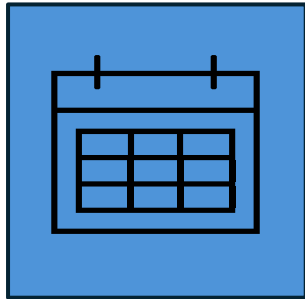
The Rurality Index for Ontario (RIO) score is a measure of rurality that ensures funding is specifically targeted to northern and very rural communities and is derived from the following three factors:

- Population (count and density)
- Travel time to a basic medical assistance
- Travel time to an advanced medical centre (hospital)

A RIO score >40 show deficiency and qualifies for special incentives

Source: RIO scores are assigned to Statistics Canada census subdivisions

What is Return of Service (ROS)?



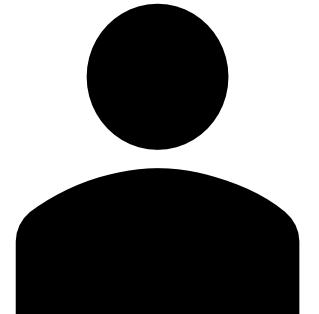
Three (3) year agreement with the Ministry of Health



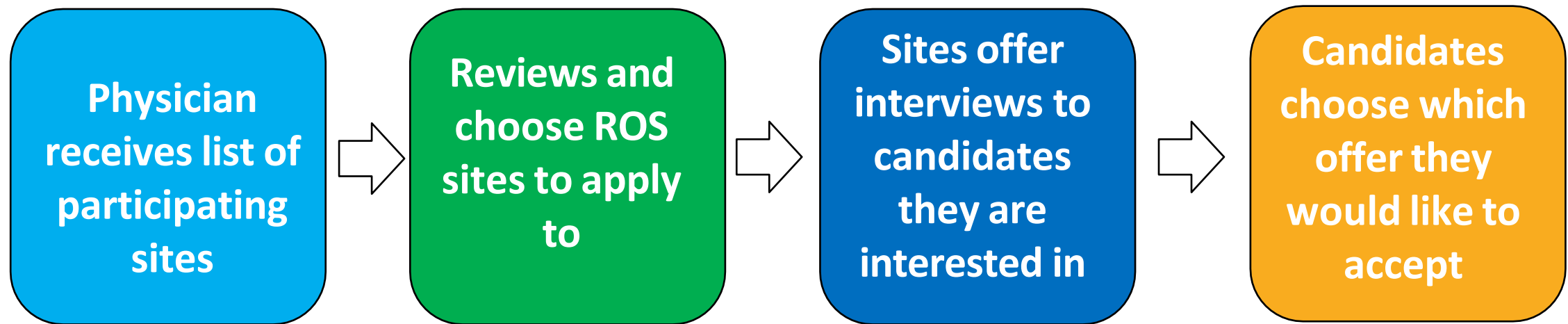
Restricted License for the full three (3) years to approved ROS community



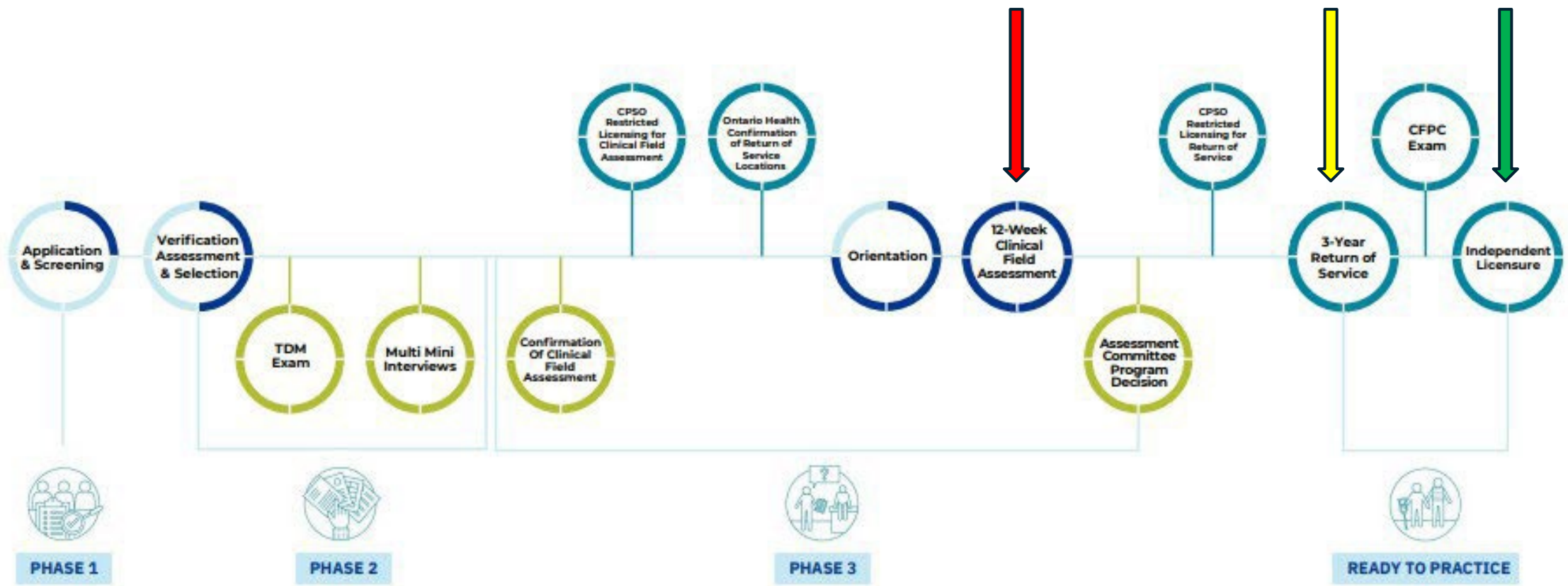
Must take and pass the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) exam within the three (3) year ROS timeframe



How Are Physicians Matched to a Return of Service?



Return of Service Career Pathway



Locums and Mid-Late Career Family Physicians

- The Rural Locum Programs locum:
 - They provide replacement and vacancy coverage
 - During this time there is an opportunity to them to become familiar with the local medical community and what The Town of The Blue Mountains offers
- Mid –Late Carer
 - This stage of any career may bring questions about professional growth, optimizing work life balance, teaching, and lifestyle all of which a rural practice

Ontario Primary Care Action Plan led by Dr. Jane Philpott



Ontario is investing over **\$1.8 billion** to connect every person in Ontario to primary care.

Connecting you to a primary care team

Create and expand **305** additional teams to attach approximately **2 million people** to primary care.

- Invest more than **\$235 million** in 2025-26 to establish and expand **80** additional primary care teams across the province, attaching 300,000 more people to primary care this year.

- Establish **standards** for what every Ontarian can expect when accessing primary care services.

- Provide **regular public updates** on progress and performance in achieving the Primary Care Team's mandate.

Making primary care more connected and convenient

Modernize Health Care Connect to improve the user and provider experience, with the goal of establishing a wait time target of no more than 12 months.

-

- Attach everyone (as of January 1, 2025) on the **Health Care Connect waitlist** to a primary care team by **Spring 2026**.

-

- Enhance **digital tools** for providers and patients, improving patient navigation, reducing administrative burden and improving the **referral process**.

-

- Leverage Health811 to view **online health records, book an appointment** with their primary care provider, and discover care options.

-

- Set **regular performance indicators** of primary care teams.

Supporting primary providers

Introduce targeted strategies to **recruit and retain** the workforce needed to support primary care providers and teams, including family doctors, nurse practitioners and other allied health professionals.

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Address administrative burden with digital tools, targeted recruitment and retention strategies for northern and rural communities and ensure all of Ontario's highly qualified health care professionals can work to their full scope of practice.

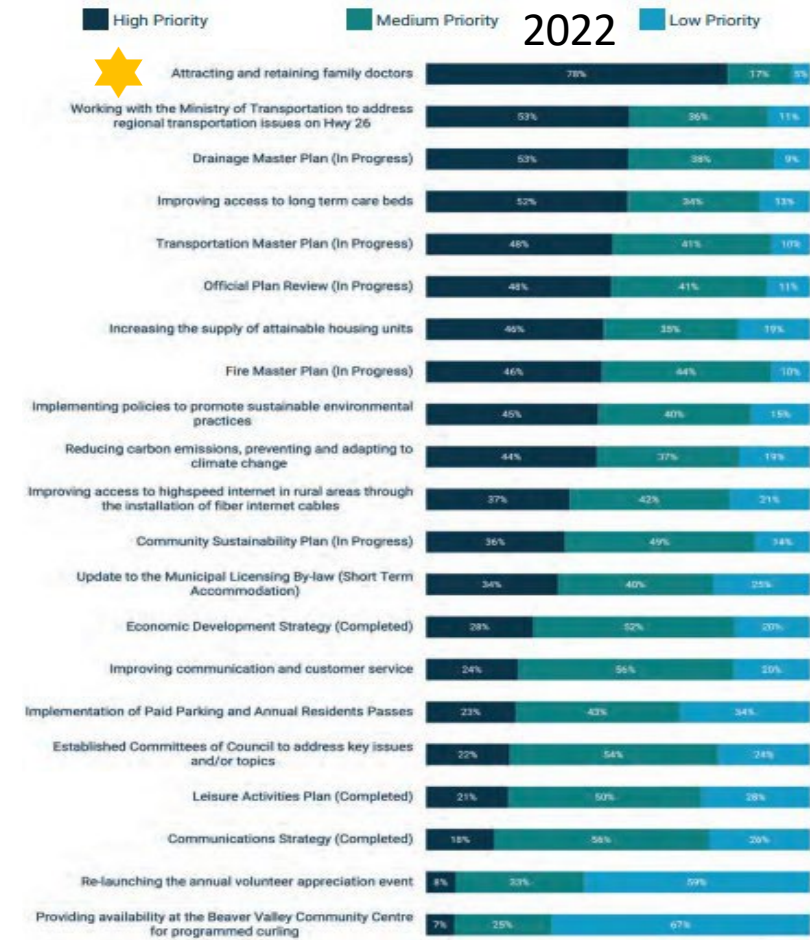
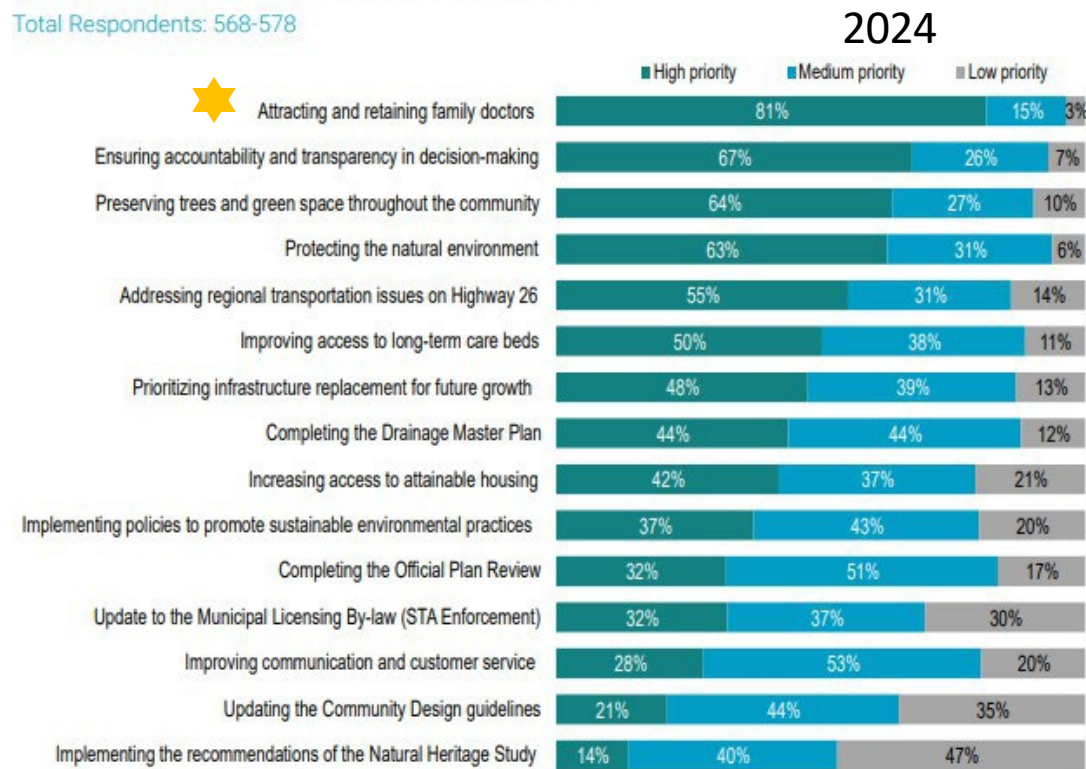
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- based **primary care teaching clinics** in collaboration with academic institutions and other partners.

Attracting and retaining Family Physicians is also most likely to be seen as high priority in both years for the current term of Council

Q: Throughout the current term of Council, several new initiatives have been prioritized. In your opinion, please indicate your priority for each of the following items.

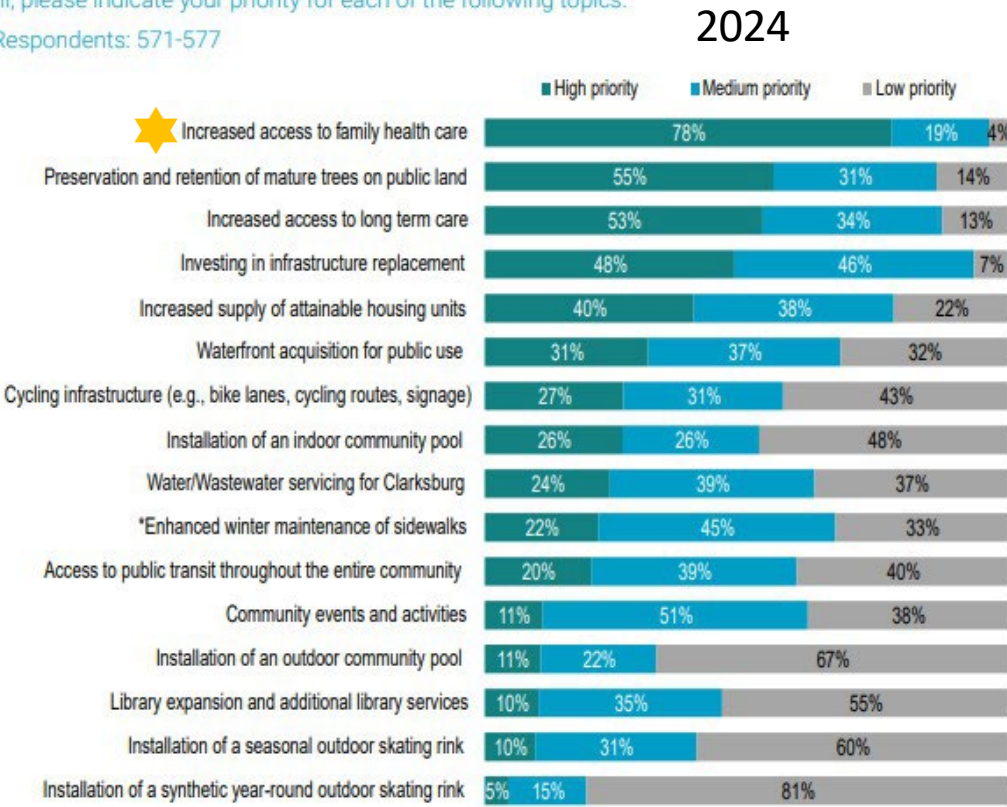
Total Respondents: 568-578



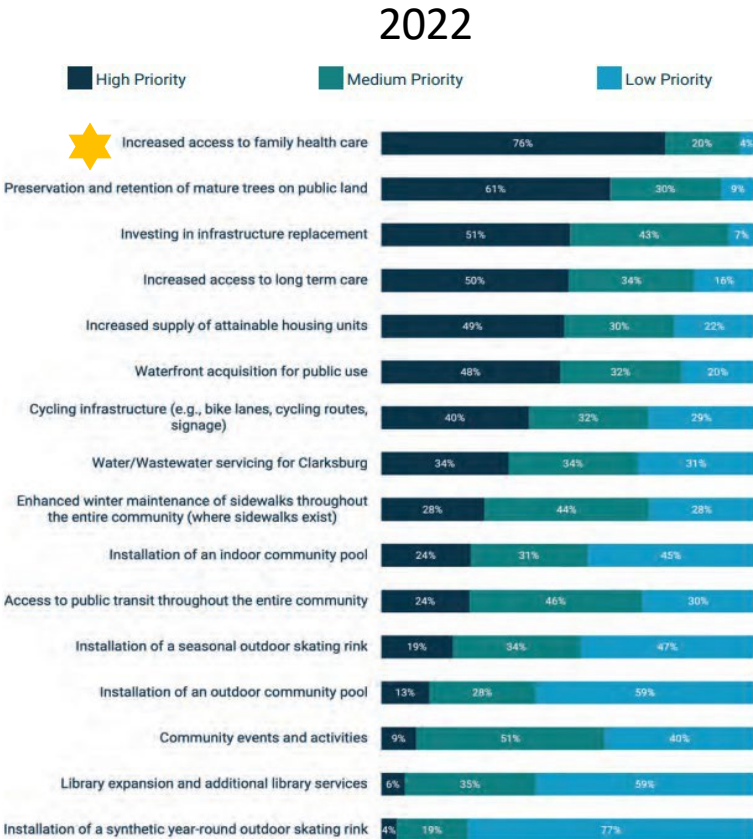
Increased access to Family Health Care was the highest priority in 2022 and 2024 for the next term of Council

Q: To help guide what projects the Town of The Blue Mountains should focus on during the next term of Council, please indicate your priority for each of the following topics:

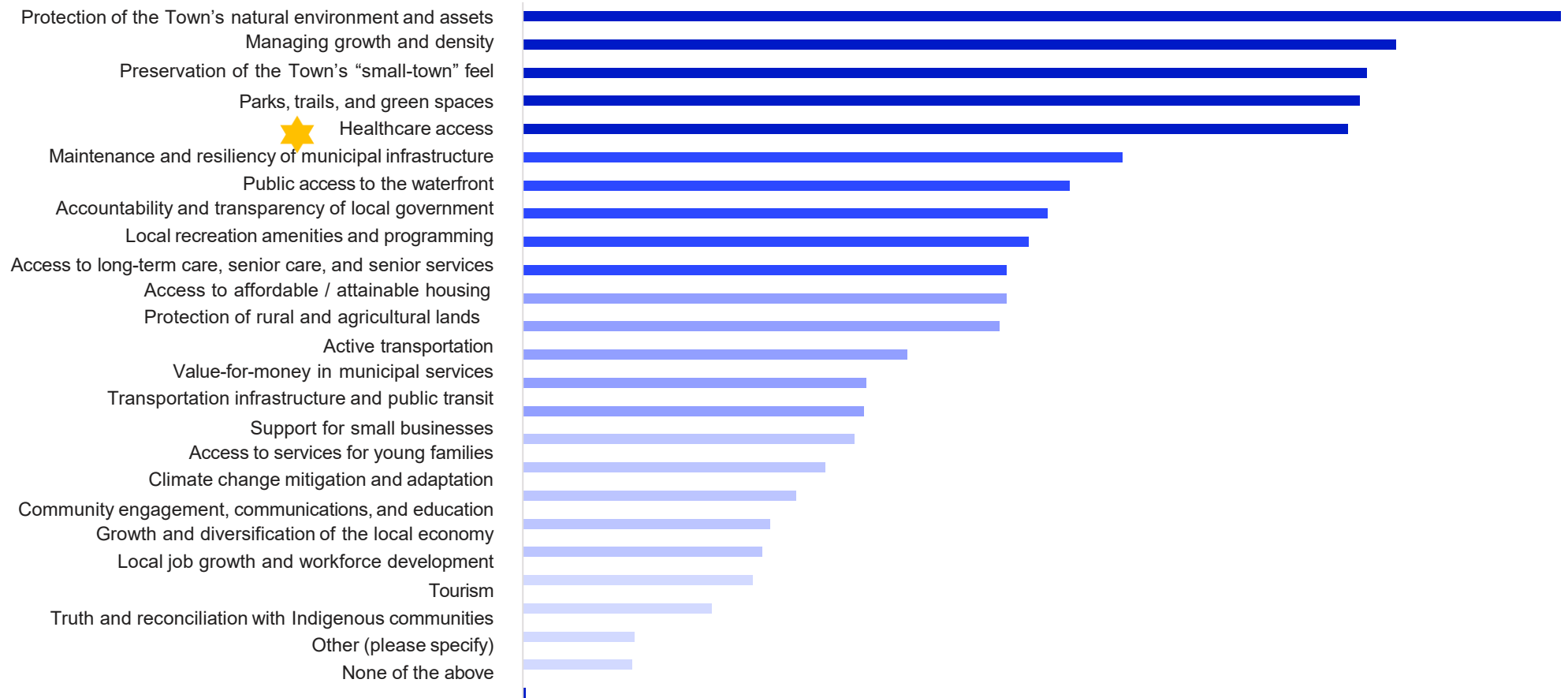
Total Respondents: 571-577



*Enhanced winter maintenance of sidewalks throughout the entire community (where sidewalks exist)



Where would you like to see the Town focus its attention over the next several years?



(source: Strategic Plan Survey 2025)