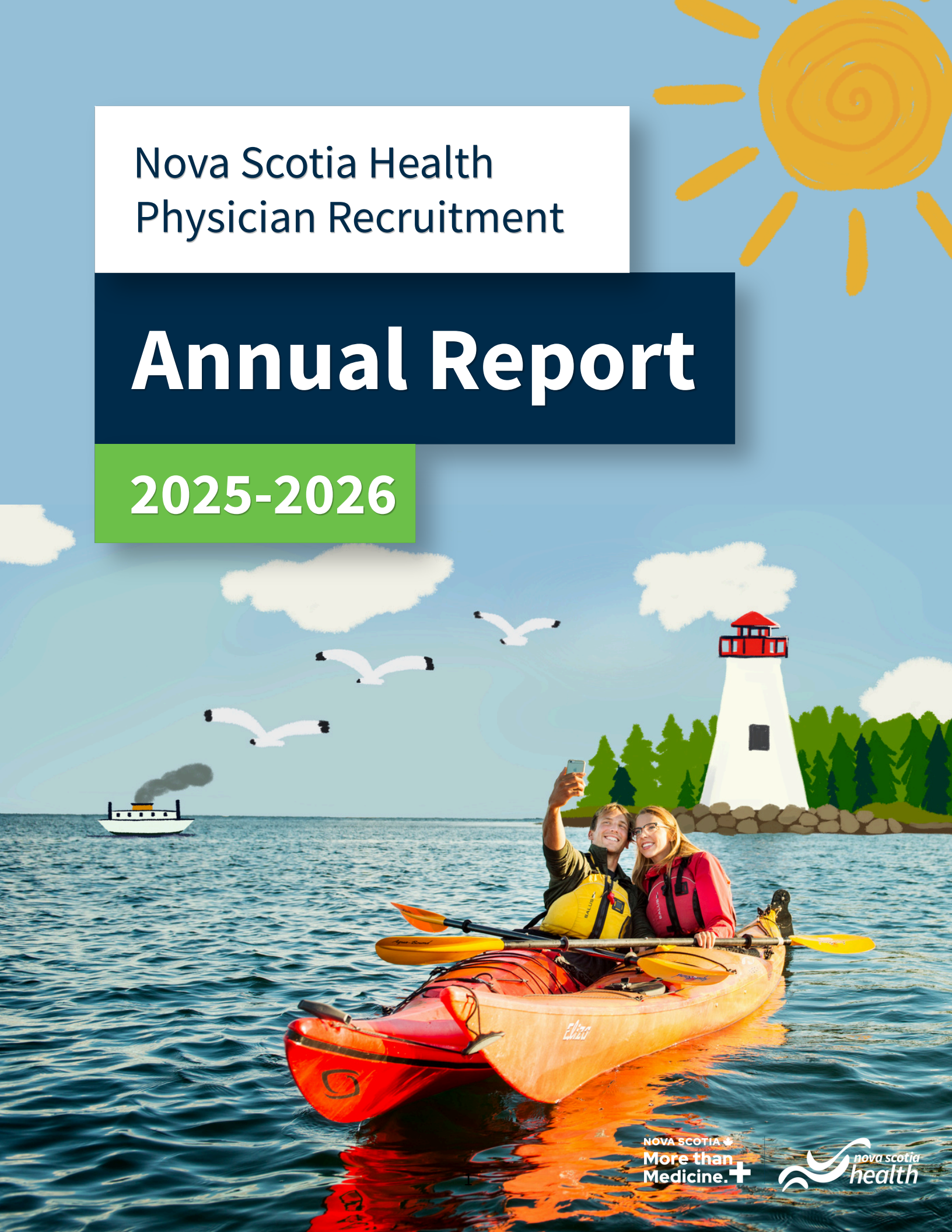


Nova Scotia Health  
Physician Recruitment

# Annual Report

2025-2026



NOVA SCOTIA  
More than  
Medicine. +





## Table of Contents

03

### A Message from Dr. Nicole Boutilier

04

### Recruit

Specialist recruitment

05

Family medicine recruitment

06

Resident recruitment

07

International recruitment

10

12

### Identify

Conferences and events

12

More Than Medicine+

13

Continued partnerships

15

18

### Retain

Onboarding

18

Longitudinal Family Medicine (LFM) Model

19

First Nations Family Medicine

19

Hospitalist Medicine Program

20



## A Message from Dr. Nicole Boutilier

It's been another successful year for physician recruitment at Nova Scotia Health. Together, we continued to make strides on our [Physician Recruitment Strategy \(2024-2027\)](#) to identify, recruit and retain doctors to Nova Scotia – united in a shared goal of healthy populations for generations.

Between April 1, 2025 and March 31, 2026, we welcomed 278 new doctors to the province – a net gain for 199 physicians. Of those, 111 are family doctors – a 25 per cent increase in family medicine recruitment from last year – and 167 are specialists, including 12 who began working at the IWK Health Centre.

We continued to connect with medical learners and work with partners to attract and retain bright minds in our province. This opportunity expanded this year, with the opening of Dalhousie's newest medical campus in Cape Breton, adding 30 seats to increase family medicine service to rural communities.

Our international recruitment efforts continued strong momentum from last year, yielding 113 internationally trained physicians in 2025-26, including 33 from the United States (12 per cent of all recruited physicians). Read more about the work we're doing to advance PACE and provide pathways to South African doctors in this report.

This work directly correlates with our commitment to timely access to care for Nova Scotians. On April 1, 2025, we reported 93,683 individuals on the Need a Family Practice Registry; a year later, as of April 1, 2026, this number is sitting at 61,947. This difference of more than 31,000 individuals removed from the registry – now attached to a family doctor, nurse practitioner or confirmed they no longer need one – demonstrates strategy, partnership and dedication. It's a meaningful difference and something we're very proud to be a part of.

So, let's take a moment to celebrate our wins, but never lose sight of the road ahead. We know there is more work to do and we remain committed to meeting the needs of Nova Scotians. Thank you to the physicians, partners and communities who join us on this journey – we can't do it without you.

Sincerely,



Nicole Boutilier  
Executive Vice President of Medicine and Clinical Operations, Nova Scotia Health  
Co-Lead, Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment



# RECRUIT

# 278

## New Physicians in Nova Scotia

# 167

### New Specialist Physicians

# 111

### New Family Physicians

# +199

## Net Gain

# 40%

### International Recruits

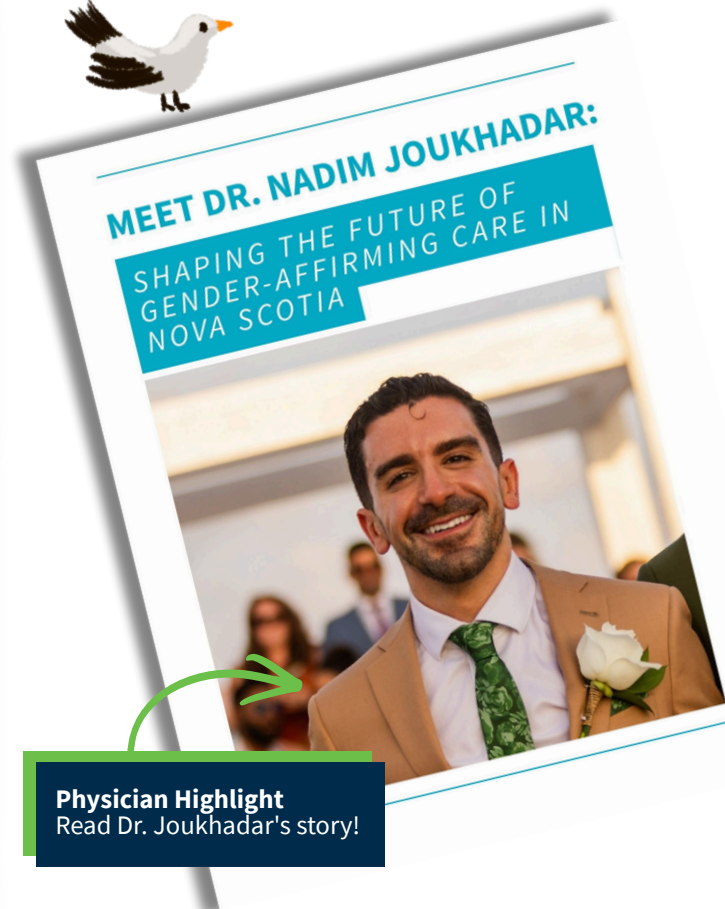
# 79

### Physician Departures

### Recruitment Activity

Our recruitment efforts are having a real and measurable impact across Nova Scotia. In 2025-26, Nova Scotia welcomed 278 physicians to our province, a 10 per cent increase compared to last fiscal year.

More doctors in Nova Scotia is translating into better access to care for patients. At the time of this report, there were 3,700+ physicians licensed in Nova Scotia.



\*\*Values reflect the most recent data available at the time of reporting. Net gain is defined as the difference between starts and departures. Departures due to changes in scope of practice or relocation within Nova Scotia are excluded. IWK data are included where applicable.

## Recruitment Across Specialties

In 2025-26, we hired 167 physicians across all specialties, with notable success in these specialty areas.

Top specialty hires by FTE



**Physician Highlights:**  
Click each photo to read their story!

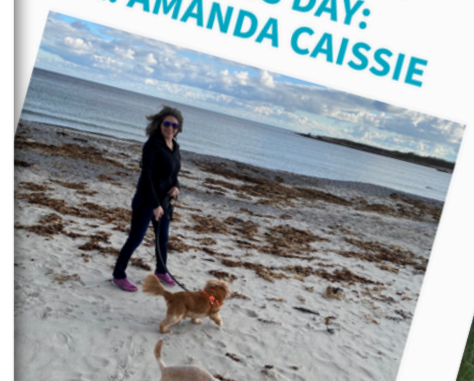
### CAPE BRETON NEUROLOGY TEAM EXPANDS



### CANADIAN WOMEN PHYSICIANS DAY: DR. CHERYL PUGH



### CANADIAN WOMEN PHYSICIANS DAY: DR. AMANDA CAISSIE





APRIL 1, 2025

93,683

Nova Scotians on the Need a Family Practice Registry



31,736

No longer on the registry

APRIL 1, 2026

61,947

Nova Scotians on the Need a Family Practice Registry

### Family Medicine Success

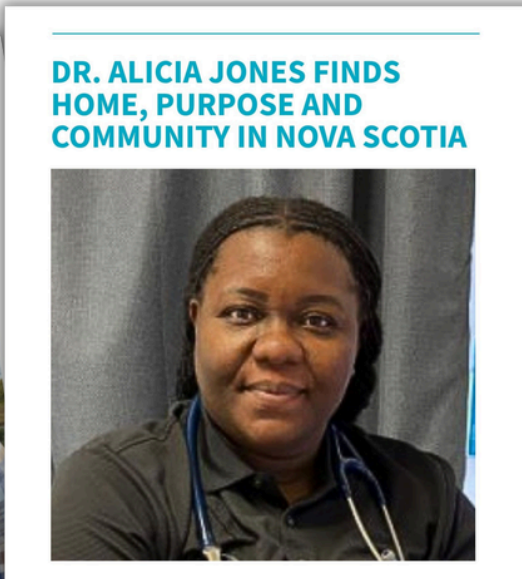
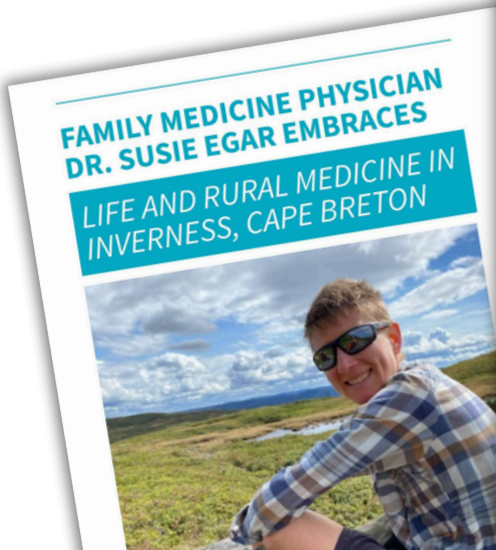
Strong recruitment outcomes mean more Nova Scotians can access a regular primary care provider.

The 111 new family doctors hired last year have been a catalyst in reducing the number of Nova Scotians on the Need a Family Practice Registry (NFPR) – from 16.2 per cent in June 2024 to 5.7 per cent in April 2026. Our achievements were even greater in Central Zone (Halifax area, Eastern Shore and West Hants), where only 3.1 per cent of Nova Scotians are now registered on the NFPR as of April 2026.

Continued investments from the government enabled Nova Scotia Health to add health homes across the province and enhance those that already exist. These investments, in combination with our recruitment successes, are driving remarkable outcomes, particularly around improving patient attachment and stabilizing care continuity during provider transitions.

This year, focused efforts were made to ensure family medicine residents were aware of the extensive investments in primary health care across the province, the longitudinal family medicine (LFM) payment model, including opportunities for flexible practice arrangements to support varied workloads. Emphasis was also placed on the continued expansion of collaborative, team-based care models to enhance sustainability and patient outcomes in health homes.

Physician Highlights:  
Click each photo to read their story!



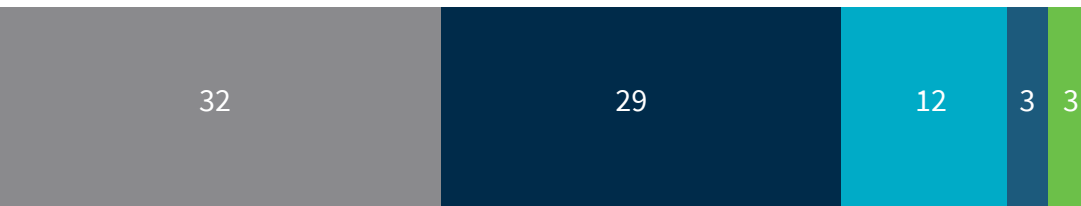
## Resident Recruitment

Dalhousie University’s Medical School remains a key focus for our physician recruitment efforts. We are committed to meeting medical learners along their journeys, exposing them to opportunities across communities in the province and finding pathways to practice in Nova Scotia.

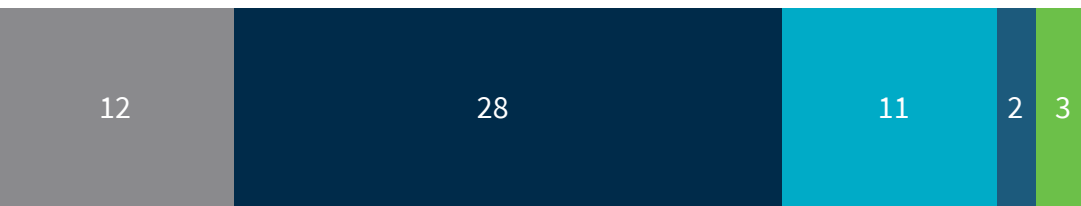
Our efforts are paying off, as Nova Scotia Health continues to see strong results with a growing proportion of trainees choosing to stay and practice within the province following graduation.

### Family Medicine Residents (Maritime-based)

All Family Medicine Graduates (79 total)



Nova Scotia-Trained Residents (56 total)



- Practising Physicians in Nova Scotia
- Locuming in Nova Scotia
- Pursuing additional education
- Off-cycle
- Practising in other jurisdictions



40

started practice in Nova Scotia



2

completing locums



18

pursuing additional training

### Specialty Residents

A total of 108 specialty residents graduated during the reporting period. Many have already started practice in Nova Scotia or are pursuing additional specialty training.



## 2025-2026 campus breakdown (129 seats)

99

Halifax Campus  
(Dalhousie)

30

Cape Breton Campus  
(CBMC)

### A Focus on Medical Learners

#### Increasing Capacity

We know that when we encourage residents to train in Nova Scotia, we increase the likelihood that they will establish their practices here and serve our communities long-term.

This opportunity increased in June 2025, with the province announcing funding for more seats for Nova Scotians who want to become doctors.

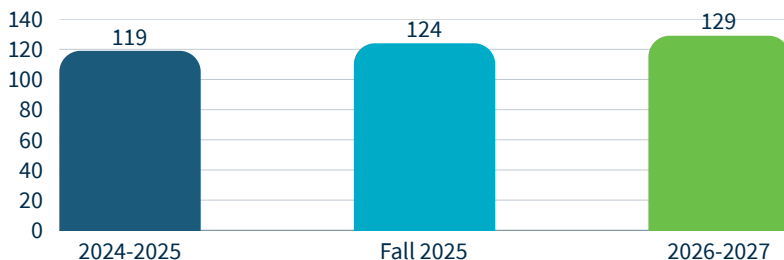
Beginning in Fall 2025, an additional five first-year seats have been allocated for Nova Scotia residents in the Doctor of Medicine program at Dalhousie University. Five more seats will be added in the 2026–27 academic year.

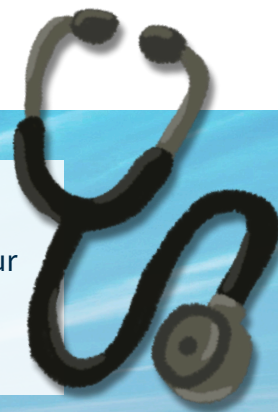
Through strategic investment, total first-year capacity grew this year to 129 seats: 99 seats at Dalhousie’s Halifax campus and 30 seats at the new Cape Breton medical campus (more information below). For the 2025 intake, 114 of the 129 seats (88 per cent) were reserved for Nova Scotia residents.

#### Cape Breton Medical Campus Opens

Dalhousie University’s Cape Breton Medical Campus officially welcomed its first class of medical students in Fall 2025. This new campus, a partnership with Cape Breton University, is designed to train 30 new doctors each year, with seats allocated for family medicine service to rural communities.

#### Medical school seat growth





## Resident Wellness Week

Resident Wellness Week is a time to recognize and celebrate physician residents across our province. In February, we were pleased to highlight a few of these resident physicians, whose contributions are making a meaningful difference in our province.

**MEET OUR RESIDENTS**

"I felt a true sense of belonging through the diversity of residents and preceptors, especially in community practices like Fall River, where interprofessional teamwork is the norm. Being supported both clinically and personally reinforced my commitment to practicing family medicine in Nova Scotia."

**Dr. Jennifer Emesh**  
Dalhousie University PGY2, Family Medicine, Wellness Representative, Halifax

Resident Wellness Week 2026

**MEET OUR RESIDENTS**

"I'm incredibly grateful for the support throughout my residency. Our department is deeply committed to resident wellness, safe learning and teaching and I truly couldn't have done it without my amazing co-residents."

**Dr. Jensen Doucet**  
Anesthesia Chief Resident, Halifax PGY4

Resident Wellness Week 2026

**MEET OUR RESIDENTS**

"Training in New Glasgow, I've felt valued by both my community and my preceptors since day one. There is a strong culture of support, with staff and allied health professionals who are genuinely invested in resident education and who create a welcoming space to ask questions and grow."

**Dr. Caitrin Sobey Skelton, MD, BSc**  
Dalhousie University PGY2, Family Medicine, North Nova Co-Associate Chief Resident

Resident Wellness Week 2026

## Meeting Medical Learners Where They Are

Nova Scotia partnered with other Maritime provinces to host another successful Medical Resident Education Week event. Our recruitment team came together with communities to engage residents in the locations where they were trained and hit the road to meet medical learners across Eastern Canada with an interest in Nova Scotia. We also joined with partners like Dalhousie and Maritime Resident Doctors (MARDOCs) for a number of events, including CaRMS match day, Family Medicine Resident Education Weekend, rural week, webinars and more.

**MEETING MEDICAL LEARNERS WHERE THEY ARE**

**DR. DENNIS BROWN'S RESIDENCY JOURNEY IN NOVA SCOTIA**

**Physician Highlights:**  
Click each photo to read their story!

## Locum Strategy Outcomes

Locum work remains a strong entry point for medical learners and visiting physicians, alike.

This past year, Nova Scotia Health placed 87 locum physicians across the province in emergency medicine, hospitalist and family medicine, with the highest usage rates seen in Eastern and Central Zones. Locum physician feedback consistently highlights strong team-based practice environments and efficient onboarding. Through these efforts, two physicians converted to permanent positions in 2025-26.

We took a more deliberate multi-channel approach to locum recruitment this year. Our Search Engine Marketing (SEM) initiative drove the addition of five U.S. physicians to our locum roster, while our Locum Facebook page membership grew 37 per cent to 344 physicians. We also began posting locum opportunities weekly to the More Than Medicine+ LinkedIn page to further expand our reach.

## International Recruitment

We saw success in international recruitment this past year, meeting our target of internationally-trained physicians making up 40 per cent of total recruits. While U.K. physician recruitment held steady at 14 per cent, we saw a significant rise in interest and uptake from the United States, with 12 per cent of this year's recruits coming from the U.S.

Strategic investment and partnerships were key to our success, including a new physician immigration team, a successful South African physician pathway pilot and our continued work with the Physician Assessment Centre of Excellence (PACE).



**Physician Highlights:**  
Click each photo to read their story!

## PACE

The Physician Assessment Centre of Excellence (PACE) was developed in collaboration with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia and the Department of Health and Wellness to improve access to care for Nova Scotians. Launched in February 2025, it supports the assessment and integration of internationally-trained physicians who would not have otherwise had a path to practice family medicine in the province.

PACE is now fully operational, with two primary care assessment centres delivering in-clinic, competency-based evaluations using nationally recognized assessment science. The program, which benefits from generous funding through the Government of Nova Scotia, launched an additional stream for hospitalists this year.

To date, eight internationally-trained physicians have successfully completed PACE and entered into office-based practice in Halifax, Digby, Yarmouth, Dartmouth, Bedford, Bridgewater and Kingston. An additional four physicians are expected to start practice in the coming months.



Following successful completion of the PACE program, Dr. Adesola is now practising in Nova Scotia.

## Physician Immigration Team

A dedicated Physician Immigration Team was established in July 2025 with support from the Office of Healthcare Professional Recruitment (OHPR), giving Nova Scotia Health centralized oversight of physician immigration cases and strengthening retention and risk management efforts.

The new model has improved efficiency through proactive case tracking, clearer escalation pathways, enhanced reporting and faster work permit processing times – reduced from 107 days to 48 days. At the time of this report, the team was managing 174 active cases through a portfolio-based approach that has improved visibility, supported earlier intervention in complex cases and streamlined physician onboarding.

## International Physician Assessment Pathway Pilot (South Africa)

Nova Scotia Health piloted a structured practice ready assessment pathway for internationally-trained family medicine and emergency department physicians in partnership with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Department of Health and Wellness and an external recruitment agency. The pathway, focused on candidates trained in South Africa, and supported entry to practice in underserved Nova Scotia communities under introduction to supervised practice.

South Africa was selected for this pilot based on Nova Scotia’s established history of recruiting physicians from this jurisdiction under defined licensure pathways for other specialties, and evidence that South African-trained family medicine physicians possess the training, education and scope of practice required to deliver comprehensive family medicine and rural emergency medicine services in Nova Scotia.

The pilot has seen great success, with five emergency medicine physicians and four family medicine physicians successfully completing their assessment and now practising across Yarmouth, Amherst, Sydney, Halifax and New Glasgow. Five additional emergency physicians were in the assessment pipeline at March 31.



**Physician Highlight:**  
Click the photo to read this story!



# IDENTIFY



Identifying prospective physician recruits is key to our success. We achieve this through site visits, marketing campaigns, attending conferences and events, and leaning into partnerships – all hands on deck to make a difference for Nova Scotians.

## A Focus on Process

This past year, our priority has been on alignment and process. That means using our database (CRM) to the fullest, undertaking pipeline changes to increase efficiencies, and establishing site visit process guidelines to maximize our best asset – Nova Scotia’s people and places.

## Site Visits

A total of 255 site visits were completed during the 2025–26 fiscal year. As of March 31, 155 physicians (68 per cent) have been officially hired, while 32 per cent remain active in the recruitment process and are either moving forward, undecided or working in short-term placements across the province.



Snapshots from various site visits across the province.

## Conferences and Events

Candidates want to hear firsthand from someone who is currently doing the job. Physician ambassadors joined our team at each conference to share their experiences and answer questions from prospective recruits.

Nova Scotia Health attended 36 conferences and hosted eight webinars, generating more than 1,800 leads.



## More Than Medicine+

More Than Medicine+ continues to enjoy a powerful brand presence in local, national and international markets – attracting interest and generating actionable leads to further our physician recruitment mission. Here are a few drivers and metrics of success from the past year.

### Our Digital Impact

# 10M+

People reached on social media

# 141,123

Unique website visitors

# 1,800+

New social media followers

# 1,235

Job applications

### Where our website visitors come from:



**37.9%**

United States



**36.6%**

Canada



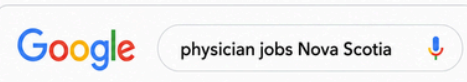
**15.9%**

United Kingdom



### Driving Traffic and Generating Leads

An always-on search engine marketing strategy ensures that practice opportunities in Nova Scotia appear at the top of job seekers' search results in Google.



Search Engine Marketing



Targeted Digital Campaigns








Engaging Content & Social Media

## IDENTIFY



### Brand Refresh

In 2025, we aligned the Nova Scotia Health corporate brand and the More than Medicine+ recruitment brand – creating a cohesive, modern and inclusive identity. This work strengthens Nova Scotia’s ability to attract top talent and present a unified, modern and engaging recruitment experience.

-  Unified visual identity
-  Tradeshow displays
-  Social media graphics
-  Digital ad templates
-  Recruitment collateral

Click the photo to read this story!

### Digital Marketing Campaigns

Targeted campaigns across search, social and programmatic channels generated 146+ qualified leads now in the recruitment pipeline.

**A SMALL PROVINCE WITH BIG IDEAS:  
NOVA SCOTIA HEALTH LEADERS SHARE  
PRIMARY CARE TRANSFORMATION  
SUCCESES AT GLOBAL CONFERENCE  
IN LISBON, PORTUGAL**



### Recruitment Outreach

Our team connected with physicians and learners at conferences and events across Canada, the U.S., the U.K. and Europe. A highlight was the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) Conference in Lisbon, where we connected with family physicians and represented Nova Scotia’s impact on primary healthcare transformation on the world stage.

## Continued Partnerships

Exceptional partnerships make physician recruitment possible and we've built the best-of-the-best across our province, including ones with our communities, the Department of Health and Wellness, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, Doctors Nova Scotia, Maritime Resident Doctors, IWK Health, Dalhousie University and Cape Breton University. Beneath are a few examples of partnership in action over the 2025-26 year.

### The Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment

The Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment (OHPR), nestled under the Department of Health and Wellness, supported critical entry into target markets for attraction and lead generation, including the U.K., U.S. and Australia. Together, we advanced the More Than Medicine+ brand, supported campaigns for medical graduates, enhanced physician lead management, and leveraged in-house immigration expertise and market intelligence to inform emerging recruitment strategies.

The partnership between Nova Scotia Health and OHPR also enabled the successful implementation of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Lebanese American University, allowing us to recruit two residents annually over the next five years.

### Department of Health and Wellness

The Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) continues to be an integral partner in Nova Scotia Health's recruitment and retention effort. The partnership this year includes work to develop the Community Hospital Inpatient Services Program (CHIP – see page 20), evolve the successful longitudinal family medicine (LFM) payment model (see page 19) and undertake practice-ready assessments for emergency department physicians.

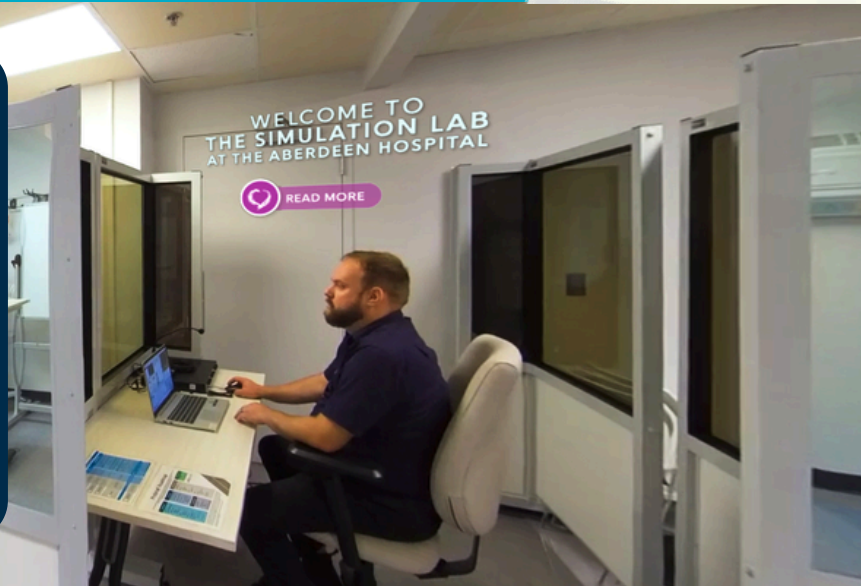


Through OHPR's Community Fund, Healthy Pictou County launched a 360° Virtual Reality experience showcasing the simulation lab at Aberdeen Hospital.

This innovative training space supports high-quality care and lifelong learning



Explore the experience:  
[360° Virtual Reality Hub | Healthy Pictou County](#)





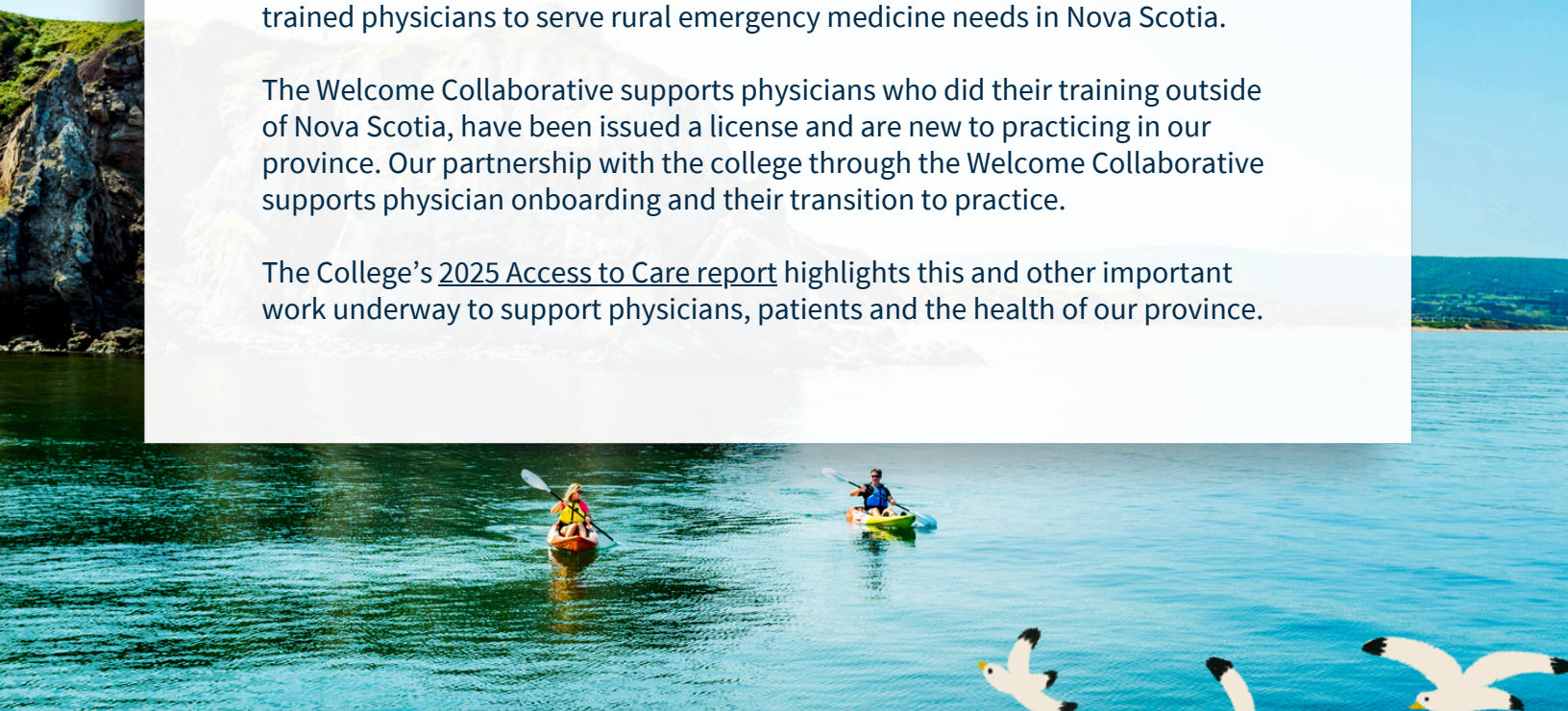
## College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia continues to be a key partner in our physician recruitment and retention efforts, including innovative work to support ad hoc Practice Ready Assessments (PRAs), as well as collaboration through the Welcome Collaborative.

Ad hoc practice ready assessments (PRAs) help ensure foreign-trained physicians have the clinical skills and knowledge they need to provide patient care. This was an important component to our pilot to bring South African-trained physicians to serve rural emergency medicine needs in Nova Scotia.

The Welcome Collaborative supports physicians who did their training outside of Nova Scotia, have been issued a license and are new to practicing in our province. Our partnership with the college through the Welcome Collaborative supports physician onboarding and their transition to practice.

The College's [2025 Access to Care report](#) highlights this and other important work underway to support physicians, patients and the health of our province.



## Dalhousie University

Our strong partnership with Dalhousie University supports medical learners across their learning journeys and helps to retain them in our province post-graduation. We continued to show up for medical learners in 2025-26, and are thrilled for new opportunities ahead through the new Dalhousie Cape Breton medical campus and expanded partnership through Cape Breton University.

## IDENTIFY

### Maritime Resident Doctors (MARDOCs)

Nova Scotia Health's Physician Recruitment and Retention team partners closely with Maritime Resident Doctors (MARDOCs) to support residents throughout their postgraduate training and help them find their ideal practice opportunities. Together, we're engaging with residents across the Maritimes, connecting with them where they train to understand their career goals and highlight opportunities within Nova Scotia.

We partnered this year on a number of engagement initiatives, including the annual Maritime tour of all family medicine training sites, webinars and communications touchpoints. We attended end-of-year resident dinners, as well as a specialty-focused event in spring. These touchpoints provided meaningful opportunities to connect with residents in both informal and structured settings. Through this ongoing partnership, we ensure residents remain informed, supported and connected as they plan their future careers in Nova Scotia and across the region.



### Community Partners

Communities and community navigators are among our most cherished partners. They warmly welcome physicians for site visits, help integrate recruited physicians into daily life and ensure physicians and families feel supported and connected.

Together, we're creating a positive and sustainable Nova Scotia where healthcare professionals thrive and belong.



Medical staff from Colchester East Hants Health Centre (CEHHC) and their families took in a Truro Bearcats Junior A game from the skybox in February. Thank you to the Truro Junior A Bearcats and the Truro Colchester Partnership for Economic Prosperity (TCPEP) for supporting this entertaining evening with funding supported through the provincial Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment (OHPR) community grant.



CASPR event in Dublin. L-R: Rebecca Cassidy, PRC; Dr. Nicole Boutilier; Dr. Ashley McCormick, Digby ER Physician; Nancy Whalley, Community Navigator.



Charlene d'Entremont, Community Navigator for Yarmouth and Area Medical Partnership, and Dr. Frenzar heading to the Villa St. Joseph's Haunted Villa fundraiser in October 2025.



# RETAIN

Physician retention translates into quality patient care, system efficiency and healthy communities for generations. Here are some of the ways we worked to retain physicians in 2025-26.

# 86%

Engagement rate

# 252

Physicians contacted

## Onboarding

Early intervention improves onboarding outcomes and strong relationships are critical for retention. That's why, in 2024, Nova Scotia Health launched a physician onboarding program to enhance support for new physicians entering practice.

The Physician Onboarding Consultant and team support physicians from offer acceptance to the end of their first year of practice (and sometimes beyond), including helping them navigate the system, access resources and integrate them into their teams and communities.

In 2025-26, 252 new doctors were contacted, with 86 per cent actively engaging with their Physician Onboarding Consultant. The Onboarding team has been embedded into the zone leadership structures, strengthening cross-system collaboration and improving the physician onboarding experience and responsiveness.

Part and parcel with our onboarding effort is the work of the MD Recruitment and Retention Leads. These physicians, located across the province, support our efforts to recruit and retain doctors by offering insights into what it's like to practice medicine in their communities and providing on-site support as new recruits join the Nova Scotia Health team.



Physician Recruitment Consultant, Patti Smith, attended the Lunenburg County Pride Parade in Bridgewater with Onboarding Consultant, Jamie Dawson, along with his wife, Dr. Asha Dawson.



Dr. Khairat Al-Habbal, during her recent trip to Halifax. She visited the city with her husband Zak, and had lunch with Onboarding Consultant, Jamie Dawson, and Physician Recruitment Consultant, Heather Rushton. Dr. Al-Habbal is joining the team at Citadel Health Home in downtown Halifax, in September 2026.



**Snapshot:** White Coat Welcome event for physicians in Annapolis and Kings Counties on October 23. New physicians were presented with a local gift and fun/serious awards were handed out to several physicians.

## Longitudinal Family Medicine (LFM) Model

The Longitudinal Family Medicine (LFM) payment model was introduced under the 2023–2027 Physician Agreement and is designed to provide competitive compensation with enhanced accountability. LFM is a blended payment model that reflects hours worked, services delivered and patient panel size. To date, 72 per cent of family medicine physicians have chosen to practice under LFM. All new physicians joining family medicine in the province elect to practice under the LFM model.

## First Nations Family Medicine

In 2025–26, the Kisa'matultimkewey wjit malpale'witk (First Nations Family Medicine) payment model was introduced for physicians supporting First Nations communities. This model is tailored to reflect the unique needs and priorities of First Nations communities, including greater coordination, cultural responsibility and system navigation. It supports equitable access to timely, comprehensive care that standard funding approaches do not adequately address.

Members of our recruitment team also attended the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (IPAC) conference this year to deepen their understanding of Indigenous health perspectives, build stronger relationships with partners and learn best practices to support respectful, culturally grounded care. This conference aligns with Nova Scotia Health's commitment to culturally safe, inclusive and equitable care for Mi'kmaq and Indigenous communities.

### DR. MICHELLE MATTHEWS FOLLOWS AN IMPRESSIVE LINEAGE OF INDIGENOUS HEALTHCARE TRAILBLAZERS

**Physician Highlight:**  
Click the photo to  
read this story!



### Hospitalist Medicine Program

The Hospitalist Medicine program advanced significantly this year with the establishment of dedicated zone-based leadership. This program development contributed to increased physician interest, resulting in 17 new hospitalists joining our workforce.

The Community Hospital Inpatient Services Program (CHIP), made possible through a strong partnership with DHW, aligns the hospitalist payment model to account for the increasing complexity of patients cared for in community hospitals. This model, boasting a competitive rate relative to other inpatient care models across the province, was renewed this year to help recruit and retain hospitalists to community hospital settings.

### DR. MALAK EL ESS'S JOURNEY FROM LEBANON TO NOVA SCOTIA AS A HOSPITALIST

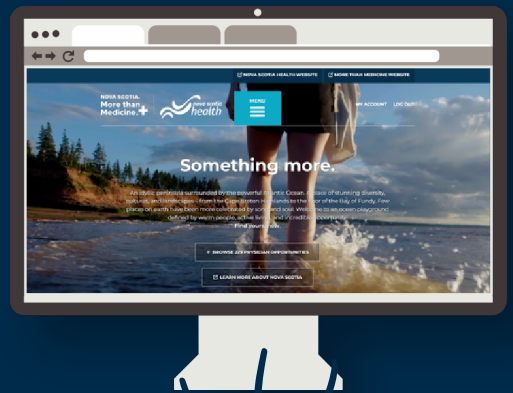


**Physician Highlights:**  
Click the photo to read this story!

### Conclusion

This past year was one of progress and forward momentum, as we came together with partnership, strategy and optimism to create a stronger healthcare system for Nova Scotians. Thank you to everyone who joins us on this journey. Together, we are creating healthy communities for generations.

Learn more on our website  
<https://nshdocs.morethanmedicine.ca/>



Follow us on social media

