



# **Accountability Report**

## 2023–24

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Office of Healthcare Professionals  
Recruitment



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Accountability Report 2023–2024

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## Introduction

New solutions and health human resource strategies are needed to attract and keep healthcare professionals and improve access to services. In 2023-24, the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment (OHPR) collaborated with system partners to increase recruitment efforts and retain needed healthcare professionals. Alongside the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), OHPR strengthened partnerships with the Office of Addictions and Mental Health (OAMH), the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care (SLTC), the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA), the IWK, Department Advanced Education (AE), Labour, Skills, and Immigration (LSI), Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH), regulatory bodies, academic institutions, and other key partners across the health system.

The Office continues to work with communities and healthcare professionals to innovate new strategies and solutions, while improving upon recruitment and retention actions already underway. As the Office helps to transform the health system, OHPR itself has evolved beyond its initial scope of recruitment and retention to focus on the health workforce more broadly so that it can further support transformation toward a world class health system. This report outlines the initiatives that the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment has implemented over the course of 2023-24.

## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment for the year ended March 31, 2023, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment management.

We acknowledge this Accountability Report is the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment management's responsibility. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Office of Healthcare Professionals 2023-24 Business Plan.

*Original signed by*  
Hon. Michelle Thompson  
Minister

*Original signed by*  
Dana MacKenzie  
Deputy Minister

## Measuring Performance

As outlined in the 2023-24 Business Plan for OHPR, new solutions and health human resource strategies are needed to attract and keep healthcare professionals and improve access to services. Action for Health is the government's plan to invest in people, tools, technology, and infrastructure to provide better care for Nova Scotians. The plan outlines a vision and plan to transform the health system, including increased efforts to recruit and retain needed healthcare professionals. This transformation requires whole-of-government and sector collaboration. For example, when healthcare professionals are recruited to the province, they need a place to live. The \$20 million housing for healthcare investment led by Municipal Affairs and Housing, with support from OHPR, is one initiative that strives to dedicate suitable housing options for healthcare professionals in the regions where they are needed the most.

Health human resource challenges require integrated, system-wide solutions and investments to change the trajectory of our health system in Nova Scotia. Action for Health focuses on innovation and finding new ways to address long-standing issues within Nova Scotia's health system which will position Nova Scotia as a leader among Canadian jurisdictions.

### Filling Healthcare Worker Vacancies

In 2023-24, OHPR worked to address recruitment and retention challenges in the system, including initiatives to address healthcare worker vacancies and support the retention for healthcare providers, including new graduates.

Working with Department of Advanced Education (DAE) and Dalhousie University, OHPR increased seats in the Diagnostic Medical Ultrasound Radiological Technology and Respiratory Therapy programs, beginning in September 2023. In conjunction with DAE and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), seats in the Practical Nursing (LPN) program were expanded in September 2023 and 2024. The Office also worked with DAE, NSHA, NSCC, and the Michener Institute to provide Nova Scotia students with access to Michener's Medical Laboratory Technologist program.

New programs were also established in 2023-24. For example, a Physician Assistant program (24 seats) was launched at Dalhousie in January 2024, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at Acadia University (21 seats) opened in September 2023, with more seats to be added in 2024-25. There were also program expansions in several health professions, resulting in an increase of over 400 seats, system-wide.

OHPR launched targeted initiatives to address nursing recruitment and retention challenges, including mentorship, professional development, and enhanced scopes of practice. All new Nursing, Medical Imaging, and Medical Laboratory Technologist graduates in Nova Scotia were offered positions. OHPR increased support to enhance the retention of newly hired graduates and included healthcare professionals in the recruitment process.

### Expanded and Simplified International Recruitment

OHPR worked to increase the recruitment of healthcare professionals to Nova Scotia. Advertising campaigns, recruitment materials, and digital marketing with partners (including NSHA, SLTC, LSI and others), have promoted Nova Scotia's work and lifestyle opportunities for healthcare professionals.

OHPR initiated a phased launch of the new More than Medicine web portal which offers health professionals with a "One Door" to access the Province's job opportunities, navigation supports and other helpful information. OHPR also planned and delivered new international recruitment events in target markets, including the first health system recruitment mission to Australia. Health system partners participated in more than 230 recruitment events resulting in more than 2600 recruitment candidate contacts.

Working with system partners, OHPR supported improvements and streamlined processes to recruit Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals, including accelerated licensure pathways for internationally educated physicians, nurses, paramedics, pharmacists and medical imaging and radiation therapy professionals. It also added paramedics and pharmacy technicians to the International Graduates in-demand stream of the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program.

Alongside partners NSHA and DAE, OHPR supported internationally educated Medical Laboratory Technicians in a bridging program with the Michener Institute to be successful in the national certification exam.

### Taking Care of our Workforce

In 2023-24, OHPR focused on priorities that supported the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals. OHPR's \$2M [Community Fund](#), aims to enhance healthcare recruitment and retention efforts by supporting community initiatives that attract and retain healthcare professionals in Nova Scotia. Over the past year, OHPR supported 30 new community initiatives in their recruitment and retention efforts through investments from the fund hosted the first annual Community Fund Conference, with almost 200 participants.

New collective agreements were negotiated with physicians, nurses and paramedics, in alignment with the Government's mandate to be a magnet for healthcare workers, and as directed, the Office conducted a conflict resolution policy review to support retention efforts.

OHPR was engaged in the launch of the Welcome Collaborative, a partnership between LSI, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and others, to provide orientation to help welcome and settle 140 internationally trained doctors in 2023-24. This initiative will complement OHPR efforts.

To recognize the work of its healthcare workforce, Nova Scotia provided 55,000 healthcare workers, including nurses and paramedics, with thank you and retention bonuses.

Finally, Nova Scotia expanded the More Opportunities for Skilled Trades (MOST) provincial income tax refund, established in 2022, to include nurses working in the publicly funded healthcare system.

## Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

### Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)

<b>Programs and Services</b>	<b>2023-2024 Estimate</b>	<b>2023-2024 Actuals</b>	<b>2023-2024 Variance</b>
General Administration	548	650	102
Strategic Direction and Accountability	7,354	5,524	(1,830)
<b>Total – Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>7,902</b>	<b>6,174</b>	<b>(1,728)</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Ordinary Revenues	---	---	---
Fees and Other Charges	---	---	---
Ordinary Recoveries	---	180	180
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>
TCA Purchase Requirements	---	---	---
<b>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</b>			
<b>Department Funded Staff</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>(4.8)</b>

#### **Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:**

The Office of Healthcare Professional Recruitment's expenses were (\$1.7) million lower than estimate primarily due to decreased travel and temporary vacancies.

#### **Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:**

Ordinary recoveries were \$180 thousand higher than budget due to a miscellaneous recovery.

#### **TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:**

N/A

#### **Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:**

The Office is reporting a variance of 4.8 FTEs under budget due to temporary vacancies.

## Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations;
- b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets;
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment; or,
- d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2023-24
The number of disclosures received	None
The number of findings of wrongdoing	None
Details of each wrongdoing (Insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing. (Insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A