

September 28, 2023

Dear County of Essex- Essex County Council Members,

ProsperUs is a Collective Impact partnership comprised of non-profit, government, healthcare, education, labour, business, and inspired community members including parents and youth. We have a shared vision of a prosperous Windsor-Essex County where all children and youth have the support they need to succeed from cradle to career. You can learn more about our work at weunlockpotential.com.

Our Cradle to Career approach is a proven strategy that focuses on systems change to ensure young people have wrap-around supports from the time they are born until they enter the workforce. This work is focused on priority neighbourhoods where data tell us families face the greatest barriers: Downtown Windsor, West Windsor, and Leamington.

In May 2022, ProsperUs formed a resident-led Advocacy Working Group for West Windsor and Downtown Windsor. Advocacy Working Group members identified that access to healthcare services is a significant barrier they regularly face. Our research demonstrates a need to focus on increasing access to primary healthcare services:

- According to the Primary Care Data Reports for Ontario Health Teams (2022), 32,118 people in Windsor-Essex County are not attached to a Primary Care Provider. This includes 6,998 children between the ages of 0-14.ⁱ
- Among people not currently attached to a Primary Care Provider in our region, 45% live in neighbourhoods with the lowest average incomes.ⁱⁱ
- The need for physician recruitment is growing as Windsor-Essex County has an aging Physician population. More than 1 in 5 physicians in Windsor-Essex County were over the age of 65 and approaching retirement in 2019.ⁱⁱⁱ
- According to the Windsor Essex Ontario Health Team's Comprehensive Primary Care Report (2022), Physicians over the age of 65 in Windsor have a total of 28,986 patients. In Leamington, Physicians over the age of 65 have a total of 4992 patients.
- Furthermore, there are only 31 pediatricians^{iv} currently working in our region serving a population of 36,640 children ages 0-14.^v
- The pressure on our healthcare system was reflected in 2022, when Windsor Regional Hospital had the longest Emergency Room wait times in Ontario as too many people used hospitals for primary care.^{vi}

This is important because in Ontario, people living with low incomes are more likely to experience health risks in their daily life such as having less access to nutritious food. They are also more likely to live with multiple chronic conditions which can lead to further health problems, yet they are less likely to receive quality healthcare.^{vii} For

example, children living in low-income households are more likely to experience health issues such as asthma and obesity and face barriers to accessing preventive and primary care services.^{viii}

As of January 2023, the Regional Physician Recruiter Office Windsor/Essex (RPROWE) is no longer funded by any municipality in Windsor-Essex County. RPROWE supported all hospitals, community clinics, agencies, and private offices in our region, as well as the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. This initiative recruited an average of 34 physicians annually and recruited 569 physicians between 2003 and 2019.^{ix} 1 in 6 physicians required help with immigration which this initiative provided.^x

The ProsperUs partnership, including resident members of the ProsperUs Advocacy Working Group, recommends that the City of Windsor collaborate with other municipalities and healthcare leaders in Windsor-Essex County to establish a strategy for physician recruitment and retention in our region. This strategy could include:


- 1) Conducting a comprehensive review of the unmet healthcare needs of residents in Windsor-Essex County and how municipalities can collaborate with local healthcare leaders and the Government of Ontario to increase our region's capacity to meet the needs of residents.
- 2) Reconvening the Regional Physician Recruitment Steering Committee to increase data sharing, collaboration, and strategic action among healthcare providers. This could include informing and implementing a comprehensive strategy for physician recruitment and retention and working with the [Canadian Society of Physician Recruitment](#) to ensure more local residents have access to a Primary Care Provider.
- 3) Increasing investment in physician recruitment and retention efforts for local healthcare services based on the needs of residents, including specializations and languages spoken.
- 4) Coordinating regional advocacy efforts to the Government of Ontario regarding increased access to Primary Care Providers, including increased funding for local healthcare services and expanding the number of residency spaces at schools of medicine.

Delayed access to healthcare services has life-long consequences and increases costs to the healthcare system.^{xi} Increasing early prevention, and easing the pressure on healthcare workers and services requires the involvement of all levels of government. ProsperUs is presenting this letter to the City of Windsor and the County of Essex to raise awareness of the need for increased regional dialogue on access to primary care providers.

Through continued advocacy, as well as endorsement of a regional strategy for physician recruitment and retention, we believe that municipalities in Windsor-Essex County can make a significant impact on this key issue.

Thank you for your consideration of our suggested regional approach to this issue.

Sincerely,



Jessica Sartori, Owner/Operator, Parallel 42 Systems, Co-Chair ProsperUs



Shelley Fellows, Chair of the Board of Directors, Automate Canada, Co-Chair ProsperUs

On behalf of the ProsperUs Collective Impact Partnership and Caroline Taylor, West Windsor Resident, Co-Chair of the ProsperUs Windsor Advocacy Working Group and Rose Hayes, Downtown Resident, Co-Chair of the ProsperUs Windsor Advocacy Working Group.

ⁱ INSPIRE-PHC, Primary Care Data Working Group. (2023) *Primary Care Data Reports for Ontario Health Teams (OHTs)*.

<https://www.ontariohealthprofiles.ca/>

ⁱⁱ INSPIRE-PHC, Primary Care Data Working Group. (2023) *Primary Care Data Reports for Ontario Health Teams (OHTs)*.

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ⁱⁱⁱ Mavrinac, J. (2019, October 16). *Regional Physician Recruitment* [PowerPoint slides]. <https://coe-pub.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=12817>

^{iv} College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (2023). *Advanced Search for Registered Doctors in Ontario*. [Data Set]. CPSO. <https://doctors.cpso.on.ca/?search=general> (accessed February 6, 2023)

^v Statistics Canada (2022). *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population*. (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001.[Data Set]). Statistics Canada. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

^{vi} Wilhelm, T. (2022, July). *Windsor Regional Hospital grapples with highest ER wait times in Ontario*. *CBC News*.

<https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/windsor-regional-hospital-grapples-with-highest-er-wait-times-in-ontario>

^{vii} Health Quality Ontario (2016). *Income and Health: Opportunities to achieve health equity in Ontario*.

<http://www.hqontario.ca/portals/0/documents/system-performance/health-equity-report-en.pdf>

^{viii} Children First Canada. (2023). *Pedionomics: the Social Return on Investment in Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Children and Adolescents*. <https://childrenfirstcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Pedionomics-Raising-Canada-2023-Children-First-Canada.pdf>

^{ix} Mavrinac, J. (2019, October 16). *Regional Physician Recruitment* [PowerPoint slides]. <https://coe-pub.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=12817>

^x Mavrinac, J. (2019, October 16). *Regional Physician Recruitment* [PowerPoint slides]. <https://coe-pub.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=12817>

^{xi} Children's Health Coalition. (2021). *Make Kids Count: A Children's health action plan to ensure hospital capacity and provide timely access to care both in the immediate pandemic response and through recovery*. <https://www.chcontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Make-Kids-Count-Action-Plan-from-the-Childrens-Health-Coalition-2.pdf>

ProsperUs is a collective of non-profit, government, health care, education, labour, business, and inspired residents with a shared vision of a prosperous Windsor-Essex County where every young person has the opportunity and support they need to thrive. ProsperUs is a partnership between:

BMO Financial Group | City of Windsor | Collège Boréal | Connecting Windsor-Essex | Conseil scolaire catholique Providence | County of Essex | CUPE Local 543 | Erie Shores Healthcare | FCA Greater Essex County District School Board | Green Shield Canada | Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare | Invest WindsorEssex | John McGarvey Children's Centre | Leamington & District Chamber of Commerce | Libro Credit Union | Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services | Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration | Ministry of Community Safety & Correctional Services | Ministry of Education | Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities | Municipality of Leamington | New Canadians' Centre of Excellence | Ontario Health Steering Committee | Ontario Provincial Police | RBC Royal Bank | South Essex Community Council | South Essex Community Council | St. Clair College | TD Canada Trust | Tepperman's | The O'Neil Foundation | Toldo Foundation | Unifor Local 444 | United Way/Centraide Windsor-Essex County | University of Windsor | Windsor and District Labour Council | Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board | Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society | WindsorEssex Community Foundation | Windsor-Essex Community Housing Corporation | Windsor-Essex County Health Unit | Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce | Windsor Police Service | Windsor Regional Hospital | Workforce WindsorEssex