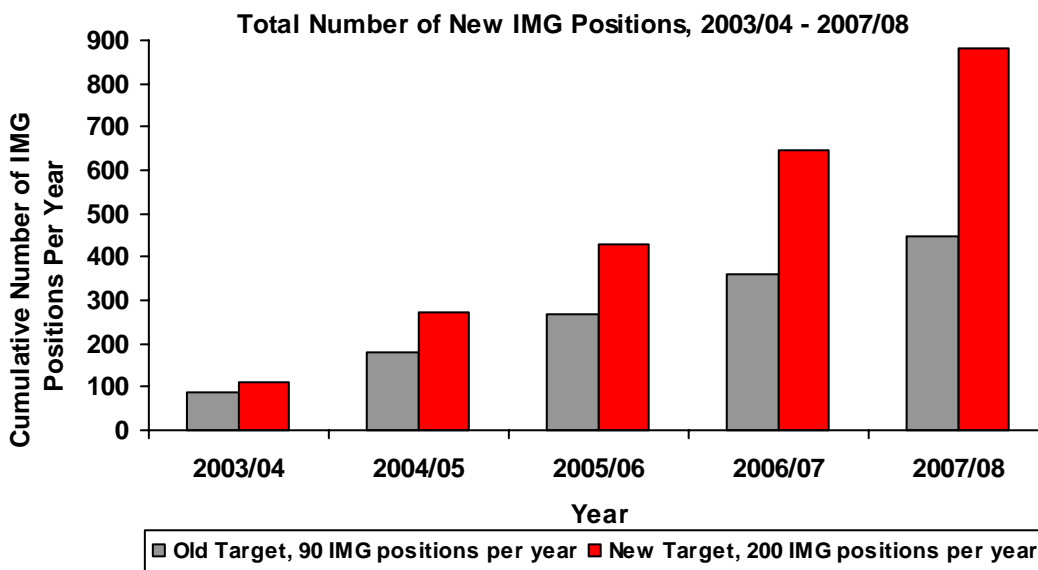


INTERNATIONALLY-TRAINED DOCTORS HELP IMPROVE ACCESS TO CARE

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The McGuinty government is creating increased opportunities for internationally trained doctors to enter practice in Ontario. In 2004, the Ontario government more than doubled the number of training and assessment positions for international medical doctors from 90 to 200 spots annually. In fact, in 2007/08, a record-breaking 235 positions were offered to International Medical Graduate (IMG) doctors.

The expansion has allowed 833 internationally trained doctors to initiate residency training in the past four years, 433 more physicians for Ontarians than would have been the case – a 96% increase.



Notwithstanding these investments in more residency positions serious, barriers remain. Laurel Broten, Parliamentary Assistant to George Smitherman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, has prepared a report, *Report on International Medical Doctors*, calling for swift action to deliver more doctors to Ontarians and opportunities for IMGs.

Broten categorizes internationally trained doctors and graduates into three fairly distinct groups and points out that each category requires a distinct game plan for success:

1. International medical doctors that are currently practicing outside Ontario and that should be practice-ready for Ontario. (Action Plan # 1 and 2)
2. International medical doctors or graduates who have significant skills, education and/or experience but need a more extensive assessment and/or who lack some specific and necessary requirements which can be gained through remediation, additional education and the experience gained through supervised practice. (Action Plan # 2, 3 and 4)

3. International medical doctors/graduates with some skill, education and/or experience but who need much more education and training for any hope of success to meet Ontario's standards and be eligible to practice medicine in Ontario (Action Plan # 3, 4 and 5)

Broten's Five Point Action Plan to improve access includes:

1. DIRECT-TO-PRACTICE

Fast track, simplify and streamline the registration process for doctors who can go direct-to-practice because they are already practicing in Canada, the United States or any other country with a medical education and health system similar to our own. (This would require amendments to the registration requirements of the regulations under the *Medicine Act, 1991*.)

2. TRANSITIONAL LICENCE

Help internationally trained doctors serve patients in Ontario by creating a transitional licence that will allow them to practice under supervision while they complete their education or gain experience to qualify for independent practice. (This would require amendments to regulations under the *Medicine Act, 1991*.)

3. MORE HELP TO BRIDGE ANY EXISTING GAP TO ENTER FULL MEDICAL PRACTICE

For those internationally trained doctors not immediately eligible to practice medicine under a transitional license, bridging programs – working with candidates on an individualized and group basis to gain entry into the medical profession – should be established so IMG doctors can become practice ready for Ontario.

4. BETTER SUPPORT/IMPROVED ASSESSMENTS FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL DOCTORS AND CANDIDATES SEEKING TO PRACTICE MEDICINE IN ONTARIO

The assessment process can be a “bottleneck” in the system and this recommendation seeks to provide the support needed to help internationally trained doctors integrate into our medical system, including cultural and language education, mentorship and hands on training, more practice assessors as well as better training and compensation for their supervisors.

5. COORDINATED ASSISTANCE

There will always be individuals with international medical training who, as a result of the timing and/or quality of the training received or as a result of the current family and/or financial situation, will have extreme difficulty in meeting Ontario's high medical standards. This initiative would provide assistance to those individuals to help them use their skills and knowledge most effectively so that they can enter alternate careers in health care.

Any changes to the assessment and certification process will be done in collaboration and consultation with The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.