



College of Physicians
and Surgeons of
New Brunswick

2023 Annual Report



Table of contents

What we do	2
Mission, vision and values	4
Message from the Registrar and CEO	5
Message from the President	6
Key facts and figures	7
Council and committees	8
Registering qualified physicians	9
Investigating complaints	14
Assessing practice readiness	17
Assuring quality	18



What we do

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of New Brunswick is responsible for regulating the practice of medicine in New Brunswick. Licensure with the College is mandatory to practice medicine in the province. The College protects the public interest through assessing, registering, and licensing qualified physicians, students, and physician assistants, investigating matters of professional conduct, and establishing standards of medical practice.

Registration

Physicians, students, and physician assistants are required to register with the College and maintain a licence to practice medicine in New Brunswick. Our policies and processes guide fair and transparent licensing.

Professional conduct

The College impartially and fairly investigates complaints of professional conduct against physicians, medical students, and physician assistants.

Quality

We support physicians in providing quality care in several ways, such as the development of professional standards and confidential peer reviews.





Mission

Protecting the public and the profession by licensing qualified physicians in a fair and transparent manner, guiding standards of care, and maintaining public trust through objective oversight of physician professional conduct.

Vision

Trusted physicians providing quality patient care.

Values

Integrity

We act honestly and ethically towards patients and physicians, ensuring an objective and transparent approach to licensing, complaints, and assessments.

Fairness

We treat everyone equally and without discrimination.

Compassion

We provide guidance to the public and physicians with sensitivity, kindness, and respect.

Innovation

We lead change in our evolving health care landscape through flexibility and continuous learning.



Message from the Registrar and CEO

As we move into spring, I'd like to take a moment to reflect upon the challenges and progress made during this last year in my role as Registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New Brunswick.

The past year has been another significant period of growth at the College as we've strived to modernize our operations. Looking back at everything that has been accomplished, I am extremely proud and grateful for the efforts of our hardworking College staff, without whom none of the advancements made in the past year would have been possible.

Chief among our work over the past year has been moving our operations to an electronic format and moving away from paper-based processes. Our registration, licensing, communications, registrant database, and election procedures are now handled entirely online. While change can be challenging for some, this was a necessary evolution and a reflection of our growth. We've only just begun implementing these powerful new tools to support us in this journey, and as we move forward, I am excited to explore more about how they can benefit the College.

Reflective of the highly confidential nature of our work, we've also engaged external cyber security specialists with a focus on health care to help us strengthen our security measures and maintain the integrity of our information. This company has supported us through the process of migrating our information online, to ensure we are establishing best practices from the beginning. Going forward, we will continue to use their services to ensure we are maintaining the highest security standards.

With similar goals of modernization and development, we've undertaken an ambitious project to expand and renovate our offices, and added additional staff to our Complaints and Registration departments.

I'd like to thank our registrants for their support and understanding as we undergo these changes. Though change brings its own challenges, change and growth go hand-in-hand, and I'm confident that we are building the foundation now for a strong, modern College that can best serve patients, registrants and the province of New Brunswick.



Dr. Laurie Potter
M.Ed, FRCPC



Message from the President

The years since the COVID-19 pandemic have brought many changes to the delivery of medicine, the patient experience, and the broader health care system.

In the years since the pandemic initially forced us to minimize close contact with other people, virtual care options have increased significantly. While the rapid adoption of these services has raised some concerns among physicians for continuity of patient care, there's no denying that these options are popular with patients and are here to stay for the foreseeable future.

Medical assistance in dying (MAID) has also been a prominent issue in headlines and discussions over the past year, with proposed expansions to extend MAID to people with mental illness. While these changes have now been put on hold, when they are revisited they will require a significant regulatory framework to guide physicians in its provision.

The practice of medicine is constantly evolving, and the guidance of the College is needed to best serve its practitioners and patients. As part of our mandate to maintain the profession's standards and support excellence in care of our patients, we will continue vigilance of current and emerging issues. I'd like to thank New Brunswick's physicians, students, and physician assistants for their dedication and resilience.

All of this has taken place as the College itself has undergone a significant transformation, the details of which you will find in this Annual Report. Looking ahead to 2024, we have ambitious goals aimed at further supporting the delivery of the College's mandate. I invite you to explore this report for a comprehensive overview of the College's activities and achievements throughout the past year.



Dr. Peter Ross
CCFP(EM), FCFP

Key facts and figures

176

New physicians and surgeons registered

133

Complaints received

50

Peer assessments completed





Governance

In 2023 we welcomed Dr. Vivek Virmani (Zone 3), who was elected as a new Council member. We said goodbye to Dr. Mahfud Abdulaati (Zone 3), who chose not to re-offer when his term ended. We also bid farewell to one of our Public Members, Ms. Denise Hollway, who relocated out of province.

Thank you all for your service!

Dr. Peter Ross (Zone 2)
President

Dr. Kerry Sheppard (Zone 2)
Vice President

Dr. Marc Aucoin (Zone 6)
Dr. Manon Belliveau (Zone 1)
Dr. Zeljko Bolesnikov (Zone 3)
Ms. Diane Brideau-Laughlin
Dr. Arif Bungash (Zone 2)
Dr. Hanif Chatur (Zone 3)
Dr. Janik Côté-Bérubé (Zone 4)

Dr. Michael Hayden (Zone 7)
Dr. Rina Lee (Zone 1)
Ms. Ruth Lyons
Dr. Michael Matchett (Zone 1)
Dr. Grant Oyeye (Zone 5)
Mr. Jason Steeves
Dr. Vivek Virmani (Zone 3)

Executive Committee

Dr. Peter Ross
President

Dr. Kerry Sheppard
Vice President

Ms. Diane Brideau-Laughlin
Dr. Hanif Chatur
Dr. Rina Lee

Complaints and Registration Committee

Dr. Kerry Sheppard
Chair

Mr. Jean Castonguay
Dr. Tim Christie
Dr. Teshome Kelkile
Dr. Lachelle Noftall

Mr. Andrew Orchard
Dr. Paul Postuma
Dr. Hugh Scarth

Review Committee

Dr. Michael Hayden
Chair

Dr. Marilyne Bossé
Ms. Cathy Bowlen
Dr. Christine Duclos
Mr. Gary Fecteau
Dr. Linda LeBlanc

Dr. Michael Matchett
Dr. Bobbie Ross
Dr. Beatriz Sainz
Dr. Patrick Sullivan

Registering qualified physicians

Our mandate

All physicians, students, and physician assistants are required to be registered and licensed with the College to practice medicine or train in New Brunswick. In granting registration, the College thoroughly examines the educational background, training, and practical experience of each potential registrant, in addition to any other relevant concerns. This process aims to ensure that only capable, knowledgeable, and ethical physicians are practicing in the province.

Member portal introduced

The most significant change to our registration process over the last year was undoubtedly the introduction of Alinity, a member portal which has helped to significantly modernize our operations. A powerful tool used by many similar organizations across the province and country, Alinity serves a number of important functions for the College, including email communications, registration and renewals, registrant database, and more.

Over the past year, Alinity has supported the registration team in streamlining and standardizing their process, in addition to facilitating and clarifying the process for new registrants. This work to improve the licensing application process has taken a significant amount of time over the last year, and efforts for further development are ongoing. We look forward to a smoother registration process over the coming year.

Other updates

The College has endeavoured to improve communications for new and potential registrants. Work has been completed to provide clarity around the new registrant process, with the addition of the “Pathways to licensure” flowcharts on the College website. As always, the qualifications of all physicians are reviewed prior to licensure, and ineligible physicians are informed of what improvements are needed for eligibility.

In addition, over the past year the College has introduced the Practice Ready Assessment New Brunswick (PRA-NB) program for internationally trained physicians, who are not otherwise eligible for licensure in New Brunswick. Intended as a tool to assess the eligibility of much-needed family medicine practitioners, PRA-NB will allow eligible physicians who have completed their medical training and practiced independently abroad to participate in a clinical field assessment for 12 weeks, through which their knowledge, skills and suitability as patient care providers are evaluated. Eligibility criteria for PRA-NB is detailed on the College website for potential candidates.

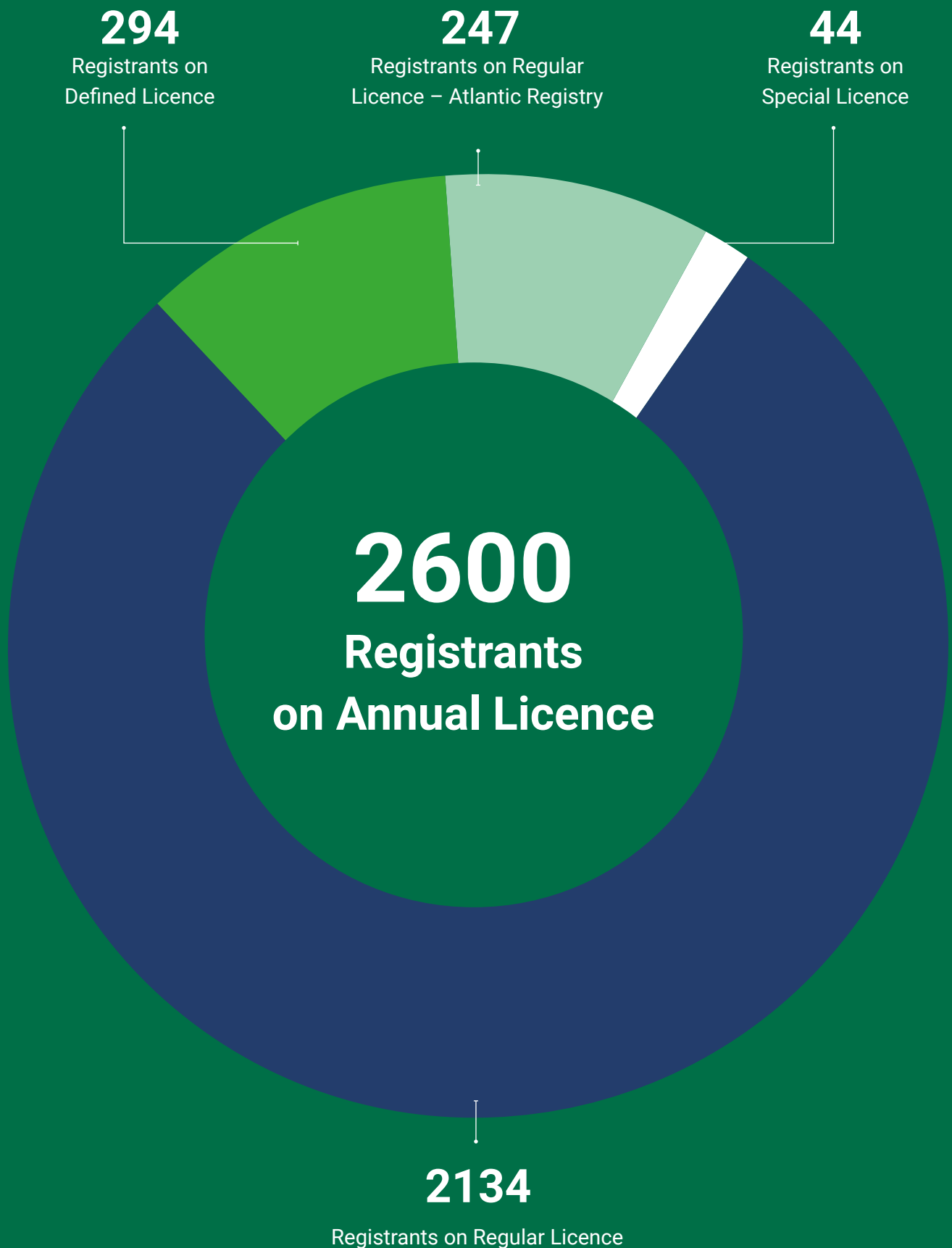
Over the next year, the registration team will focus on communicating the licensing process in greater detail on the College website and elsewhere, with the intention of moving towards better clarity for all current and potential registrants.

Registration policy development

For much of the past year, we’ve focused our policy development on internal functions impacting registration and licensing procedures. To that end, we’ve invested time in familiarizing ourselves with policies in other provinces that are relevant to New Brunswick. Researching guidelines across the country has allowed us to apply this information to our own policy development.

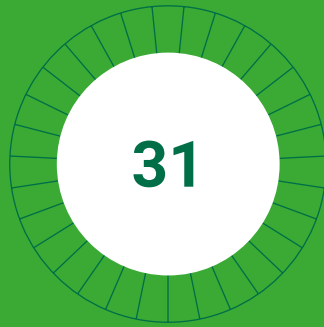
Key areas of development over the past year have included clinical assistants, language proficiency, moonlighting, criminal record checks, and practice ready assessments. Attention has also been given to developing pathways to licensure for the core licence types – in addition to acceptable alternatives to LMCC and alternatives to Canadian certification. These policies aim to ensure fair and transparent licensing, in addition to addressing some longstanding gaps in the health care system.

At a glance As of December 31, 2023





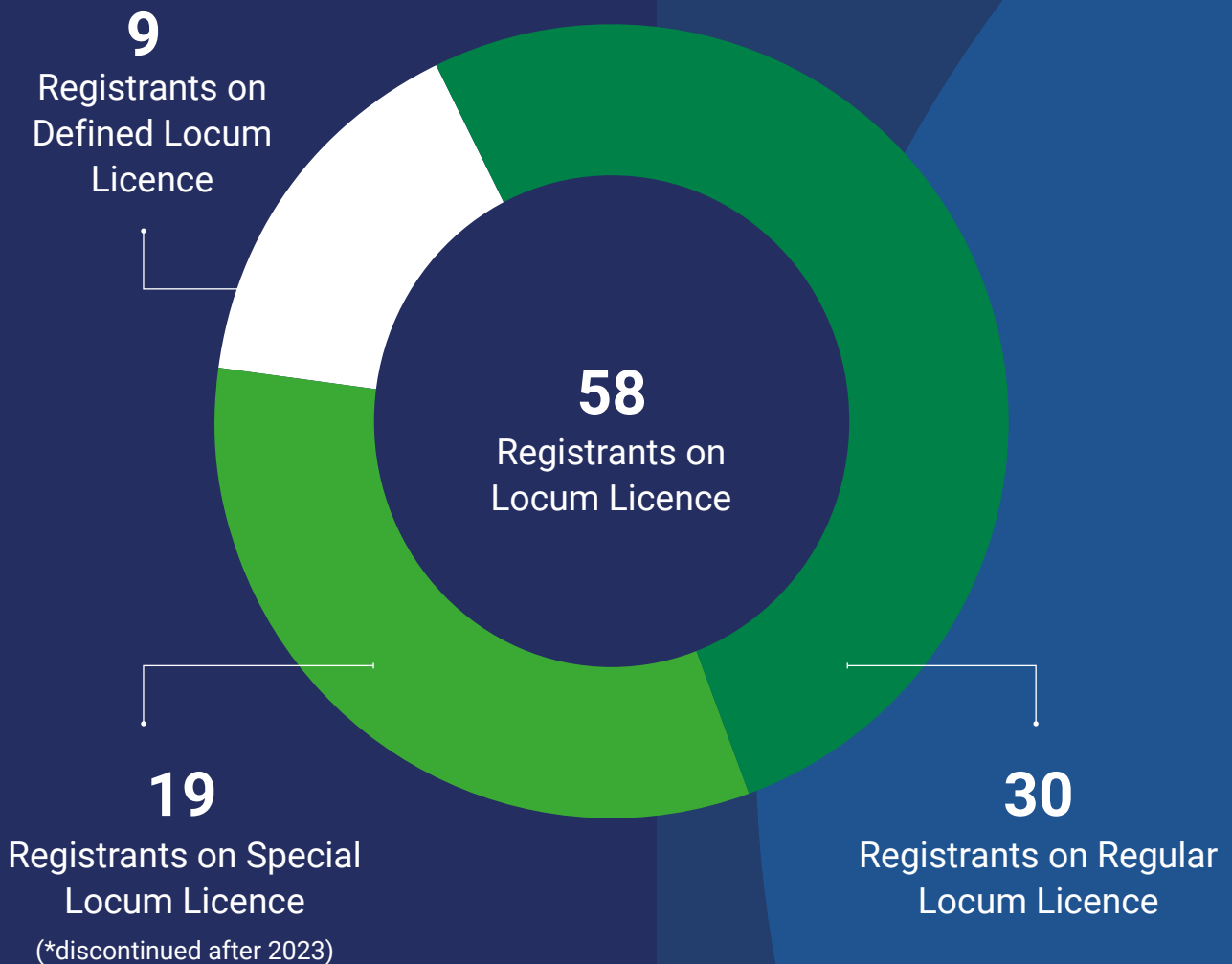
Registrants with a Border Area Licence



Registrants with a Courtesy Licence



Registrants with a Physician Assistant Licence





396

**Registrants with a
Medical Student Licence**

253

**Registrants with a Postgraduate
Trainee Licence**

918

Family physicians

1066

Specialists

616

**Family physicians with Certificates of
Added Competence**



1029 Female



1571 Male



- 54** aged <30
- 606** aged 30-39
- 685** aged 40-49
- 688** aged 50-59
- 421** aged 60-69
- 117** aged 70-79
- 29** aged >79



247

Physicians on the Atlantic Registry across all four Atlantic provinces



90

Physicians on the Atlantic Registry with New Brunswick as their home province



Investigating complaints

Our mandate

An important part of the College's mandate of protecting the public interest is the investigation of complaints. Under the **Medical Act**, the College must investigate each complaint it receives. The College is committed to ensuring the complaint process is as sensitive and efficient as possible, while ensuring complaints are investigated fairly and in accordance with right-touch regulation principles.

Rise in complaints

The volume of complaints received by the College has steadily risen over the past four years, in line with national trends. In the College's view, this increase is likely attributable to our strained health care system and the resulting stressors for patients and physicians. Given the fragile state of our health care system, we expect this trend to continue over the coming years. In addition, complaints are becoming more complex.

We recognize that the complaints process is stressful for patients and for physicians. We strive to provide a compassionate and respectful complaints process. Whenever possible, we resolve complaints using early resolution techniques, which avoids the presentation of the complaint to our professional conduct committees. This allows us to resolve complaints quicker and, in most cases, preserves the patient-physician relationship.

Highlights

As with the rest of the College, modernization efforts have continued over the past year. All open complaints were input into our new electronic database, Alinity, which allows us to determine precisely at what step of the complaints process any given complaint is situated. Work continues to input historical complaints into the database. We have also developed materials explaining

the complaints process to complainants and physicians. These materials are provided at the start of the complaints process and the feedback received has been positive.

We have continued to add staff to our Professional Conduct Department as well as physicians and public members to our Complaints and Registration Committee and Review Committee to support the increased volume of complaints. We thank all our committee members for their important contribution to the regulation of the practice of medicine.

Looking forward

Looking ahead to 2024, we will continue working on streamlining our complaints processes to deal with the increased volume of complaints. We will continue adding staff to the Professional Conduct Department to ensure complaints are investigated and resolved in a timely manner. We will also plan to provide staff and Committee members with continuing education and training relevant to their roles, including training in fairness principles and bias. In addition, content on our website will be expanded to explain our complaints processes and to provide information to patients on which types of complaints should be presented to the College.

While in the past only formal complaints that were intended to be presented to a professional conduct committee were included in our complaint reports, starting in 2024 we will track all complaints received by the College, including those resolved using early resolution techniques. This will allow us to report on complaints and early resolution techniques of complaints by staff more accurately.

Finally, we will continue our efforts to add additional physician members to our Complaints and Registration Committee and Review Committee. We take this opportunity to remind physicians that participation in the College's committees is eligible for Continuing Medical Education credits.



At a glance As of December 31, 2023



- **85** quality of care
- **21** practice management
- **19** ethics
- **6** communication
- **2** medical records

65 additional complaints received compared to 2022



- 11** Complaints resulted in no further action
- 3** Counsel
- 6** Caution
- 7** Censures
- 3** Physicians ordered to take a course
- 1** Complaint closed by approval of settlement by Council
- 12** Complaints closed by early resolution by staff



Complaints Committee

60	Complaints considered	5	Referrals to Review Committee as potentially disciplinary matters
52	Recommendations issued	2	Appeals sought
29	Recommendations approved by Council	6	Reconsiderations sought
23	Recommendations awaiting approval by Council		

Review Committee



Complaints Committee appeals considered



Recommendations issued



Recommendations approved by Council

Assessing practice readiness

The Practice Ready Assessment New Brunswick (PRA-NB) program was created to help increase the number of family physicians entering into practice in the province. It was developed as a means to safely assess and onboard internationally trained physicians, who are not otherwise eligible for a licence, by providing these physicians with an alternate route to licensure. Under the PRA-NB program, eligible physicians who have completed their medical training and practiced independently abroad can be chosen to participate in a 12-week clinical field assessment, to evaluate their knowledge, skills, and suitability as care providers for New Brunswickers. Upon successful completion of the assessment, they will practice under a Special Licence.

PRA-NB is based on a national PRA program model from the Medical Council of Canada (MCC), with eight other provinces also participating. Provincial PRA programs and the MCC collaborate on a pan-Canadian framework to develop and maintain common standards and materials for delivering and administering practice readiness assessments. This ensures internationally trained physicians experience fair and comparable assessments across Canada.

Interest in PRA-NB is high; in our first year, we received a large number of applications despite our smaller program size. We will be welcoming our inaugural cohort of 10 candidates in 2024, shared evenly between the two Regional Health Authorities. In the coming months, we will be recruiting physician assessors from both Regional Health Authorities, developing a selection plan for candidates, and building an orientation program for assessors and selected candidates. We will also be defining our clinical field assessment processes and resources and engaging in our first assessment period in fall 2024 with our inaugural cohort of 10 candidates. We expect successful candidates to finish their clinical field assessments in December 2024 and be licensed and ready to practice in early 2025. Subsequent cohorts are also being planned throughout the next year.

As New Brunswick's population has increased by approximately 125,000 and the provincial wait list for a family doctor continues to climb, the need for competent medical practitioners is more apparent than ever. Through this program, we aim to match 10,000-15,000 New Brunswickers annually with a family doctor, and move towards better care for our population.

At a glance

194

applications from

9

different provinces

126

eligible candidates

10

candidate positions for clinical field assessments



Assuring quality

Peer Assessment Committee

The Peer Assessment Committee (PAC) supports physicians in providing quality care to New Brunswick patients by doing routine assessments in a continuous quality improvement perspective. The committee operates at arm's length from the College with a committee consisting of engaged practicing New Brunswick physicians. The PAC also contracts with the College of Prince Edward Island to carry out a number of reviews for them as well.

The Peer Assessment process currently focuses on a number of medical fields including family and emergency medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, after-hours medicine, and hospitalist and palliative care. Assessments may be either on-site, off-site, or virtual.

The Peer Assessment Committee is supported by a team of 13 competent assessors, all of whom are physicians who have been through the assessment process themselves. The committee is looking for motivated physicians who would like to join the assessor team.

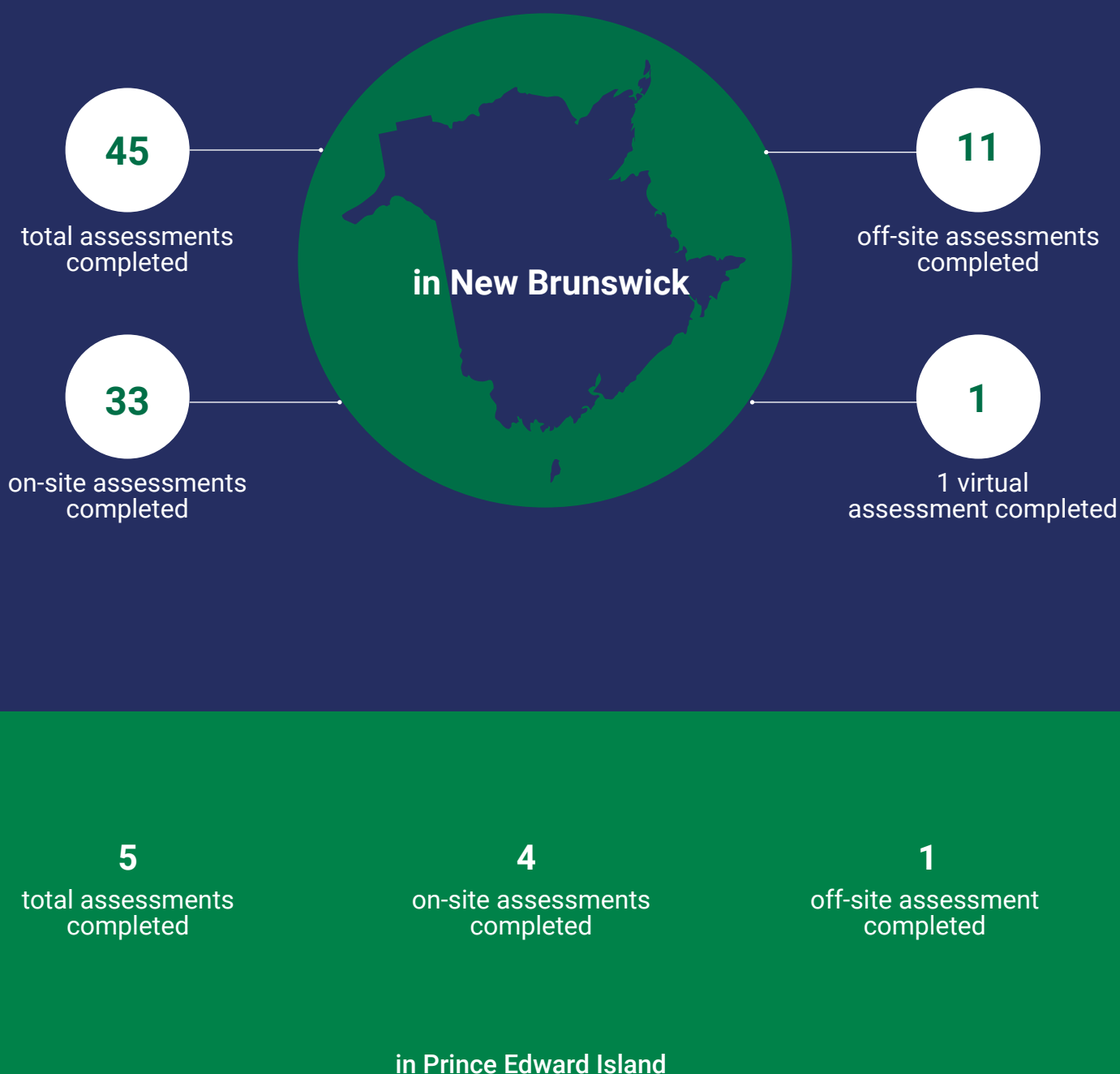
In line with broader modernization efforts at the College, the Peer Assessment team has recently embraced electronic communication platforms and are transitioning away from paper.

Professional standards

Work has now begun to review the College's existing professional standards, to help prioritize which standards need to be updated, and to identify gaps where new standards will need to be developed. These are expected to take on a more prominent role over the next year.

Professional standard development is influenced by both external and internal forces, as registrants help us to identify where new standards are needed, in addition to changing legislation. Over the coming year, we anticipate that professional standard development related to virtual care, episodic care, continuity of care, and record retention will be prioritized.

Peer Assessment Committee: At a glance






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