

The number of unmatched medical graduates in Ontario is **rising**.

To become a practicing physician in Ontario, medical students must first complete postgraduate medical training as a resident. In their final year of medical school, students apply for residency positions in a process known as “the match.” Historically, 10 to 20 graduates in Canada have gone unmatched each year. However, that number has dramatically risen since 2011, **rising to 46 in 2016 and 68 in 2017 (35 in Ontario), and is projected to reach 141 in 2021.**

Without postgraduate training, medical school graduates cannot be certified to practice independently, leaving many of these students with limited professional options, a lack of support, a high debt burden, and risks to their mental health. Unmatched grads also result in a waste of educational investments amid physician shortages and long wait times. This crisis is multifaceted, and requires urgent action by many healthcare stakeholders, including the provincial government.

Ontario medical students call on the Government of Ontario to act on the following recommendations:

Make a physician workforce that meets Ontario’s needs

Health human resources planning should be based on the Ontario Population **Needs Based Physician Simulation Model (NBM)**, which has not been updated since in 2010.

Without actively employing a needs-based model, Ontario’s supply and distribution of physicians will be unbalanced, leading to longer wait times and physician unemployment.

RECOMMENDATION:
The needs-based model needs to be updated annually.

Specifically, the simulation model should be used to allocate post-graduate positions to reflect the medical speciality needs of the province and help bring physicians to underserved areas.

RECOMMENDATION:
The needs-based model should be used to determine the geographical and specialty distribution of residency positions.

More transparency in health human resources planning

Communication between the Ministry of Health and medical students has been inadequate.

In 2015, the MOHLTC **cut 25 residency positions**, announcing this cut just months before residency applications without providing specifics to the affected specialties.

Medical students need to be aware of the government’s health human resources planning. Medical students often prepare for their speciality of choice years in advance.

RECOMMENDATION:
The needs-based model and its projections for the distribution of residency positions needs to be communicated to students clearly and in a timely manner.

This information will guide career decisions and help medical students to seek better long-term career options in areas of greater need.

Create residency spots for Ontario’s medical graduates

In the past, a 1.1 to 1 ratio of positions to applicants was provided to support medical students through this matching process, providing a 10% buffer to allow for career choice flexibility year to year.

Due to cuts and other factors, this ratio dropped to **1.02 to 1** in 2017, driving the rise in unmatched medical graduates.

RECOMMENDATION:
Re-establish a 1.1 to 1 ratio of residency positions to applicants.

Furthermore, most unmatched grads re-apply in subsequent years, resulting in an accumulation of unmatched graduates. **Without action, the ratio of positions to applicants will drop below 1 to 1 (no buffer) by 2021.**

RECOMMENDATION:
Implement a one-time boost in residency positions to address the accumulation of unmatched grads.