

Ontario's Comprehensive Nursing Strategy

HFO Symposium
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Objectives

- To provide an overview of the local nursing workforce;
- To discuss key nursing workforce priorities and Ontario's Comprehensive Nursing Strategy; and
- To provide some thoughts on the future of nursing in Ontario.

The Local Nursing Workforce

- Registered Nurses (RNs), Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs), and Nurse Practitioners (NPs), provide vital services to a broad range of patients across the health care system.
- In 2009, the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) reported that over 123,000 nurses¹ were employed in nursing in Ontario. 63.9% of nurses were working full-time, 27.9% working part-time and 8.2% working casual.
- A shortage of nurses currently exists, across every sector, which may compromise the province's ability to deliver care.
- Furthermore, the supply of new nurses does not meet the demand created by the large number of nurses leaving the nursing profession through attrition and retirement.
- A number of key factors have led to challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified nurses including:
 - Challenges in obtaining full-time employment;
 - Unhealthy work environments;
 - Heavy workloads;
 - High risk of injury; and
 - Limited funding for professional development opportunities.
- The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy was developed and implemented to address these challenges.

¹ College of Nurses of Ontario. (2009). *Membership Statistics Report 2009*.

The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy

- Ontario's Comprehensive Nursing Strategy addresses the core reasons for instability in the nursing workforce.
- The strategy is part of a broader health human resources strategy, HealthForceOntario, developed to ensure that the province has the right number and mix of health care providers to meet the health care needs of Ontarians both now and in the future.
- The strategy helps to build a sustainable workforce by providing supports for nurses at each stage along the career continuum.
- The overall goals of the strategy are to:
 - Improve access to quality and ongoing nursing education;
 - Increase full-time employment opportunities; and
 - Promote safe and healthy work environments.

The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy

Supports for All Nurses

- Creating strategic policy initiatives to increase recruitment and retention of nurses **across** the system is integral to building a sustainable workforce.
- The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy supports nurses across the nursing career continuum through programs/initiatives such as:
 - ***9,000 Nurses Commitment;***
 - ***70% Full-Time Employment Policy;***
 - ***Nursing Health Human Resources Planning Capacity Demonstration Projects;***
 - ***Nursing Workload Demonstration Projects;***
 - ***Nursing Education Initiative;***
 - ***Nursing Retention Fund;***
 - ***Nursing Research Fund;***
 - ***Nursing Education Strategy; and***
 - ***Nurse Practitioner Regulatory Amendments.***

The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy

Supports for Early Career Nurses

- **Early career nurses represent 30% of the current nursing workforce and they are the future of nursing.**
- Recruiting and retaining early career nurses is imperative for the health and stability of the nursing workforce in Ontario.
- Historically, the lack of full-time employment, comprehensive orientation and opportunities for professional advancement has exacerbated the systemic and individual challenges faced by early career nurses.
- The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy aims to reverse early career nurse losses through programs/initiatives such as:
 - *Nursing Graduate Guarantee;*
 - *Nursing Community Assessment Program;*
 - *Summer Externship Program;*
 - *Grow Your Own Nurse Practitioner Program;*
 - *Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Education Program; and*
 - *Tuition Support for Nurses.*

The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy

Supports for Mid-Career Nurses

- **Mid-career nurses represent about 43% of the current nursing workforce, and as the largest cohort, they are integral to our system.**
- These nurses have acquired “the professional memory that employers count on, the expertise that patients and clients require, and the experience and wisdom that young nurses depend on for coaching, mentoring and support”.¹
- Studies have shown, however, the mid-career nurses exhibit the least amount of commitment and satisfaction of all the nursing groups – possibility a result of both non-work priorities and negative work experiences.
- The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy aims to improve the work-life balance of mid-career nurses through programs/initiatives such as:
 - *The de Souza Institute for Oncology Nursing;*
 - *Registered Nurse Surgical First Assist (New Role);*
 - *Registered Nurse Performed Flexible Sigmoidoscopy (New Role);*
 - *Nurse Practitioner with Specialty Education in Anesthesia (New Role); and*
 - *Graduate Nursing Tuition Waiver Program.*

¹ Donner, G.L. and M.M. Wheeler. (2001). Discovery Path: A Retention Strategy for Mid-Career Nurses. *Journal of Nursing Leadership*. 14(1), 27-31.

The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy

Supports for Experienced Nurses

- **Experienced Nurses represent about 27% of the current nursing workforce. They are over the age of 55 and have many years of valuable nursing experience.**
- The health system is at risk of losing a large number of nurses from this cohort.
- In 2009, over 32,700 experienced nurses were eligible for retirement and considering that 41.3% of the nursing workforce is aged between 40-54, this figure is set to grow dramatically in the next 5 to 10 years.¹
- In a 2007 report, the Canadian Institute for Health Information indicated that up to 4,000 nurses² could be retained in the system if effective strategies targeting late career nurses are utilized.
- The Comprehensive Nursing Strategy supports experienced nurses through programs/initiatives such as the *Late Career Nurse Initiative*.
- The *Late Career Nurse Initiative* provides experienced nurses with the opportunity to engage in less physically demanding alternate roles, resulting in healthier work environments and opportunities for transfer of knowledge and mentorship.

¹ College of Nurses of Ontario. (2009). *Membership Statistics Report 2009*.

² Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2007). *Health Indicators, 2007*.

The Future of Nursing in Ontario

- The Nursing Secretariat will continue to address existing issues and priorities in nursing.
- Additional nursing priorities may include:
 - Building capacity in health human resources planning;
 - Addressing shortages of nurses in rural and isolated communities;
 - Interprofessional collaboration, including the alignment of competencies and knowledge with nursing roles;
 - Succession planning and leadership development; and
 - Supporting the integration of internationally educated nurses into practice in Ontario.

For More Information

1) HealthForceOntario Website

www.healthforceontario.ca

2) Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Website

www.health.gov.on.ca

3) Nursing Secretariat Website

www.health.gov.on.ca/nursingsecretariat