

80/20 vision

RNAO hopes strategy will retain experienced RNs

Almost 40 per cent of Ontario's registered nurses are over the age of 50, and something must be done to encourage them to stay in the workforce or risk a dramatic provincial shortage.

In a report released late in 2006, the Canadian Institute of Health Information's (CIHI) Workforce Trends of Registered Nurses in Canada showed that the share of Ontario's RNs over age 50 increased by almost six percentage points from 32.8 to 38.6 per cent between 2001 and 2005. Fully 21.3 per cent of RNs working in the province were eligible to retire in 2005.

The average age of Ontario nurses also increased, from 45.1 years in 2004 to 45.2 in 2005 with the provincial figure slightly higher than the national average of 44.7 years.

Mary Ferguson-Paré, president of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO), said the statistics underscore the need for revitalized policies to keep RNs working in Ontario and right across Canada.

"We're pleased with the Ontario government's promise to offer full-time employment to new nursing graduates. No doubt this will help build a younger nursing workforce. At the same time, it is imperative that we honour the knowledge of our experienced RNs by building programs to ease their workload and allow them to share their expertise with novice colleagues."

The RNAO would like to see the immediate implementation of the 80/20 strategy across all sectors, "so that the tradition of excellent patient care is passed from generation to generation," adds Ferguson-Paré.



Registered Nurses Association of Ontario president Mary Ferguson-Paré makes a point at the podium.

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The strategy, currently in place in some Ontario hospitals, provides nurses, aged 55 and over, with an opportunity to spend 80 per cent of their time in direct patient care and 20 per cent on research, education and other professional develop-

ment activities – especially mentoring new grads.

RNAO executive director Doris Grinspun says targeted investment in all health-care sectors to increase full-time employment to 70 per cent, side by side with the 80/20 solution, would go a long way to stave off nursing shortages and the loss of expertise.

Although there is much to do with respect to the nursing, there are some noteworthy improvements, says Grinspun.

For example, RN employment in Ontario increased by almost four per cent between 2004 and 2005 from 86,099 to 89,429. At the same time, the share of RNs working full-time rose to 60 per cent.

"While Ontario has always been a magnet for nurses who enter Canada, we must ensure that we are not poaching health resources from countries that need them more," says Ferguson-Paré.

"We welcome new immigrants and value their breadth of experience and unique perspective. However, we would vigorously oppose poaching. This would be both morally wrong and the wrong policy for resolving the nursing shortage in Ontario," she adds, pointing to the increase from 11.5 to 11.9 per cent in internationally educated nurses.

The RNAO is the professional association representing registered nurses wherever they practice in Ontario.

Since 1925, RNAO has lobbied for healthy public policy, promoted excellence in nursing practice, increased nurses' contribution to shaping the health-care system, and influenced decisions that affect nurses and the public they serve.



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A MESSAGE FROM RNAO

Happy Nursing Week

to all RNs and nursing students in Windsor and the surrounding area

Nursing is at the centre of our health-care system and no one knows that better than you. Your knowledge, skills and compassion have a positive effect on the lives of Ontarians each and every day.

This is a time to celebrate the achievements you've earned over the last year. Your dedication makes nursing and the health-care system even stronger.

We thank you for your unwavering commitment.

Mary Ferguson-Paré, RN, PhD, CHE
President, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD (c), O. ONT
Executive Director, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

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— From the staff at Bayshore Home Health's Windsor office



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