

WeRPNs KEY MESSAGES & ASKS

Background Information

- There are over 50,000 Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) practicing in Ontario and WeRPN is the organization that represents us.
- RPNs are a core part of patient care teams – along with Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Personal Support Workers (PSWs), and other health professionals – working in settings across the health care system including hospitals, long-term care and in patients' own homes.
- RPNs are experts in care at the bedside – we are college-educated, regulated health professionals, combining nursing skill, knowledge, and judgment.
 - Over 95 percent of RPNs are in direct patient care positions.
- Across the health system, and especially in long-term care, Ontario's RPNs have worked tirelessly to care for and protect Ontario's most vulnerable through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **RPNs are proud of the work we do and the care we provide, but after more than two years of fighting a pandemic and managing increased workloads, we are tired and burnt-out.**
 - **34% of RPNs have reported that they are considering leaving the profession since the beginning of the pandemic.**
 - The potential for this "great resignation" of nurses in Ontario will have a devastating impact on our health care system and the people it treats and protects.
- To ensure that Ontarians continue to receive safe, high-quality care, **we must continue to build up Ontario's nursing workforce by focusing on recruitment and, most importantly, by working to retain the nurses we have.**

Issues

- 1) Addressing fair remuneration for RPNs
- 2) Standardizing Workloads
- 3) Full-time Work

ISSUE #1: Addressing fair remuneration for RPNs

- RPNs were not included in the pandemic pay top-up of \$3/hour awarded to PSWs, leaving many RPNs making the same wage or, in some cases, *less* than the colleagues they supervise (like PSWs).
- To be clear, RPNs support fair compensation for our PSW colleagues. However, this policy, which is intended to support the retention of PSWs, is pushing RPNs to leave the profession.

THE SOLUTION: Better pay for RPNs, wage increases now

- We're calling on all parties to commit to expanding the permanent pay top-up to include RPNs and make it retroactive to match increases awarded to other health professionals, to ensure that RPNs are fairly compensated for their contributions and provide incentives to retain and recruit future RPNs.

ISSUE #2: Standardizing workloads

- RPNs play a critical role in the delivery of safe, high-quality care for Ontarians of all ages and medical needs.
- COVID-19 stretched RPNs, along with our front-line colleagues, who were already over-worked.
 - 71% of RPNs reported experiencing a breaking point at their job during the pandemic
 - 83% felt like their mental health had been adversely affected by their work
 - 34% are considering leaving the profession

THE SOLUTION: Better working conditions for RPNs

- There is an opportunity to rebuild a better health system going forward. To do this, we must tackle unsustainable nursing workloads.
- Matching care provider competencies (RPNs, RNs, NPs, and Doctors) with patient and resident needs is key to ensuring manageable nurse workloads and creating a work environment that is conducive to attracting and retaining staff.
- We are calling on all parties, if elected, to commit to legislating staffing and workload standards that ensure the highest levels of care and safety for patients and RPNs.
- We are also calling on the next government to prioritize moving to 75% full-time positions for RPNs in the **long-term-care, home, and community care sectors**.

ISSUE #3: Full-time work

- Did you know only 59% of RPNs across all sectors work full time and under 40% of RPN working in long-term care are full-time?
- About 30% of RPNs working in long-term care hold **two or more part-time positions** to earn a full-time salary equivalent.
- This is less than ideal for health care workers as it increases the risk of burn out. And COVID-19 has shown us, working in multiple workplaces also increases infection control risks.
- Positions in long-term care have become less attractive to RPNs – as working in patient care settings under high stress and unsustainable workloads has contributed to mental and emotional health issues for RPNs.
 - Long-term care resident and worker experiences are improved when RPNs' can develop real relationships with patients.
 - With the time to properly address the daily needs of the residents the level of care that is delivered is improved because RPNs come to understand both the acute issues and the underlying conditions that need to be addressed while also building a personal relationship with residents.

THE SOLUTION: More full-time work for RPNs

We are calling on all parties to commit to ensuring that, at minimum, 75% of positions in long-term care and home and community care are full-time to ensure that RPNs can support residents through better care, continuity of treatment, and reduced infection control risks.