

2023
Review

We RPN Registered Practical Nurses
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The State of Nursing in Ontario

We RPN

Registered Practical Nurses
Association of Ontario

Research Summary Report Survey Commissioned by: WeRPN May 2023

About WeRPN

The Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (WeRPN) is the professional voice of over 60,000 Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) across the province. WeRPN builds the profile and professional capacity of RPNs so they can better care for patients and better support their fellow healthcare workers. The association works closely with its members and the healthcare community to support and advocate for the concerns of Ontario's RPNs.

About This Survey

In May 2023, WeRPN conducted a comprehensive survey to document and benchmark the current state of nursing in Ontario and the challenges facing this profession. Over 1,200 RPNs participated from across the province. This annual survey follows previous research conducted in 2022, and 2020.

Methodology

From May 17 to 25, 2023 an online survey was conducted among 1,208 Registered Practical Nurses across Ontario, by WeRPN. For comparison purposes only, the sample plan would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

WeRPN's 2023 nurses survey highlights several growing threats to the nursing profession that are having a profound impact on patient care across the province. The findings reveal a deteriorating healthcare system under severe strain, at risk of collapse. An overwhelming majority of nurses surveyed indicate that they have witnessed how the nursing shortage is directly compromising patient care in Ontario.

Together, the cumulative effect of ongoing staffing challenges, enhanced workloads and increasingly pressured workplace environments are laying the foundation for an even greater loss of care capacity as they drive nurses away from:

- i. The front lines of direct patient care – many nurses are changing sectors, moving away from direct care, or seeking opportunities outside of Ontario's public system, in response to the overwhelming pressure and mental toll of providing care in the face of current realities in healthcare.
- ii. The province – nurses are considering moving to other jurisdictions because of their dissatisfaction with the Ontario healthcare system and the potential for better compensation, and more opportunities elsewhere.
- iii. From the profession altogether, at a time when Ontarians desperately need the knowledge, expertise and compassionate care of more nurses.

Considering these findings, WeRPN is calling on the government to take immediate action to address the crisis in nursing, stop the exodus and keep more nurses in the profession. WeRPN is recommending this be done by instituting manageable workloads with standardized nurse-to-patient ratios, prioritizing growth and retention strategies for nurses, providing fair compensation for RPNs across all sectors that recognizes their professional knowledge and skills, and moving away from short-term solutions such as the current reliance on for-profit nursing agencies. As many of the challenges from the last few years have remained unresolved, these findings highlight an urgent need for swift action to preserve the future of nursing, and safeguard the quality of patient care.

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¹The College of Nurses of Ontario h
²Ontario Demographic Quarterly: h
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Loss of nursing care capacity in Ontario

The Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (WeRPN), the professional voice of over 60,000 Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) across the province, conducted its annual survey, “The State of Nursing in Ontario: A 2023 Review,” in May 2023. It surveyed just over 1,200 nurses, collecting and analyzing their experiences over the past year, to create benchmarks for the profession. The research provides a stark outlook on the worsening healthcare crisis that is in full swing in Ontario.

Among the many insights uncovered, the most notable and alarming finding is that Ontario could experience a greater loss of nursing care. Despite the persistence of Ontario’s nursing shortage, the province has not taken sufficient steps to improve the realities for nurses. In fact, the increasingly difficult realities nurses are facing in their workplace today are driving many nurses away from direct patient care on the front lines, prompting some to consider leaving the province, and some to consider leaving the profession entirely.

In response to the toll of the growing health crisis, some Ontario nurses are leaving staff positions in the public system, opting to work with for-profit nursing agencies in search of more flexibility and better compensation. Others are turning to roles outside of direct care such as managerial, education or administrative positions. Many are also considering leaving Ontario for other locations that offer better compensation, while some nurses are choosing to leave the healthcare profession altogether.

While Ontario may be reporting a slight increase in net registration numbers, that doesn’t tell the full story. Focusing primarily on the registration rate oversimplifies a complex issue, and potentially skews the narrative to minimize the realities that nurses are experiencing on the front lines. In 2022, the College of Nurses of Ontario reported a 3.05 per cent net increase in registrants compared to the previous year¹. While it is noteworthy that the province has been able to attract new talent – the pace of recruitment, and limited focus on retention, continues to leave Ontario’s healthcare systems in an extremely vulnerable state. This is especially clear when considering the province’s growing population, which reached 15,386,407 on January 1, 2023, with an increase of 123,747 people during the last quarter of 2022². In 2022, Ontario’s population grew 3 per cent, much faster than the previous year (1.4 per cent)³. Considering the growing needs of the aging populations, more complex patient health challenges, and backlogs due to the pandemic, compounded with the burden of increased workloads with no release, the need for nurses continues to rise. The current rate of recruitment is nowhere close to where it needs to be to bring the province out of this healthcare crisis.

¹The College of Nurses of Ontario Registration Renewal Statistics Report 2023

² Ontario Demographic Quarterly: highlights of fourth quarter

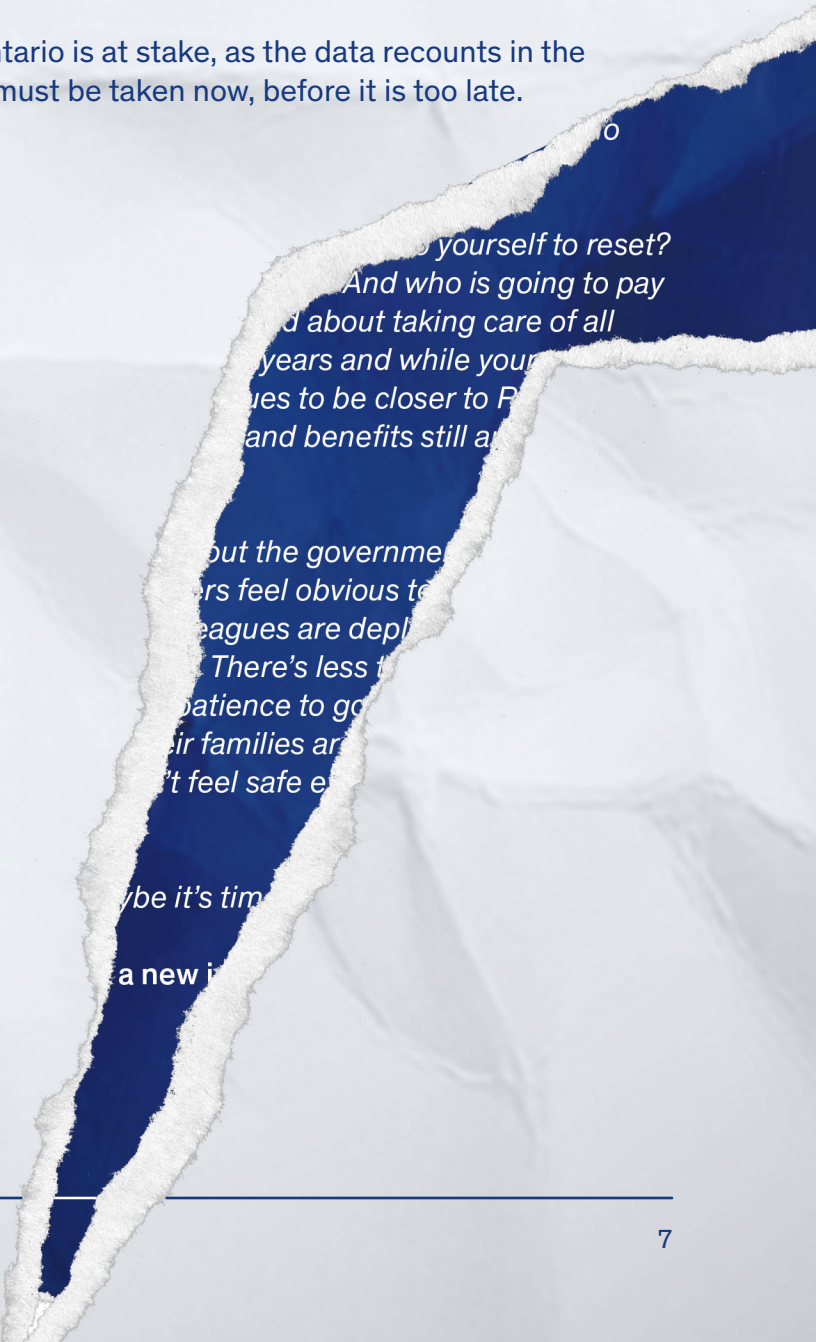
³ Ontario Demographic Quarterly: highlights of fourth quarter

Overview

Additionally, and most concerning, it's evident that the province continues to struggle with nursing retention. According to the same report⁴, nurses leaving the province have continuously increased year after year. During the same period in 2022, close to 10,000 Ontario nurses opted not to renew their registration, an 11 per cent increase from 2022 to 2023, and a staggering 42 per cent jump from 2016. Knowing that net registrations are determined based on the net change by subtracting the total number of losses from gains too, this shows why it's important to dig deeper.

It's clear that more needs to be done to recruit and retain. Ontario's RPNs continue to raise the alarm. The data reveals that what is not visible, but much more deeply consequential is the shockingly negative healthcare repercussions for Ontarians, the seriously declining welfare of nurses, and experienced nurses choosing to leave the front lines.

The future viability of the nursing profession in Ontario is at stake, as the data recounts in the following pages. WeRPN is calling for action that must be taken now, before it is too late.



⁴ The College of Nurses of Ontario Registration Renewal Statistics Report 2023

A Day in the Life of Ontario Nurses

Imagine you are getting ready for work. You know you'll have to take care of up to double the appropriate number of patients you can safely care for. You take a moment to brace yourself for how impossible it will be to be fully present for all of your patients, knowing that despite your best efforts, you'll still end up feeling like you didn't do enough. Your workload just keeps growing, you're consistently taking on added, more complex responsibilities, and all the while, the time you have to serve your patients remains finite. Your stress levels only move one way these days – up, up, up.

As it is with most days, you'll likely have to skip a break or not take your lunch because there is no one to cover for you, while you're away. There is a good chance that you'll be asked to stay longer past your shift too, because again, patients need care, and there aren't enough hands to go around. Some days you have to say no because you mentally and physically can't keep going on empty, but even if you do, you're burdened by a mix of guilt of knowing there likely won't be someone else. You're worried about letting your colleagues down, wondering if your patients would get the care they need if everyone's working short again... And then there's the fear of potential repercussions, of consequences for not being seen as a 'team player.' The reasons pile up, it feels like there's no winning, so you keep going, because what other choice do you have?

That long-awaited vacation you were hoping to take, nevermind a day or two off to yourself to reset? That will have to wait. Again. 'We simply don't have enough people at work.' And who is going to pay for that time off anyway? Despite working long hours, you're still worried about taking care of all your bills. Money is tight. RPNs have experienced stagnant wages for years and while your role closely resembles your Registered Nurse colleagues, the pay continues to be closer to PSW levels. While some unions may be negotiating new agreements, pay scales and benefits still aren't appropriate or consistent across the health system.

Some days, it feels like you're screaming at the top of your lungs, but the government just isn't listening. DO SOMETHING. WE NEED HELP. Nothing. The answers feel obvious to you, but change isn't coming fast enough, if at all. You're exhausted, and your colleagues are depleted. To top it all off, you have to navigate an increasingly tense work environment. There's less time to connect and collaborate, more isolation, less friendly faces, and not enough patience to go around when everyone's stress levels are at an all time high. Patients and their families are more frustrated too, and instances of workplace violence are much higher. You don't feel safe even going to work, and you don't feel like your workplace has your back.

You start to wonder, is this job really worth it any more? Maybe it's time for a change...

If this was your story at work, would you start looking for a new job or career?

A Day in the Life of Ontario Nurses

In their own words from survey respondents

"We are all just fighting to keep our heads above water."

"I feel defeated most days, short staffed. I will always give 110% but it's a drop in a bucket. I'm 65 years old and should be thinking of retiring but leaving would mean experiencing more short staffing at my place of employment and colleagues not getting time off or holidays."

"I work my entire shift without getting my one hour break. There's an increase in workload and patient load, yet reduced wages and now benefits."

"It's so sad to hear people complain of wait times, feeling helpless because you can't keep up with the demands of the job. Every day is a struggle."

"I love being a nurse but some days I ask myself is it even worth it anymore? Mental health takes a toll."

"One nurse is expected to care for upwards of 64 patients at a time. It is devastating. The staffing is so unsafe. The moral distress is so high. Patient care is suffering tremendously. Healthcare in Ontario is truly collapsing before our eyes."

"Nursing is not what it used to be. Patients these days have way more complex health needs. We run laps now just to keep up. We need better support and nurse-to-patient ratios to be able to do our jobs properly."

"It's very busy, there is no time to communicate with my residents as there are too many tasks to be completed. It's very sad. I do my best communicating with them because that is why I am there, however, I never leave my shift on time. I have 30 residents myself, where I have to administer medications, take vitals (when needed), assess residents when unwell, intervene when they are behavioural, change dressings, skin assessment, change O2 tubing (when needed), assist with toileting (when needed), answer the phone, file paperwork, call families (when needed), etc. There is not enough time in a shift to complete all of these tasks."

Unsustainable Conditions Impacting Care

Many Ontario nurses, living with these realities described, are doing just that. They are looking for a way out, so they can survive. This “day in the life of an Ontario nurse” is based on the findings captured from Ontario’s nurses in WeRPN’s recent 2023 survey. The following data represents their direct experiences with Ontario’s ongoing nursing shortage, which continues to have impacts on nurses and patient care.

Not enough time and resources to meet growing patient care needs

Ninety-two per cent of nurses say their workload has increased over the last few years. This has meant nurses having to take on more responsibility (83 per cent), missed breaks and meals (79 per cent), and being asked to care for more patients, residents, or clients (69 per cent). Nearly 7 in 10 nurses surveyed (68 per cent) do not feel they have the time and resources available to provide adequate care to their patients. It is worth noting that this is the third year that nurses are reporting an increase in their workload – the figure has remained above 90 per cent since 2020, and is now higher than it was at the height of the pandemic. Despite three years having passed, there continues to be a concerning absence of meaningful improvement, with the effect of growing workloads creating even more unmanageable work environments.

Overworked, and stressed in high pressure work environments

Ninety-one per cent of respondents say their daily experiences at work have become significantly more stressful compared to last year. Almost 4 in 5 (78 per cent) report being asked to take on additional shifts or to work overtime, due to staffing shortages, and nearly a third (31 per cent) worry about the potential consequences if they were to decline.

In their own words from survey respondents

“I am watching healthcare decline in availability and quality. I am scared for the care my loved ones will receive. I am scared to be a part of this sinking ship, and I am angry that it means so little to so many Ontarians.”

“I find it very difficult and challenging to not have the time to get to know your patients and care for them as they should be cared for... With the shortage of nurses, it makes nursing feel like a chore rather than a profession. Although I am happy to be a nurse, it's becoming harder and harder when we feel like we have no support.”

“Burnout and fatigue need to be addressed. RPNs’ voices and experiences need to be factored into decisions.”

Unsustainable Conditions Impacting Care

Reaching a breaking point

Seventy-eight per cent report that they experienced a breaking point related to their job this year. In the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, 71 per cent of nurses reported feeling this way, and yet, two years later, this figure continues to rise.

Personal safety is a key concern

Shockingly, 63 per cent of all nurses surveyed said they have experienced or witnessed an increase in workplace violence against nurses this year. Almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of respondents impacted by staffing shortages reported feeling pressured to work in unsafe conditions. Not surprisingly, 53 per cent of respondents who are planning to leave the nursing profession say there needs to be better practices to protect nurses from such violence at work.

Nurses feel moral distress with no end in sight

Seventy-nine per cent of nurses impacted by the nursing shortage say they feel ethically conflicted, knowing the appropriate care they are educated to provide, but being unable to do so given the pressures of their environment at work. Among nurses who experience moral distress, the leading factors include knowing patients deserve more, but being unable to offer it (87 per cent), witnessing the impact of staffing shortages on patients (83 per cent), and not having the proper resources to provide quality care (73 per cent).

In their own words from survey respondents

"We need better support, and nurse-to-patient ratios to be able to do our job properly."

"I'm forced to take on more, even when asking for help, and when I've voiced that it is unrealistic."

"I'm guilt tripped into taking more shifts and talked down to for taking sick days."

"Patient care is negatively impacted by the shortage of nurses. I am often missing lunch breaks and staying late to complete the work that needs to be done."

Unsustainable Conditions Impacting Care

The majority of nurses' mental health is suffering

Eighty-nine per cent of RPNs say their mental health is suffering due to their workplace conditions. Seventy-six per cent of nurses surveyed say they could be provided with more mental health support to address the mental toll their job has taken on them and 37 per cent of those surveyed indicated they are in immediate need of more mental health support. There hasn't been a noticeable improvement to mental health support in the past few years and not surprisingly, among the nurses who transitioned away from direct patient care roles, 45 per cent attributed their decision to workplace stress, and another 42 per cent cited their work affecting their mental health as the reason for them changing roles.

Working more without earned time off

Sixty-seven per cent of nurses report being pressured to take on overtime. A full 82 per cent admit they simply cannot take time off, due to the staffing shortage at their workplace. A third of nurses (35 per cent) who said their workload increased, cited unpaid overtime at the end of their shift.

Workplace culture is worsening

Sixty-eight per cent of respondents believe their workplace culture has worsened in the last year. Almost all nurses surveyed (97 per cent) say working short staffed has had a negative impact on their workplace culture. Additionally, 58 per cent say they have less time to consult and collaborate with colleagues, and 34 per cent report not having any close relationships at work anymore.

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The majority of nurses are experiencing worsening financial distress

In addition to nurses continuing to feel undervalued and overworked, an alarming 85 per cent of those surveyed are experiencing financial distress, a statistic which has dramatically worsened from 57 per cent in 2020. What's more, only half (53 per cent) of nurses in this survey have the security of one full-time position. Most others are surviving from part-time work, managing multiple jobs, or accepting casual shifts where they can. For those who have experienced financial distress, to help improve their finances, 63 per cent have picked up extra shifts, 59 per cent say they have to work overtime, and 29 per cent secured an additional job in healthcare.

RPNs don't feel fairly compensated

Ninety-four per cent of nurses do not believe they are fairly compensated for their role as an RPN and that is leading more to consider alternative careers. Of those who intend to leave the profession, the top reason cited by nearly all (96 per cent) is wages. This is followed by workload (76 per cent), lack of staff (63 per cent), and the impact of the nursing shortage (60 per cent). Moreover, 91 per cent of RPNs do not feel valued in their role.

Better wages and more opportunities outside of the province

One in five nurses (19 per cent) are considering moving outside of Ontario. Of the nurses considering leaving the province, wage is a leading factor – 83 per cent feel they have an opportunity to earn more income, 71 per cent cite hiring bonuses offered in other locations, and 43 per cent are attracted to more opportunities in other places.

In their own words from survey respondents

"I have had challenges finding full time employment that pays fairly and doesn't burn me out physically and mentally."

"The low wage makes it impossible... you don't become a nurse for financial reasons or praise, but you don't expect to have your heart and soul crushed out of you."

"Underpaid, overworked, disrespected. You feel helpless and miserable and like it's never going to get better. I can't afford to live in Ontario because I don't get paid enough – I would much rather get another job in another province but I have a family to provide for."

"Nursing is what I know. I can't make ends meet doing it however."

In their own words from survey respondents

"In today's healthcare system, as an RPN, I feel undervalued. To be a licensed provider and carry this responsibility for such little pay is a huge kick. It makes me feel underappreciated and used."

"The work environment is too stressful with not enough support offered to nurses. We're not being compensated fairly for the work we do."

"We are exhausted. We are frustrated. Oftentimes, we are teaching agency nurses, only to have them earn more money than us."

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A mass exodus of nurses is underway

WeRPN's research reveals 6 in 10 nurses (62 per cent) are considering leaving their profession altogether – an increase of 3 per cent from 2022. Alarming 86 per cent of nurses considering leaving intend to leave within the next two years, and 59 per cent say they are considering leaving healthcare altogether. This is aligned with data from the College of Nurses, which indicates an increasing number of nurses leaving the profession in Ontario year-over-year, in recent years.

Patient care is being compromised

The poll revealed that 91 per cent of nurses are seeing patient care be negatively impacted due to staffing issues. Among these nurses, 83 per cent are seeing increased wait times for patients, and 70 per cent have noted that it has gotten harder for patients to receive access to the necessary care they need, such as surgeries and diagnostics. Another 70 per cent say they are seeing less consistency in patient schedules, while 69 per cent say patients are having to wait longer to be assessed today. Shockingly, 62 per cent of nurses say they've directly witnessed how delays in such assessments have resulted in a decline in patient health.

In their own words from survey respondents

"Nursing is a rewarding career, however given the healthcare crisis, I feel as nurses we are not able to deliver the best care to all our clients because of the lack of resources and a decline in morale across the sector."

"I'd like to go back in time to when patients and nurses took priority over profit and bed flow."

"I moved away from Long-Term Care where I worked for years. I could no longer maintain my position in good faith."

"I have nursed in both Long-Term Care and hospitals for over 35 years. I am witness to declining levels of ability to provide quality care, and this negatively impacts both patients and care staff. Workloads are unsustainable, and are driving nurses both old and new from the profession."

Dangerously high nurse-to-patient ratios

Nurses are increasingly concerned by the growing and often unsustainable nurse-to-patient ratios. 7 in 10 respondents (70 per cent) report being asked to care for more patients today compared to the year before. Of course, this has direct consequences on patient care. Fifty-five per cent of nurses say the quality of care they've been able to deliver to patients, residents, or clients has worsened as a result. This compromised care stems from not having enough staff to adequately care for patients according to 91 per cent of nurses. Eighty-nine per cent also cite not having enough time and resources to meet patient needs. Eight in ten nurses (81 per cent) say they are being asked to care for more patients with more complex health conditions, and 77 per cent say increased sick time among nurses is a contributing factor.

Pride in nursing has dramatically eroded since the pandemic

When the provincial healthcare system was being tested to its limits in 2020, 67 per cent of nurses in Ontario said they had never been more proud to be an RPN. Sadly, three years later, pride in nursing has plummeted to mere 31 per cent. The morale and intrinsic motivation of 7 in 10 nurses (72 per cent) have suffered to the point that they admit their pride in nursing has worsened in the past year.

In their own words from survey respondents

"There was a day when a particular resident was in need of being listened to. At the time I was not able to sit and listen to her but promised I would return. I had no time until the end of my shift. I went and talked with her to assess her needs and mental health. I then put the extra hour on my sign-in form, but was denied because I was told I did this on my own, and because I was not asked to stay. Everyone knew this person needed care. So, yeah, there's lots of working for free, if you care."

"I hope to see a change in how RPNs are valued, I am having more trouble each day being proud of my profession due to the inequity in pay, increasing responsibility and ongoing workplace violence."

"Hospital staff, I believe, have reached their maximum capacity and are so exhausted and overworked that I believe patient care is compromised daily. The moral distress among all nurses is not conducive to a strong healthcare future."

Nursing Talent Loss

Breaking Points and Better Choices: A Deeper Look

Ontario's nurses have been tested in recent years, in every possible way. They've been asked to rise to every occasion, make personal sacrifices that also impact their families and loved ones. They've been expected to set aside personal gains for the good of their service to society as Ontarians' frontline health caretakers...

WeRPN's survey shows however, that the same values, sentiments and good will don't appear to be reflected back towards Ontario's nurses from government policymakers. Nurses in this province feel unacknowledged, unappreciated, unheard, and grossly undervalued.

At some point, every person reaches their breaking point. Unfortunately, Ontario's nurses are collectively at this pivotal juncture. They continued to be committed and dedicated professionals for years, but without further meaningful steps to address the conditions they are faced with, many are opting to make different choices now – better choices, for themselves, their families and their lives overall.

With nurses reporting they do not have the time or resources available to provide adequate care to their patients, a worrisome statistic that increased 8 per cent from 2022, WeRPN is sounding the alarm about the risk of a major loss of Ontario's nursing workforce, if further action isn't taken.

Imagine the devastating impact of losing 6 in 10 RPNs? This would be a catastrophic loss for Ontario's public health care system.

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Breaking Points and Better Choices: A Deeper Look

The conditions nurses are experiencing are driving many to consider other options:

The lure of agency nursing

More than half of all nurses surveyed (54 per cent) are considering leaving their current role to work for a private, for-profit care agency due to the challenges in the current nursing environment. It seems they've discovered, perhaps from others who have already made the move to agency nursing, that they could enjoy better compensation (95 per cent), flexible hours (71 per cent), and convenience (46 per cent). While individual nurses may benefit personally, Ontario's overreliance on nursing agencies is costing the health system. Employers can pay up to three-times as much for agency nurses compared to staff nurses.

Moving away from direct-to-patient nursing roles

Almost 2 in 5 nurses (38 per cent) report having changed their roles within the healthcare sector in the past two years. Of this group, 40 per cent say they chose to move away from a direct patient care role. A further 31 per cent have scaled back their working hours overall. While nursing registrations may continue to grow slowly, these moves within the profession are creating critical yet invisible gaps as fewer nurses are available to provide direct patient care.

In their own words from survey respondents

"If conditions continue to deteriorate in Long-Term Care, I'm unsure if our facility can continue to operate at the current level. There is often more agency staff than regular staff, which puts increasing responsibilities on the regular staff to ensure care is provided safely and by protocols."

"Nursing was my purpose until I was so burnt out. I could hardly care for myself. I have left for a different job in healthcare, and am keeping my license by working very casually in Long-Term Care. However, it's expensive to renew and at this point I may consider just letting it go."

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Breaking Points and Better Choices: A Deeper Look

Reducing working hours

In 2023, approximately half (53 per cent) of respondents currently hold at least one full-time position, a decrease from 61 per cent of respondents in 2022. Among a portion of nurses surveyed who have changed roles in healthcare in the past two years, 27 per cent say they made the switch from full-time to part-time work, and 31 per cent say they scaled back their working hours. The top factors that prompted nurses to scale back their working hours include workplace stress (45 per cent), the detrimental effects on their mental health (42 per cent), and simply needing a break (38 per cent).

Seeking better opportunities outside of Ontario

One in five nurses (19 per cent) are currently considering moving outside of Ontario to practice nursing. What are the driving factors for the decision to leave the province? The opportunity to earn more income is the leading catalyst (83 per cent), followed by dissatisfaction with the Ontario healthcare system (76 per cent), hiring bonuses offered in other locations (71 per cent), and more full-time opportunities (43 per cent), among other factors. Competition for nurses will only continue to grow in the coming years, and Ontario must catch up if it wants to be considered and competitive.

An alarming majority of Ontario nurses are considering leaving their beloved profession altogether

Over 6 in 10 nurses (62 per cent) say they will, or they are considering leaving nursing. Among those who intend to leave, 59 per cent plan to leave the profession altogether, 27 per cent would remain in healthcare but move to more administrative/non-direct practice roles, 15 per cent plan on going back to school for a different role in healthcare, 10 per cent plan to practice as a PSW instead, and 17 per cent said other. The statistic that should jolt government policymakers into paying attention is that 86 per cent of those planning to leave the profession will do so within the next two years. Of those who intend to leave, the top reason cited by nearly all respondents (96 per cent) are wages, followed by workload (76 per cent), lack of staff (63 per cent), and the impact of the nursing shortage (60 per cent).

In their own words from survey respondents

"I'm constantly wondering if I want to be a nurse at all anymore. I sometimes think I would rather do almost anything else for the same amount of money if it causes me less stress."

"When I leave, my workplace will have lost 3 nurses with 18 to 23 years of experience in 6 weeks."

"We're being called 'heroes' but not being shown it."

Conclusion: WeRPN's 4-step action plan

What would make nurses stay?

The solutions to today's dire challenges in Ontario's nursing profession are not complicated. Among those nurses who are currently planning to leave the profession, the top contributing factors that would get them to stay, include better wages (90 per cent), better nurse-to-patient ratios (72 per cent), improved support in the workplace (69 per cent), and improved workload (67 per cent). Further, 79 per cent of respondents feel the government must step in, to establish a stronger nurse-to-patient ratio. The next steps to rectify this crisis are clear.

In response to these findings, WeRPN is calling upon the government to take the following four tangible actions immediately:

- **Legislate manageable workloads**

Urgently establish standardized nurse-to-patient ratios to reverse deteriorating patient care and ensure workplace safety for nurses.

- **Prioritize retention with growth opportunities**

Streamline education for experienced nurses looking to expand their careers by supporting continuing education and enhancing spaces in schools.

- **Establish professional compensation**

Establish a fair and professional level of compensation for RPNs that reflects their knowledge and skills and is more closely aligned with their RN counterparts.

- **Guard against cost inefficiencies and privatizing healthcare**

Reduce over-reliance on for-profit nursing agencies with the development of more strategically planned full-time nursing positions.

The Ontario government's time to act is right now – there is not a second to lose. The state of this profession is nearing the point of no return. The future of Ontario's care is at stake.

Ninety-six per cent of nurses say they don't see an end to the nursing shortage, and almost every nurse (99 per cent), believes the government isn't doing enough to address this critical and ever-worsening nursing shortage.

WeRPN is asking government decision makers to show Ontario nurses through their actions that they deeply value their critical contribution to the health of Ontarians.

For more information, please contact:

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