



dialogue

July 13, 2006

A bi-weekly update on issues affecting health care in Ontario

Web sites to keep an eye on

Nursing Health Services Research Unit
<http://www.nhsru.com>

Nursing Retention Fund
<http://www.nursingretentionfund.ca/>

Job guarantees for grad nurses mostly PR

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Tom Closson may have his hands full. Inspired by Nursing Week, the province unveiled a dramatic promise May 8: every graduate nurse in Ontario would be guaranteed a full-time job beginning in 2007.

That's 4,000 full-time jobs, each year, into the future. These jobs would be out of reach to the thousands of experienced RNs and RPNs presently working in part-time, casual, and temporary work.

Closson, the head of a new Ministry of Health human resources task force, is responsible for working out the details. However, the idea may be impossible to implement, especially with collective agreements that have clear language around job postings. With unions participating on the taskforce, the policy is unlikely to emerge without a fight.

With no money tied to the announcement, there is doubt that the policy will ever see the light of day. It is not the first time the McGuinty government will have failed to live up to a hiring promise.

During the last election, the Liberals promised 8,000 new nursing positions, 70 per cent of which would be full-time. These would replace more than 7,000 lost nursing positions between 1993-1999.

However, under Bill 8, hospitals are now required to sign accountability agreements and balance their budgets annually, forcing many nurses back out the door. Hospitals are the largest employer of nurses in Ontario.

OPSEU Local 260 filed a grievance in May after Grey Bruce Health Services

jumped the gun on the new policy, advertising full-time positions for new grads at its six sites. Union members were told they were ineligible to apply, and that complaints should be directed to their political representatives.

A day later the postings were withdrawn, but not before the local drew media attention to this unfair policy.

Last year Ontario employed 89,054 RNs and 24,482 RPNs. An independent May 2006 study reported that only seven per cent of new RN graduates and three per cent of RPN graduates left the province in 2005. Included in that number are nurses who continue to live in Ontario but work across the border in the United States.

The two-year study revealed that only half the RNs had found full-time employment within two years of graduating, while very few RPNs had found full time employment after one year.

While the study indicates new nurses are having trouble finding work, the government is also facing the fact that within the next two years, one in three nurses in the province will be eligible to retire.

Given the anticipated demand, why is the government dividing eligible nurses into experienced and new grad camps? And if it were serious about maintaining nurses, why would it not live up to its commitment to 70 per cent full-time employment? It may have sounded good during nursing week, but this is one policy likely to quietly go away.

Graduating nurses...

- Are less than 30 years of age
- Prefer full-time work
- Seek employment in the GTA
- Seek employment in the hospital sector
- Prefer to stay in the region where they received their education.

Source: Nurse Health Services Research Unit Report, 2006

Nursing Retention Fund

For RNs and RPNs

The government has established a \$40 million fund for nurses who may be losing their position or hours of work as a result of changes to the hospital's service delivery. The fund is intended to be used for re-training towards filling an alternate or upcoming position. The program runs to 2010.

The fund, managed by the RAO, the RPNA, and ONA, is accessible only by public hospitals, not by individuals.

For more info, go to www.nursingretentionfund.ca