



Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario  
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers  
autorisés de l'Ontario



# ONTARIO'S RURAL, REMOTE & NORTHERN NURSING WORKFORCE REPORT

RNAO TASK  
FORCE makes  
recommendations  
to address the  
nursing shortage in  
**RURAL,  
REMOTE &  
NORTHERN  
COMMUNITIES**



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**Director of Nursing & Health Policy**  
**RNAO**

# Outline

**This presentation provides a high-level overview of:**

- Why the task force was initiated
- Membership
- Mandate
- Work Plan
- Next steps

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# Context

- Over 1.8 million Canadians live in rural areas (Stats Can).
  - Significant First Nations and Francophone populations
- ~ 18 per cent of Canada's RNs practice in rural areas (CIHI)
- Complexities created by geography, isolation and culture (Vukic and Keddy)
- Ontario-based research identifies significant workforce gaps, including significant challenges in retaining and recruiting the rural nursing workforce
- The rural nursing workforce must be sustained to ensure accessible care and optimal health outcomes for rural residents today and tomorrow

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# Membership

David McNeil, VP & CNE Health Sciences North

Louise Paquette, CEO North East LHIN

Co-Chairs

- Association of Ontario Health Centres
- Association of Public Health Units/Chief Nursing Officers
- Aboriginal Nurses' Association of Canada
- Council of Ontario University Programs in Nursing
- Dryden Regional Health Centre
- Health Canada
- HealthForceOntario MRA
- Lakehead University
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (*ex-officio*)
- North West LHIN
- Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres
- Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors
- Ontario Health Care Association
- Ontario Hospital Association
- Ontario Long-Term Care Association
- Ontario Nurses Association
- Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario

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# Mandate

## Purpose:

- To ensure a stable and sustainable nursing workforce exists in rural, remote and northern areas of Ontario by bringing together policy-makers, professional and labour associations, administrators, researchers, educators and other stakeholders.

## Objectives:

- To identify the enablers and barriers impacting the retention and recruitment of Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and Registered Practical Nurses in Ontario's rural, remote and northern areas.
- To propose short, medium and long-term strategies to ensure the retention and recruitment of Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and Registered Practical Nurses in Ontario's rural, remote and northern areas.

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# Work Plan and Progress

Activity	Status
Develop Terms of Reference & Work Plan	Achieved
Literature Scan	Achieved
Environmental Scanning and Key Informant Interviews	Achieved
Develop Draft Recommendations Framework & Consultation Plan	Achieved
Consultation	Achieved
Finalize Recommendations & Develop Report	Achieved
<b>Release Report</b>	<b>Nursing Week 2015</b>

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# Findings

- Partnerships
- Employment status
- Local solutions vital (access to education)
  - Francophone and First Nations, Métis and Inuit
- Orientation and mentorship key
- Recognize autonomous/expanded role through practice standards and education
  - RN prescribing
- Access to professional development
- Technology
- Compensation
- Leadership development
- Community integration
- Funding models

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# Recommendations

- **Recommendation #1:** Expand and create programs that enable residents of rural, remote and northern communities to access practical nursing, baccalaureate and graduate nursing education locally across the province.
- **Recommendation #2:** Provide sustainable funding for current initiatives that prepare and support First Nations, Inuit and Métis persons to pursue nursing education programs, preferably locally, and expand these programs across the province.
- **Recommendation #3:** Ensure that all entry-level nursing education programs in Ontario incorporate the socio-cultural context of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the curriculum.

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# Recommendations

- **Recommendation #4:** Expand and create new initiatives that prepare and support Francophone persons to pursue nursing education, preferably locally.
- **Recommendation #5:** Develop regional networks that co-ordinate opportunities for rural, remote and northern student placements and establish community partnerships to support travel and accommodation.
- **Recommendation #6:** Continue to highlight in all marketing the unique and rich opportunities that exist within rural, remote and northern communities, while also openly communicating the realities that are experienced in these communities.

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# Recommendations

- **Recommendation #7:** Invest in and support strategies that will enable achievement of 70 per cent full-time employment for all nurses.
- **Recommendation #8:** Fund a rural nursing orientation program to provide any nurse who is newly hired, or returning, to rural, remote and/or northern practice with an opportunity for an extended supernumerary orientation that includes accessing prerequisite certifications if needed.
- **Recommendation #9:** Leverage capacity to relieve short-term staffing gaps in rural areas through organizational partnerships that facilitate longer-term secondments in place of agency utilization and/or overtime.
- **Recommendation #10:** Collaborate with rural, remote and northern nurses to create dedicated continuing education programs that recognize the unique nature of rural nursing practice.

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# Recommendations

- **Recommendation #11:** Maintain current government interventions that promote the retention and recruitment of nurses in rural, remote and northern communities and expand them to all health-care settings, minimizing eligibility restrictions and optimizing their administration.
- **Recommendation #12:** Establish a rural nursing education initiative as an augment to the Nursing Education Initiative to provide reimbursement for tuition and transportation/accommodation costs associated with pursuing education.
- **Recommendation #13:** Enable collaboration between health organizations with capacity to deliver specialty care and rural, remote and northern settings, to support ongoing education and competency development.

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# Recommendations

- **Recommendation #14:** Expand access to, and utilization of, the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) and leverage other forms of virtual connectivity to deliver education and consultation in rural, remote and northern areas, augmented with in-person opportunities.
- **Recommendation #15:** Ensure effective standards exist to guide the appropriate use of technology in service delivery models and develop new standards where needed.
- **Recommendation #16:** Address compensation and benefit inequities for RNs, NPs and RPNs that exist between the community (including primary care) and hospital sectors and ensure that compensation reflects the realities of rural living.

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# Recommendations

- **Recommendation #17:** Develop a framework, including practice standards and education pathways that support the expanded utilization role of nurses in rural settings, including RN prescribing.
- **Recommendation #18:** Identify ways to develop and support the capacity of rural, remote and northern nurse administrators to effectively respond to clinical and human resource complexities.
- **Recommendation #19:** Bridge research gaps by funding studies that focus on rural, remote and northern nursing practice and issues/interventions impacting recruitment and retention in these areas.

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# Recommendations

- **Recommendation #20:** Consider the context of rural, remote and northern health-care delivery through meaningful engagement of relevant stakeholders and conducting an impact analysis, when developing new provincial initiatives.
- **Recommendation #21:** Enable local health human resource planning that is inclusive of all sectors, engages the local voice and is informed by evidence and appropriate data.
- **Recommendation #22:** Support evidence-informed funding models that consider population health needs and local context to enable person-centred care.
- **Recommendation #23:** Invest in ongoing infrastructure renewal and growth in rural and remote communities (i.e. telecommunications, hydro, transportation, housing, etc).

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# What's Next?

- RNAO extends its gratitude to the co-chairs, task force members and countless nurses and others who participated in consultation activities.
- RNAO will work with a number of stakeholders involved to advance the recommendations.

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# Questions

[www.RNAO.ca/RuralRemote](http://www.RNAO.ca/RuralRemote)

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