



Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy

Ensuring a healthy, vibrant nursing community

APRIL 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The New Nursing Strategy	2
Renewal	4
Retention	6
Recruitment	8
Conclusion	9
Appendices	10

Introduction

In April 2001, Nova Scotia introduced its first comprehensive *Nova Scotia Nursing Strategy*.

Developed in partnership by the Department of Health and the Provincial Nursing Network (PNN), the strategy's goal was to stabilize the province's nursing workforce by improving the quality of life for nurses, keeping experienced nurses in the system, and enhancing recruitment efforts. From 2001 to 2006, approximately \$60 million was invested to implement the strategy's initiatives.

Significant progress was made under this original strategy, particularly in respect to recruiting and retaining nurses, and in increasing the number of full-time, permanent nursing positions in the province.¹

Notes:

¹ *Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy: A Summary Report*, Nova Scotia Department of Health, 2007.

² *Building the Future: An Integrated Strategy for Nursing Human Resources in Canada, Phase II Regional Consultations "As Said" Report*, Nova Scotia, 2005

³ *A Report on The Nursing Strategy for Canada, Advisory Committee Health Delivery and Human Resources*, 2003

To help us build on those accomplishments we are now introducing Phase II of the *Nova Scotia Nursing Strategy*.

This new phase of the strategy identifies additional ways we can create the settings that enable nurses to deliver quality care while attaining professional satisfaction. It addresses the issues of recruitment and retention, which continue to remain priorities.^{2,3} It also outlines a path to strengthen the health-care system today while preparing to meet tomorrow's needs.



Through the Provincial Nursing Network partnership, we were able to successfully address many of the recommendations made by nurses in the focus group report *Nursing in Nova Scotia: Strengthening the Foundation*.

That led to the first nursing strategy.

These actions made a real difference in nursing and health care in this province.

We did what you asked, let us continue the work. ”

Provincial Nursing Network Member

NOVA SCOTIA'S NURSING STRATEGY

Phase II

For two intense days, Nova Scotia's Provincial Nursing Network (PNN) and the Office of Nursing Advisory Services came together and collaborated to create Phase II of the *Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy*. These key stakeholders share responsibility for implementing the strategy and measuring its success.

Other groups, including experts in nursing policy from across Canada, educators, employers, unions, regulatory bodies, practicing nurses, and government, were also able to provide input either through consultation or their participation with the PNN.

All of these groups, organizations, and individuals will continue to provide a forum for decision-making around, and evaluation of, the Phase II of the new strategy as it continues to roll out.



“The process of engaging all the key stakeholders that affect nursing contributes to the strength and uniqueness of the province. Deliberations and co-operation among people with different perspectives brings strength to the strategy and leadership to the country.”



Phase II of the *Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy* is comprised of three interdependent initiatives:

1. **Renewal**

Renew work and practice environments for nurses and make better use of the nursing workforce

2. **Retention**

Increase the retention of nurses

3. **Recruitment**

Improve the flow of nurses entering the workforce

All three initiatives work in concert to support the success of the second phase of the strategy. Renewing the working life for nurses and the environments in which they practice contributes to successful recruitment efforts, as well as to the retention of new and experienced nurses. At the same time, retaining more nurses reduces the pressure to recruit, and improves the environments in which nurses practice.

“ This is a collaborative effort within Nova Scotia of not only senior nurse leaders, but also nurses across the province working together to continue to find solutions that enhance nursing. ”

RENEWAL

Renew work and practice environments Make better use of the nursing workforce

Findings reported in the *National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses* highlight the physical and emotional challenges faced by nurses in increasingly demanding and often hectic workplaces.⁴ Nurses perceive they have a lack of control over their work environment. Furthermore, they also perceive that they are not respected, are harassed in the workplace, experience confusion about their role, and suffer from excessive workloads. If these issues are not properly addressed, Nova Scotia's ability to sustain its nursing workforce, and the care of its citizens, will be compromised. *Phase II of the Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy* will help to resolve the fundamental challenges faced by nurses in their work environments and help to ensure that all nurses are working to their full potential.

“Renewal is at the core of the strategy. It holds it all together. Without it, our retention and recruitment efforts will fail.”

The path to renewal:

- Enhance health human resource planning through improved information gathering
- Improve the environments in which nurses work
- Make better use of the skills nurses currently possess that can be applied to the way care will be delivered in the future
- Provide sufficient professional development to promote professional practices in the workplace
- Develop leaders for the future⁵

Notes:

⁴ Findings from the 2005 *National Survey of the Work and Health of Nurses*, Statistics Canada, 2006

⁵ Detailed information about the goals, objectives and strategic priorities for Renewal can be found in Appendix A





Nurses want to provide quality patient care. They also want to meet their own professional goals. Any attempts to resolve nurses' issues by defining better care-delivery models, improving the nurse-to-patient ratio, and ensuring appropriate staff mixes, must take these fundamental needs into consideration and balance them with concerns such as scopes of practice and the functioning of a collaborative work team. We must also keep an eye to the future and how care-delivery models will change. That is why making better use of the skills our nurses currently possess, and considering how those can be better used in the future, is a key priority in this new phase of the strategy.⁶

“Strategies within the renewal component of the plan are crucial in the maintenance, sustainability, and future of the health system as a whole.”

Sustaining a robust nursing workforce, one that can enhance efforts at inter-professional collaboration, requires strong leadership. When there are more nurses in leadership roles, they will be able to use their expertise to help identify new and better ways of working, as well as to guide nursing to keep pace with changes in care delivery. There will be many new and exciting opportunities for nurses to act as facilitators for these changes. For that reason, leadership development and succession planning are critical elements for renewal. Innovation, coordinated provincial change, and targeted investments, will be required to ensure sufficient professional development that will produce the necessary results.

Notes:

⁶ *Toward 2020: Visions for Nursing*, CNA, 2006

“Renewal promotes nursing as a dynamic professional career option.”

RETENTION

Increase the retention of nurses

As the labour shortage increases, our nurses have their choice of work opportunities in Nova Scotia, across Canada, and around the world. We must find ways to retain both new and experienced nurses in the system, and to remove any remaining barriers that prevent Nova Scotia from benefiting from its available nursing workforce in the most effective manner.

The path to retention:

- Retain late-career nurses in the workforce
- Improve access to continuing education and professional development
- Retain new nurses⁷

The national and international health-care sector has experimented with many nurse-retention strategies. Some have focused on improving workplace and practice environments, workload, productivity, and utilization issues, as well as job flexibility, mentorship/preceptorship programs, pre- and post-retirement initiatives, use of technology,⁸ and return-to-nursing programs.⁹ Many have placed special emphasis on retaining late-career nurses.

Notes:

⁷ More detailed information about the goals, objectives and strategic priorities for Retention can be found in Appendix B

⁸ *Patient Safety-Worker Safety: Building a Culture of Safety to Improve Healthcare Worker and Patient Well-Being*, Healthcare Quarterly, 8(Sp) 2005: 32-38.

⁹ *Commitment and Care: The benefits of a healthy workplace for nurses, their patients and the system*, Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, 2001

“Compassion, respect and choice ...
We want our nurses to
choose to stay.”



“We need to retain nurses
in order to help us create
the environment that
is required.”

The retention of late-career nurses has the greatest potential to increase the number of nurses available in Nova Scotia. These are nurses with a high level of expertise and a strong work ethic.

In order for this initiative to succeed, however, current work environments must change to reflect the needs and concerns of a healthy, older workforce.

“ We need to develop an environment that ensures nurses feel valued. ”

Nurses want access to continuing education and professional development throughout their careers, particularly in specialty areas. The second phase of the *Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy* places priority on nurses developing leadership skills so they can facilitate change, prepare for future care-delivery models,¹⁰ and collaborate on inter-professional teams. The province will continue to invest in these areas as part of the retention initiative.

Notes:

¹⁰ *Toward 2020: Visions for Nursing*, CNA, 2006

“ We need to create and sustain a healthy workforce that is supportive of people. ”



RECRUITMENT

Improve the flow of nurses into the workforce

There have been notable gains in the recruitment of nurses to Nova Scotia recently. In fact, Nova Scotia's supply of nurses has been significantly enhanced through immigration. Today, nearly half of all new nursing registrants are inter-provincial or foreign-trained graduates.¹¹

We will continue to build on these successes. Rural areas of the province, as well as specific care areas, such as critical care, operating room, and long-term care, face a number of unique challenges. In addition, recruitment for management and nursing leadership positions must be addressed.

The path to recruitment:

- Improve support for the clinical component of education and introduce students to potential employers
- Provide financial incentives to align Nova Scotia with other labour markets
- Improve recruitment in hard-to-fill positions
- Effectively market and promote vacancies
- Ensure continued public interest in nursing as a career¹²

Nurses are part of a global labour marketplace. In order to get them to choose our province, Nova Scotia must offer compensation and incentive packages that are competitive with other jurisdictions.¹³



Improved marketing and promotion will help enhance the image of nursing as a career and draw more interest in the profession. Programs aimed at attracting under-represented populations to nursing in Nova Scotia will help increase diversity and culturally competent care in the nursing workforce, as well as make it a more attractive career option for diverse populations. Increased emphasis on initiatives that address cultural competence are likewise needed for all nurses who work with diverse populations.

We will continue to provide access to education seats, grants, and bursaries for those interested in entering the nursing profession. Innovative education opportunities, such as accelerated training and collaborative learning programs, will further increase the supply of new nurses in the workforce.

Notes:

¹¹ *Workforce Trends of Registered Nurses in Canada, 2005*, Statistics Canada, 2006

¹² More detailed information about the goals, objectives, and strategic priorities for Recruitment can be found in Appendix C

¹³ *Internationally Educated Nurses in Ontario: Maximizing the Brain Gain*, Nursing Health Services Research Unit, 2006

MOVING FORWARD

Nova Scotia values its nursing professionals. The first *Nova Scotia Nursing Strategy* (2001–2006) made significant progress in addressing nurses' issues by successfully enhancing recruitment and retention efforts, and confronting work-life issues identified by nurses across Canada and within Nova Scotia.

As of 2007, about 35 per cent of Nova Scotia's nurses are over age 50. With more nurses approaching retirement, the province must continue to bolster efforts to ensure a stable workforce.

All evidence points to renewal of nurses' work environments and work life as being key to helping Nova Scotia meet its nursing needs. That is why *Phase II of Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy* focuses on renewal, with an equal emphasis on retention, and recruitment, to ensure the province will be well positioned to meet the health-care needs of all Nova Scotians, and the demands of the health-care delivery system, now and well into the future.

“ This strategic plan maps out a positive direction for nursing in Nova Scotia. This is important because nursing is the linchpin that supports our healthcare system. ”

“ We need to be selective in our approach when we market and fill vacancies; we need to work together rather than competing with each other. ”



RENEWAL

Renew the work and practice environments and make better use of the nursing workforce

Goals	Objectives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Enhance health human resource planning through improved information gathering	• Determine need for all nursing full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, required experience mixes, and required supports for nurses in urban and rural settings.	■		
	• Develop a method to determine nursing FTEs that takes innovative models of care delivery, functional hours of care, and patient days into consideration.	■		
	• Create a mechanism to plan for nursing seat expansion. Consider the requirements for clinical placements and nursing faculties.		■	■
Improve the practice environment	• Continue to fund orientation. Determine the effectiveness of the current strategy and look for opportunities to increase support for orientation.	■		
	• Institute sustainable commitment to the Practice Environment Collaboration Program (PECP). Determine how the actions of the PECP can be supported by other relevant initiatives across the public-health system; e.g. Healthy Workplace Initiative led by the Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations.	■	■	■
	• Develop strategies to reduce injury and abuse in the practice environment.	■		
Improve utilization of nurses' competencies in keeping with the care-delivery models of the future	• Implement new and appropriate care-delivery models that utilize nurses' full scope of practice. This should be based on patient/client needs and should also consider inter-professional team models.		■	
	• Examine the efficacy of tools used to determine nursing workload and to determine utilization of nursing staff in the workplace.		■	
	• In primary health care, enhance the contribution of nurses and nursing to inter-disciplinary teams.			■
Develop leaders for the future	• Continue to expand participation in, and support follow-up from, the annual nursing leadership conference.		■	
	• Develop a succession plan for leadership in nursing.		■	■
	• Implement the recommendations of the Nursing Leadership Development Report.	■		
Provide sufficient professional development to promote professional practices in the workplace	• Adopt best practices in professional development to enhance career and professional development for nurses.			■
	• Continue to inform the Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre (RN-PDC) of projected needs for nurses in priority areas. This will help ensure the RN-PDC can meet the performance-based education needs of nurses throughout the province.	■	■	■

*Strategic priorities will commence in the year indicated.

RETENTION

Increase the retention of nurses

Goals	Objectives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Retain late-career nurses in the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia's <i>Late-Career Nurses Report</i> recommendations as they relate to work life and scope-of-practice issues, employment and retirement options, respect, recognition and support for nursing work, and evaluation of outcomes of retention strategies. 			
Improve access to continuing education and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase funding, access to, and support for the <i>Nursing Strategy's Continuing Education Program</i>. Improve the promotion of the Continuing Education Program at the local and provincial levels. 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a provincial approach to address the priority continuing education needs of nurses. This will promote professional development and prepare nurses to meet changes in the health of the population and the health system. 			
Retain new nurses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support new nurses through orientation and other critical transition periods early in their careers. 			

*Strategic priorities will commence in the year indicated.

RECRUITMENT

Increase the retention of nurses

Goals	Objectives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Improve support for the clinical component of education and introduce students to potential employers	• Expand funding for the Co-operative Learning Experience Program so all eligible nursing students can participate.	■		
	• Explore ways to improve the clinical placement process.		■	
	• Consider the development and funding of simulation labs.		■	
	• Develop strategies to support student placement and preceptorship opportunities in the workplace.	■		
Provide financial incentives to align Nova Scotia with other labour markets	• Create a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to financial incentives for new nurses.	■		
	• Target hard-to-fill areas through the New Graduate Transition Allowance.	■		
	• Continue to fund the Relocation Allowance Program.	■		
	• Continue support for the Re-entry Financial Award Program.	■		
Improve recruitment in hard-to-fill positions	• Implement the recommendations surrounding marketing, quality practice environments, and education included in the <i>Rural and Remote Nursing Report</i> .	■		
	• Build cultural competence and increase diversity in the nursing workforce.	■		
	• Create permanent full- and part-time job opportunities. Consider the issues related to the need for a casual workforce.		■	
Effectively market and promote vacancies	• Develop a targeted marketing strategy to promote job opportunities.		■	
Ensure continued public interest in nursing as a career	• Promote nursing as a progressive career option.	■		

*Strategic priorities will commence in the year indicated.



Nursing Advisory Services
Nova Scotia Department of Health
Joseph Howe Building
P.O. Box 488, Halifax
Nova Scotia, B3J 2R8

Tel: (902) 424-0122
Fax: (902) 424-6690
www.gov.ns.ca/health/nursing