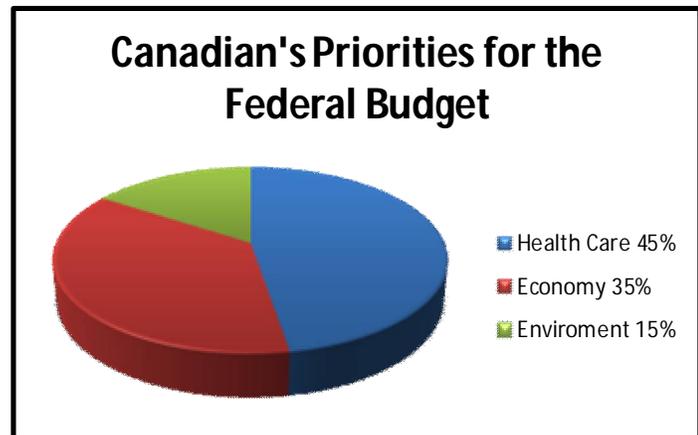


## NURSES WANTED: The Largest Body of Health Care Professionals in Canada Face Workforce Shortage Crisis

### CUTS TO HEALTH CARE IMPACT EVERYONE

Financial strains on health care, mass exodus of retiring nurses and attrition of nursing graduates have serious implications to the health care system. Canadians value health care above all else and believe it is the highest priority for the federal budget.

The Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA) urges all candidates to pledge to invest in Health Care and nursing leadership to help guide the health care system to one that is preventative, as opposed to curative, which promotes healthy work environments, improves job retention for new nurses and ultimately better patient outcomes.



### WHY ARE NURSES IMPORTANT

Nurses are the largest body of health care providers in Canada and are at the heart of patient care. Nurses work in all facets of the health care system that include but are not limited to community, clinical settings, government, rural and remote care, research and education. Nurses work intimately with patients offering highly skilled clinical expertise while fostering trusting relationships built on advocacy, professional responsibilities and client centered care. Nursing leadership is integral to a strong health care system and must be protected and advocated for.

### THE FACTS

Between 1990 and the year 2000, 40% of new graduate Registered Nurses (RNs) left the profession due to the strain imposed on them by a lack of nursing leaders and mentorship stemming from nursing shortages. Attrition rates are associated with student debt, nursing's high stress working environments and staffing shortages. **Here are the facts:**

**\$26,000**

The average student loan debt for Canadian students finishing a bachelor's or masters program in 2010.

### #1 Student Debt

**\$19,000,000,000**

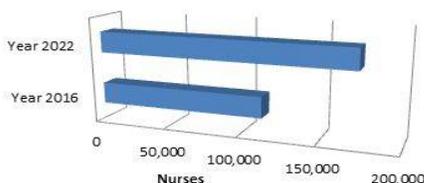
The amount the Canadian Student Financial Assistance Act increased its legislated student loan ceiling to after surpassing the original \$15 billion ceiling. This increase occurred in 2010 without a parliamentary action plan to address the alarming student debt rates.

**\$5,427**

Amount of the average yearly tuition fees for nursing students increased by **3.3%** in 2014.

### #2 Nursing Shortages

#### Projected Nursing Shortages



- In 2014, there was a reduction of **2,824** RN license renewals from 2013. Contributing factors were retirement, changes in careers and changes in the regulator body resulting in the first decline in decades.
- Optimal ratio of full-time to part-time nurses is 70:30. Reports show that **42%** of RNs and **50.4%** of LPNs work in casual or part-time positions.

## #3 Implications to the Healthcare System

Public sector nurses worked **20,627,800** hours of over-time in 2010, the equivalent of **11,400** jobs costing the health care system **\$891 million** per year.

The government has made cuts to our health care model without evidence based knowledge of the potential consequences despite nursing research showing that nursing shortages negatively impact patient outcomes.

**19,200** publicly employed nurses were absent from work each week in 2010 due to illness or injury; twice the rate for all other occupations and the highest amongst healthcare professionals. The cost of this absenteeism to the health care system is **\$711 million** annually.

## Recommendations

### #1 Address Student Debt

The financial burden currently imposed on nursing students must be addressed as they are the future of health care. Canadians believe that education contributes to the betterment of society and should be paid for by the government and made affordable even if taxes increase. CNSA recommends that the government:

- Reduce tuition costs
- Develop a national strategy to address nursing shortages, unpaid internships, and lack of nursing mentorship programs for new graduates
- Provide federal bursaries, non repayable grants, and increase loan repayment initiatives to rural nurses to drastically reduce nursing student's debt.
- Invest in nursing research and education

### #2 Provide Mentorship for New Graduates

Facilitate succession planning by funding nursing mentorship programs. Create job share positions where expert nurses close to retirement share a full time position with novice nurses to mentor and slowly ease new graduates into the profession in a supportive environment. Mentorship programs ensure graduates are getting the proper training they need to gain confidence and self-efficacy.

### #3 Improve Work Environments and Safe Staffing Levels for Quality Patient Care

Research shows that supportive learning environments are crucial to quality clinical education for nursing students, which improves patient outcomes while decreasing the cost on the health care system. Educational and health institutions must be supported by the government and the public to ensure RNs receive a supportive learning environment that promotes retention and safe working environments, enabling them to practice quality care.

The Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA) is the national voice of Canadian nursing students. CNSA is actively dedicated to the positive promotion of nurses and the nursing profession as a whole. The CNSA has over 29,000 members and is an affiliate member of the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) and Practical Nurses Canada, as well as an associate member of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU). The CNSA has a reciprocal relationship with Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) and is a co-chair of the New Health Professionals Network (NHPN). For more information please email [president@cnsa.ca](mailto:president@cnsa.ca)

***“CNA recommends that the federal government facilitate the recruitment of new nurses by reducing tuition costs for students...[and] that bursaries be made available to nursing students to cover 50 per cent of their annual tuition costs.”***

CNA

***“A key to effective nursing education is nurses teaching nurses, whether as faculty, preceptors or mentors.”***

CASN

***“Sufficient numbers of nurses are required to provide safe, competent and ethical care. The individual nurse's workload should not increase merely because staffing numbers decrease.”***

CFNU