

Citizen Delegations

Request for Recommendation Priorities Committee



Type of Decision

Meeting Date	October 4, 2006				Report Date	September 28, 2006			
Decision Requested	X	Yes		No	Priority	X	High		Low
	Direction Only				Type of Meeting	X	Open		Closed

Report Title

Nurse Practitioners - Part of the Solution

Policy Implication & Budget Impact

This report and recommendation(s) have been reviewed by the Finance Division and the funding source has been identified.

No policy or budget impact

x

Background Attached

Recommendation

WHEREAS the Nurse Practitioner functions as a member of the primary care team in the provision of primary care services; and

WHEREAS the Nurse Practitioner provides community based comprehensive primary health care with a focus on health promotion and disease prevention; and

WHEREAS the role of the Nurse Practitioner is seen as optimizing the healthcare delivery in Greater Sudbury:

THEREFORE be it resolved that the City of Greater Sudbury acknowledge the role of the Nurse Practitioner and their contribution to our underserved area and support the community's collaborative efforts necessary for the recruitment and retention of Nurse Practitioners; and

x

Recommendation Continued

Recommended by the Department

Catherine Matheson
General Manager, Community Development

Recommended by the C.A.O.

Mark Mieto
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: October 4, 2006

Report Prepared By

Kim Rossi
Coordinator of Senior Community Services

Division Review

FURTHER THAT Council petition once again the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to increase the number of funded positions for Nurse Practitioners in the City of Greater Sudbury

Background

The role of the Nurse Practitioner has been in existence in Ontario since the 1960's. The Nurse Practitioner is a Registered Nurse (Extended Class) will several more years of advance medical training and is regulated under the College of Nurses of Ontario.

Nurse Practitioners have a collaborative relationship with physicians or a group of physicians to ensure that patients have access to a comprehensive range of primary care services.

The Nurse Practitioner skills include the ability to:

- provide wellness care including health screening activities such as Pap smears and monitoring infant growth and development
- diagnose and treat minor illnesses such as ear and bladder infections
- diagnose and treat minor injuries such as sprains and lacerations
- screen for the presence of chronic disease, such as diabetes
- monitor people with stable chronic disease, such as hypertension
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It is within the scope of practice for NP(EC) to act independently on the following:

- communicating a diagnosis
- ordering a form of energy (ie: ultrasounds)
- prescribing a drug
- ordering prescribed x-rays
- ordering prescribed lab tests.

Recruitment and Retention:

Nurse Practitioners over the years have lobbied the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care in order to try and sustain funding that would allow them to practice within their own community. There are currently eight(8) RN(EC)'s unable to access employment locally and are considering migrating to other communities in order to practice within their scope of medicine.

Nurse Practitioners in Greater Sudbury recognize the need to enhance on the delivery of primary care and in 2005 submitted an expressions of interest to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to develop a local Family Health Team but were unsuccessful with their submission .

Date: October 4, 2006

In 2003 the previous provincial government had provided \$11 million for 117 new nurse practitioners and to date there remains 40 unfilled positions throughout the province.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario has sent a letter of appeal to Minister Smitherman (MOHLTC) in relation to the under-utilization of these eight(8) local nurse practitioners.

Nurse Practitioners are requesting the following from City Council:

- lobby the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to take the funding allocated in 2003 that has not been utilized and re-distribute it so that those monies could be used in Greater Sudbury
- lobby the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to fund a community clinic that would be managed by Nurse Practitioners and would deliver primary care to a number of unattached patients
- support graduates of the Laurentian University Nurse Practitioner program



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

Honourable George Smitherman
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

August 9, 2006

Dear George,

I am writing to alert you to a disturbing situation that affects access to primary care services for Ontarians and reflects a waste of valuable health human resources. I am also writing to ask for your urgent intervention.

A group of nurse practitioners from Sudbury recently informed us of eight fully qualified nurse practitioners, who are unable to find work as nurse practitioners, in their home community of Sudbury. As you will see from the attached testimonials from these Sudbury RN(EC)s, some are currently working as RNs at positions that they could have filled prior to completing their nurse practitioner programmes. Some have accepted or are actively seeking employment in southern Ontario or the United States. Most disheartening, some are considering a career change out of the nurse practitioner role and even out of the profession of nursing altogether. This is a tremendous squandering of talent for the individuals who have sacrificed much to become qualified for this vital role, for the communal resources that have subsidized their training, and most of all, for the people of Sudbury who are desperately seeking access to primary care.

George, as you know, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) supports and appreciates your Ministry's plan to improve access to health care through such initiatives as the Family Health Teams and increasing the number of community health centres. We commend the work done by your Ministry, especially through the Nursing Secretariat, with the Ontario Nursing Strategy and the Grow Your Own Nurse Practitioner Program. Given your commitment to improving our health care system by strengthening our recruitment and retention capabilities, I know that you will share our grave concerns about the unutilized yet highly qualified nurse practitioners in Sudbury.

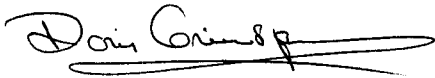
This powerful illustration of what is happening in one community supports the recent recommendations for health human resources planning for underserved areas in *The Definitions of Underserved: Policies, Issues, and Relevance*.ⁱ In particular, we would like to highlight their recommendation to take a systemic rather than a discipline-based approach to local health care. This report, as so many others,^{ii iii} recommends maximizing the contributions of all professions with relevant competencies who are available to deliver health care services in local communities.^{iv}

Given the barriers to nurse practitioners being used to their full scope within the Family Health Teams in Sudbury, the Ministry should now facilitate nurse practitioner-led clinics to provide needed health services to the community.

As we ask you to investigate this waste of nurse practitioner talent in Sudbury, we also assure that RNAO and NPAO are available to be of assistance with further information as required. Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue.

Warm regards,

Kind regards,



Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD(c), O.Ont.
Executive Director
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

cc: Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Marilyn Butcher, NPAO Communications Director
Willi Kirenko, NPAO President
Sue Matthews, Provincial Chief Nursing Officer

ⁱ Blythe, J. & Baumann, A. (2006). *The Definition of Underserviced: Policies, Issues, and Relevance*. Hamilton: Nursing Health Services Research Unit, McMaster University.

ⁱⁱ Romanow, R. (2002). *Building on Values: The Future of Health Care in Canada—Final Report*. Saskatoon: Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada.

ⁱⁱⁱ Health Council of Canada (2005). *Modernizing the Management of Health Human Resources in Canada: Identifying Areas for Accelerated Change*. Toronto: Author.

^{iv} Blythe, J. & Baumann, A. (2006). *The Definition of Underserviced: Policies, Issues, and Relevance*. Hamilton: Nursing Health Services Research Unit, McMaster University, p. 3.

Nurse Practitioner Testimonials

I graduated from the Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Programme in 2005, however I continue to work part-time as a Registered Nurse in the Intensive Care Unit of the Sudbury Regional Hospital. The reason I continue to work in the General Class as opposed to the Extended Class is largely due to the fact that there is a lack of positions for Nurse Practitioners in the community of Sudbury, where so many in the population are without primary care providers. The Nurse Practitioner is not valued in Ontario and this is reflected in the lack of funding, positions and remuneration. Due to this very frustrating fact, I have made the decision to leave Ontario and return to work as a Registered Nurse in the United States where I am treated as a valued member of the healthcare profession.

Sincerely,

Mary McGuire

Addendum October 1 2006: Mary McGuire is now working in Washington DC.

Carol-Ann Agnihotri, RN(EC), BScN, NP

My family and I have resided in Sudbury for the past five years. We originally moved here so that I could attend Laurentian University to pursue my Nurse Practitioner education.

I graduated in 2003, and was surprised to find limited employment opportunities in my new found role. I first worked for the North Shore Tribal Council, and provided Primary Health Care services for 3 First Nations reserves including Serpent River First Nations, Mississauga First Nations, and Thessalon. My commute was as long as 2.5 hours one way.

In 2004, I was recruited to the Blind River and District Health Centre. This ministry funded position had been vacant for 2 years, and the organization was diligently trying to find an NP with an Emergency room and hospital background. The perfect job, but in the wrong town.

My commute now is one hour and forty minutes each way. Although not ideal in many ways as it takes me away from my 3 young children, I persevere as there are no current employment opportunities in Greater Sudbury. My position in Blind River allows me to practice to the full capacity of a Nurse Practitioner. My role is diverse, exciting and challenging.

I look forward to the day when I am able to practice in my home community.

Thank-you,
Carol-Ann Agnihotri, RN(EC), BScN, NP
Lively, ON

I graduated from the Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner programme at Laurentian University in 2005. I completed the programme part-time over a period of three years as I juggled family responsibilities and worked full-time. I am proud to say I graduated with honours.

I was fortunate my employer agreed to grant me a four month leave of absence last year to complete the Integrated Practicum or I would have been unemployed after graduation. I continue to work full time as a registered nurse as I have been unable to find employment as a Nurse Practitioner in Sudbury. Family obligations prevent me from being able to leave Sudbury to relocate to southern Ontario, where there are unfilled Nurse Practitioner positions.

My 16 years of nursing experience includes Emergency, ICU, Oncology and Occupational Health Nursing. In addition to a BScN and a Nurse Practitioner Certificate, I have a Diploma in Occupational Health Nursing and have been certified in Emergency Nursing by the Canadian Nurses Association. I feel frustrated that I am unable to use my health care knowledge and skills to the fullest in a community where so many do not have a primary health care provider.

Nina Hoyt, RN(EC)

I am a RN(EC) presently living in Sudbury, Ontario. I graduated from Laurentian University with my PHCNP certificate in October of 2005.

I am currently unemployed both as a RN(EC) and as a RN. I had my 3 child 3 weeks after completing the PHCNP at Laurentian University. I had hopes of starting to work as a RN(EC) in Sudbury or the surrounding area this fall when my youngest child turned a year. With the lack of RN(EC) jobs here in Sudbury, I don't see becoming an employed RN(EC) any time soon.

I chose to become a RN(EC) in order to work in the north. My husband, who is completing his family medicine residency, also had a passion to come and work in the north.

I unfortunately will not be staying in Sudbury. There is little opportunity for me as a RN(EC) in this community. When my husband completes his residency next July, our family will be moving from Sudbury to a community that will welcome a RN(EC) and a Family Physician into their midst with jobs for both of us. We both hope that it will be a community the north, but with the lack of RN(EC) jobs here, most likely we will head south.

I do hope RN(EC) job opportunities will open up in Sudbury and that the RN(EC)s who remain here will find fulfilling careers.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Van Gilst RN(EC) BScN

In the past 18 months, I have travelled across this province, doing short term locums. I continue to do this, but am growing tired of living out of a suitcase when there is such need in my own community.

I have not sat idly by waiting for a position. I authored 2 extensive FHT proposals, only to have them both turned down. After being told that MOHLTC would consider NP run FHTs, it is very disappointing to see that they have not done so.

I have written MOHLTC many times, met with my local MPP Rick Bartolucci and spoken with the Provincial Chief Nursing Officer, all to no end.

At age 50, after 29 years as a nurse, the last 10 as a NP, I have never had so much to offer my community and yet so little opportunity to do so. This "NP experience" has become the most frustrating experience of my life. Although I had not planned on retiring at age 50, it appears that there are very few other choices available to me.

Marilyn Butcher RN(EC)

My name is Robyn Gorham RN(EC) and I graduated from the nurse practitioner program in September 2004. Since that time, I have been unable to find full time employment in Sudbury despite the desperate need for primary care in the community. At the moment, I am working in the same position as I was prior to returning to school for completion of the nurse practitioner program. The lack of government support and opportunity has created an extremely frustrating two years, and I have decided that this is my last attempt to obtain employment as a nurse practitioner. Should my business not succeed I will have no choice but to concentrate my career efforts on ventures that do not include the nurse practitioner role. This is disheartening not only for me as I have invested my time, energy and money to obtain the credentials, but it is also a loss for the community desperately needing primary care.

I submit this letter in support of nurse practitioners working to create more positions, which will inevitably improve the health of our community.

Robyn Gorham RN(EC)

Vesna Dokmanovic has moved to a community that is **not underserviced** medically as there was an open position for a NP.

Rochelle Hatton RN(EC) continues to work as a RN.