

# BACKGROUND

## Expanded Access to Nurses in a Renewed Healthcare System

Nurses are the most prevalent healthcare provider in our healthcare system. Without nurses, there is no healthcare system. More than anyone else, they are the face of healthcare delivery. But, as we speak, in their own words, “nurses are at a breaking point.” Presently, PEI is short over 200 nurses, and the shortages are getting worse in the face of an aging nursing demographic.

The shortage of nurses is having a profound impact on healthcare access. Virtually every department, ER, or rural hospital is just one missed nursing shift away from a closure or reduction of service. These shortages are placing enormous stress on the nursing workforce. Nurse shortages are causing ill-timed shift reassignments that create added burdens as nurses - like all Islanders - need to balance family responsibilities for their children and elders alike. Nurses describe the current work environment as toxic, with nurses and administrators locked in a constant battle of trying to deploy too few nurses to cover too many assignments.

According to the PEI Nurses Association:

*“Governments must do three things to fix the nursing shortage crisis: keep experienced nurses in their jobs, bring nurses back to the public sector, and recruit nurses where they are needed most. We need proven programs, backed by firm timelines and real accountability.”*

The Liberal Party’s *Healthcare First* platform recognizes the essential role of nurses and will:

- 1. Engage with PEI Nurses Association to develop a Nursing Sustainability Strategy** with the nursing profession that is based on a 10-year workforce projection in order to define projected shortages and recruitment/retention/compensation challenges and solutions;
- 2. Establish a workplace where nursing workloads are based upon legislated nurse-to-patient ratios;**
- 3. Increase student enrollment in expanded PEI nursing programs** through a PEI Team Nursing scholarship program that covers the tuition costs for any nurse who trains on PEI and returns to work in PEI’s healthcare system;

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4. **Increase nursing spaces in RN and LPN programs** to address chronic nursing shortages, including a focus on training nurses in rural areas;
5. **Address financial compensation** so that nursing becomes an attractive, financially-rewarding career that ensures new entrants;
6. **Expedite the incorporation of internationally-educated nurses** into the PEI nursing workforce;
7. **Establish inter-provincial labour mobility among nurses licensed to practice** in other provinces to practice in PEI; and
8. **Expand the health service delivery role** that Nurse Practitioners play on PEI by ensuring they are employed and compensated to work to their full scope of practice.

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