

ONTARIO NURSES' ASSOCIATION

SUBMISSION

ON

**Authorizing Ontario Colleges to Offer the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree
(Amendments to O. Reg 275/94 (General) made under the Nursing Act, 1991)**

TO

**The College of Nurses of Ontario
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The Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) is the union representing 68,000 registered nurses and health-care professionals as well as 18,000 nursing student affiliates, providing care in hospitals, long-term care facilities, public health, the community, clinics and industry.

We welcome this opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed amendments to O. Reg 275/94 (General) made under the Nursing Act, 1991, from the College of Nurses of Ontario. This change will authorize Ontario Colleges to offer the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) degree.

Currently, BScN degrees are offered by stand-alone university programs or collaborative college-university programs. ONA has long been supportive of the proposed changes to authorize approved colleges to offer the BScN degree independently of a university partner. We see the following benefits and positive opportunities associated with this change:

1. Colleges offering a nursing program would still be responsible for meeting the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing national accreditation standards. According to Colleges Ontario, in a number of nursing degree programs currently offered jointly with the universities, colleges are providing more than 90 per cent of the nursing curriculum and some colleges currently deliver 100 per cent of the curriculum.¹ These examples demonstrate that colleges can deliver the full program independently.
2. There is an equity advantage, as colleges traditionally provide greater access to non-traditional learners and underrepresented groups, thus contributing to a more diverse workforce. In addition, in some collaborative college-university programs, nursing students must relocate to a different community to complete their studies. There is significant cost associated with relocation that could be a barrier to education. Authorizing colleges to offer stand-alone nursing degrees will give students the option to study nursing in their home community and may help colleges to increase registration numbers in nursing programs.
3. This proposed amendment has the potential of increasing the number of Registered Nurses (RNs) graduating each year, as colleges can expand the number of nursing students faster than universities. This would also provide more opportunity for Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) to bridge into baccalaureate nursing programs, which would help increase the number of RNs entering the system. This is in the public interest as Ontario is facing a global health pandemic with the lowest RN-to-population ratio in Canada for the fourth year in a row.² Nursing is an in-demand profession, particularly in the acute care and the long-term care sectors.

ONA also identifies the following risks to the proposed changes. We do not believe them to be insurmountable, however, these are issues that require thoughtful consideration and consultation:

1. Successful implementation of this new policy requires close attention to clinical placements. Over the years, ONA has raised concerns at the Joint Provincial Nursing Committee that both the university nursing programs, and collaborative college-university programs do not have a

¹ Colleges Ontario. *Opening Doors to Nursing Degrees: A Time for Action*, 2015.

² ONA Press Release: <https://www.ona.org/news-posts/ontario-last-ratio-2019/#:~:text=A%20report%20released%20today%20by,%2Dto%2D100%2C000%20population%20ratio.>

sufficient clinical component to them. These concerns have increased due to the pandemic with many clinical placements being moved online and with students not being given sufficient in-person and hands-on opportunities to practice their nursing skills. We believe a stand-alone college program could provide a better clinical experience for students in terms of time and quality however approved colleges must have a robust plan in place, working with health-care partners, to meet the demand for in-person clinical placements from students with the appropriate health and safety precautions in place.

2. Colleges that are approved to offer the BScN degree program must ensure a smooth transition plan, including clear instructions and communications, for nursing students currently enrolled in the collaborative program. There should be no barriers or disruptions for these students as they continue their nursing studies.

In closing, ONA supports the proposed regulatory change to authorize Ontario Colleges to grant the BScN degree.