



Hospital Provincial Negotiating Team Candidate Article

Name: Shelagh Magee

Nominee For: Region 4 Full-Time Representative

I would like to submit my name for the position of a member of the Hospital Provincial Negotiating Team, I feel I would bring a strong voice to the table, speaking on behalf of the 62,000 Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and Allied Health Professionals who are currently members of ONA working in 127 participating Ontario Hospitals.

I bring to the table, 32 years of nursing experience, and have been involved in the union for over 20 years as a Union Representative, I currently sit on the Scheduling Committee and have for 5 years, I have participated in the Negotiating team for Local issues for the last two contracts, and look forward to representing my local at the next round of negotiations taking place this fall. I have also represented the membership on the Grievance committee for 8 years.

Nurses are facing incredible challenges in their daily work, “working short” is becoming the norm while dealing with a patient population who are anxious and possibly hostile due to increased wait times and lack of care due to scarcity of primary health care practitioners. There is increasing pressure from management to work more with less, and increasing frustration for the nurses who feel they are unable to provide proper care due to the patient staff ratios, and their heavy workload.

It is difficult, to take vacation time, due to staffing shortages and the needs of your unit. There are constant call-ins for extra time, leaving nurses feeling drained, burned out and exhausted.

With these sorts of pressures; many people are entering a health care career, only to find that they cannot manage it, feel unsafe and that their license is in jeopardy, so they move on to a different career or find a specialty area , where the pressures are perhaps not as great.

Developing standards and legislating for a safe workplace is essential to the future of Nursing, members must feel safe in the workplace and supported by their employers and society at large. While there has been much propaganda and cries for the need for safe workplaces, the reality is far different. Nurses are routinely yelled at, struck and insulted by their patients and family members, due, in large part, to their anxiety and stress; created by our inadequate healthcare system.

People are relying more and more on hospitals to fill the gaps in the healthcare system and the resulting frustrations are leading to increased incidences of violence

being as well as heavier workloads without safe staffing levels being mandated, despite frequent reports about the hazards and negative impacts this is having on nurses as well as other patients. When will this stop?

All of this makes negotiating for standard safe patient ratios, mandatory in order to provide safe working conditions for our nurses as well as a safe place for the patients to receive safe and timely care.

One of the other critical issues that needs to be addressed is the current nursing shortage, while numbers of Registered Nurses in Ontario has increased by 4% this last year, many of them are newer graduates or IEN, Internationally Educated Nurses, the numbers of experienced nurses currently working in acute care areas are dropping, with many senior nurses leaving the field due to the pressures of the heavy workloads, the lack of breaks, the increasing patient assignments, and their resultant concerns of not being able to provide appropriate care to their patients or meet safety standards. They are not willing to jeopardize their licences or their patients' well being. The result of this, is a drastic decrease in the combined years of experience in a unit, resulting in situations, where no one in the unit may have experienced a certain situation, or had experience with a certain practice or being able to quickly recognize a condition or change in condition that could be very detrimental to the health of their patient. The hospital needs to put in place measures that make it easier for their senior nurses to stay and retain their knowledge and experience for the good of the entire hospital, or healthcare system that they are engaged in.

Nurses in the 0-5 year range of experience make up 48.1 % of the workforce while those with 16 years or more experience make up only 16.5% of the workforce. Do our patients not deserve a skill mix that will optimize their care by retaining some of those more experienced nurses to make the numbers more balanced, I believe that they do!

Some options or opportunities to retain those nurses with more than 20 years experience could be flexible scheduling options such as shorter shifts and self scheduling so they can prevent fatigue. Reducing the number of "heavy" patients that are assigned to them. Leverage their expertise through mentorship and leadership roles. Tailored compensation and recognition of their contributions such as seniority based pay plus retention bonuses. Compensation for extra certificates or knowledge gained through the Rn's personal efforts. Meaningful recognition of those that go that extra mile and obtain certifications and continue their education throughout their career. Continuing benefits for nurses that are working full time past the age of 65, why should they not be entitled to benefits such as dental care and eyeglasses? And, finally, back to the crux of the matter, make safe staffing ratios mandatory for all areas

Hospitals and Health Care Organizations alike would benefit from focusing on some if not all of these suggestions for improvement. These efforts would truly demonstrate their commitment to supporting staff and ensuring a safe and caring workplace; thereby ensuring their loyalty and willingness to continue their employment and sharing the benefits of their acquired knowledge and experience with the organization. Additionally, this would also decrease the costs of continual hiring and orientating new staff who simply turn around and leave either the facility or the entire career, due to fears for their own safety as well as the patients that they care for.

Shelagh Magee

Signature of Nominee