



NURSE PRACTITIONERS'
ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Ontario Election 2011 Key Issues for Ontario's Nurse Practitioners

March 1, 2011

OUR VISION

Transforming health care for Ontarians through Nurse Practitioner innovations

OUR MISSION

NPAO is the professional voice for Nurse Practitioners in Ontario. Our mission is to achieve full integration of Nurse Practitioners to ensure accessible, high quality health care for all

KEY PRIORITIES

1. Fast-track the nursing changes supported by the College of Nurses introduced in the *Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act* (Bill 179)
2. Amend the Public Hospitals Act and associated Regulation 965 related to admitting (s.11) and discharge (s.16) to provide authority to NPs to admit, treat and discharge hospital in-patients.
3. Amend the Ontario Schedule of Benefits for Physician Services to recognize the nurse practitioner as a direct referral source for which specialists can claim a consultation fee.
4. Fast-track the implementation of a system wide electronic health record for Ontarians to ensure Ontarians receive safe, efficient, effective patient centred care as they move from one provider or setting to the next.
5. Ensure protected funding for hospital-based nurse practitioner positions, currently in place by mandating that all existing hospital funded nurse practitioner positions are maintained.

The Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario (NPAO), an interest group of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO), represents the professional interests of all nurse practitioners in Ontario. NPAO advocates for accessible, high quality health care for Ontarians through the integration of nurse practitioners across the health care system. NPAO membership offers the benefits of advocacy, professional support and educational opportunities.

NPAO supports the key election positions put forward by RNAO in "*Creating Vibrant Communities: RNAO's Challenge to Ontario's Political Parties* (Available at www.rnao.org). This includes

- Nurses working to their full potential
- Strong community care that follows the principles and spirit of Medicare
- A solid elder and mental health care program and
- A national pharmacare program.

NPAO is committed to action targeting the social determinants of health, shifting the emphasis to wellness and disease prevention. Nurses are uniquely positioned to implement this shift, working with their patients and interprofessional partners.

NPAO supports efforts that accelerate and stabilize the full integration of NPs into the Ontario healthcare system in order to improve access to care, decrease wait times reduce system inefficiencies and improve the health of Ontarians. Initiatives begun through Bill 179 must be implemented now to ensure successful integration and achieve the full potential of the nurse practitioner role in all practice settings and in all parts of the healthcare system.

The Ontario Health Quality Council identifies nine attributes that reflect a high performing health system:

- Accessible
- Effective
- Safe
- Patient-centred
- Equitable
- Efficient
- Appropriately resourced
- Integrated
- Focused on population health¹

These points are the basis for the policy positions we outline in this document.

¹ Ontario Health Quality Council – 2010 Report on Ontario's Health System

Promote Effective Utilization of Nurse Practitioners

Nurse practitioners have practiced in Ontario for more than four decades, although it is only recently that legislation and policy has been developed to establish and regulate the nurse practitioner role. While successive governments have made great strides to enable the potential of NPs, much work remains to provide the healthcare system access to the full potential of NP practice. Ontario now lags behind other jurisdictions in removing barriers that restrict nurse practitioners from working to the full scope of practice. The *Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act, 2009* received Royal Assent December 2009, passing Bill 179. While this initiated significant progress for the healthcare system, this progress will be lost if the associated regulations are not approved by Cabinet in a timely manner.

To promote utilization of full scope of nurse practitioner practice and support integration of the role across all sectors, NPAO recommends that political parties commit to the following actions:

1. Fast-track the nursing changes supported by the College of Nurses introduced in the *Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act* (Bill 179), with a view to full implementation before the end of this Legislative session [*i.e. before the House rises in June*]
2. Review all legislation and associated regulations that restrict or limit all speciality nurse practitioners from practicing to their full scope in any health care setting, in particular the Public Hospitals Act and associated Regulations. The NPAO strongly recommends that Reg. 965 under the *Public Hospitals Act* (1990) related to admitting (s.11) and discharge (s.16) be amended to provide authority to NPs to admit, treat and discharge hospital in-patients.
3. Immediately implement the recommendations contained in the Nurse Practitioner Integration Task Team Report submitted to the Minister of Health & Long-Term Care in 2007 including amending the Ontario Schedule of Benefits for Physician Services to recognize the nurse practitioner as a direct referral source for which specialists can claim a consultation fee.
4. Fast-track the implementation of a system wide electronic health record for Ontarians to ensure Ontarians receive safe, efficient, effective patient centred care as they move from one provider or setting to the next. Ensure documentation of nurse practitioner practice and patient outcomes are available as indicators of effective nurse practitioner utilization in the health care system.
5. Ensure protected funding for hospital-based nurse practitioner positions, currently in place by mandating that all existing hospital funded nurse practitioner positions are maintained.

Improve Access to Health Care Services for All Ontarians

A key priority of governments across Canada is to improve access to health care services. The Ontario government has taken many steps including the regulation of new health professions, new models of care delivery and new funding strategies to support interprofessional teams, yet much work remains to be done. A recent report by the Commonwealth Fund found that accessibility to timely healthcare in Canada ranks last out of seven countries, including the United States.²

Many of the challenges facing our health care system can be addressed through increased access to Ontario's nurse practitioners. To improve access to care in communities across Ontario and in a variety of settings, NPAO proposes that political parties adopt the following recommendations:

6. Implement strategies to promote the recruitment and retention of nurse practitioners in rural, remote and/or underserved areas including special salary designations, funding relocation expenses, expansion of the Grow Your Own NP Program and financial incentives to encourage nurse practitioner students to do clinical placements in these communities.
7. Fund at least 50 new nurse practitioner-led primary health care clinics in communities where there is demonstrated support and need for expansion of primary health care services by 2015. Establish specialty nurse practitioner clinics that can act as additional resources to their communities or integrate specialty nurse practitioners into nurse practitioner-led clinics to address identified specialized needs of communities.
8. Fund at least 200 new nurse practitioner positions in the adult, paediatric, anaesthesia and primary health care specialty areas, across all practice settings and all health sectors annually for the next four years.
9. Initiate a comprehensive review of chronically vacant nurse practitioner positions and implement effective strategies to address recruitment and retention problems for attracting and retaining nurse practitioners to these practice settings.

Ensure an Adequate Supply of Knowledgeable and Skilled Health Human Resources Today and in the Future

The health care needs of Ontarians are changing. New strategies are needed to support nurses to pursue nurse practitioner education and to retain experienced practitioners. Ongoing support for nurse practitioner education is also required. Continuing support for faculty development and preceptors who contribute to the training of these valuable professionals is also needed.

² *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: How the US Health Care System Compares Internationally*, June 2010

To ensure an adequate of supply of skilled nurse practitioners, NPAO recommends that political parties adopt the following recommendations:

10. Expand the 80/20 registered nursing mentorship strategy to include nurse practitioners and enable nurse practitioners aged 55 and over to have the opportunity to spend 80 per cent of their time working in the nurse practitioner role and 20 per cent on mentorship of new nurse practitioner graduates.
11. Provide funding to the Ontario School of Nursing education programs to graduate 250 nurse practitioners in the adult, pediatric, anaesthesia and primary health care specialty areas per year for the next four years.
12. Build upon the Nursing Faculty Fund by targeting tuition support for three nurse practitioners applicants per year pursuing PhD level preparation in order that they may continue to educate nurse practitioners for Ontario.
13. Ensure research funds to develop and implement a multi-faceted education program to help stakeholders (the public, physicians, other health care professionals and policy makers such as Local Health Integration Networks) better understand the nurse practitioner role and how they can improve access to care, reduce waiting lists, improve chronic disease management, health promotion and disease prevention.

Foster the development of interprofessional teams focused on providing quality patient centred care and knowledge support

NPAO applauds the positive steps that have been taken to build quality interprofessional teams. We believe the continuous pursuit of evidence-informed excellence will ultimately have a positive impact on the health of Ontarians. This is especially true for individuals with complex needs, where the team approach provides better chronic disease management.

To support the transformation of Ontario's health care system and promote the shift to prevention, NPAO proposes that political parties support the following recommendations.

14. Implement team-based incentives where groups of providers are remunerated for achieving targets for practice that are known to improve patient outcomes. This practice would be more congruent with efforts to integrate evidence informed practices through interprofessional collaboration and effective team performance. Remove the current compensation model that provides bonus payments to physicians for illness prevention and health promotion activities such as immunizations and mammograms regardless of whether they or another member of the team such as nurse practitioners or registered nurses actually provided the care.

15. Provide funding for the early development and implementation of a one year mentorship program to support the transition from novice to expert nurse practitioner and facilitate the integration of nurse practitioners into interprofessional teams in all sectors and settings. This should include both inter and intra professional mentorship.
16. Continue to support the Quality Improvement & Innovation Partnership for the purpose of supporting the development of interprofessional primary health care teams by providing guidance, structure and tools to ensure their success and support the full integration and maximum utilization of nurse practitioners. Identify how resources can be shared with primary health care practices other than Family Health Team, NP lead clinic and Community Health Centre models.