

Funding in 2011 Ontario Budget may be inadequate to address nursing workload issues

MISSISSAUGA, March 29 – While the 2011 Ontario Budget includes a number of worthwhile investments in the area of health care, it's not clear whether it goes far enough to address several key issues facing Ontarians and the front-line nurses who care for them.

“For the second consecutive year, the government has increased Ontario hospitals’ base funding by just 1.5%. This simply does not keep pace with the annual cost increases in most Ontario hospitals today,” said Dianne Martin, Executive Director of RPNAO. “Unless such an increase is accompanied by corresponding, meaningful investments in home care and long-term care to move us toward a more sustainable health care system, we’re going to see negative impacts on the workloads of nurses and the outcomes of their patients.”

“We’re encouraged by the government’s increased investment in long-term care as one of these steps,” says Martin. “However, we believe that an increased focus on home care is also required in order to ensure a balanced, appropriate and innovative approach to creating sustainable health care that assures manageable workloads for nurses.”

“With well over 90% of Ontario’s 30,000 registered practical nurses involved in direct care, any additional increase on workload will result in impacts that are felt throughout the system – more sick days, increased burnout, additional overtime costs and more nurses choosing to leave the profession,” she says.

“Sustainable health care is about more than just dollars and cents,” says Martin. “It’s also about ensuring optimal patient outcomes and doing everything we can to keep nurses where they belong and where they want to be – making a positive difference in Ontario’s health care system.”

About the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (RPNAO)

Founded in 1958, RPNAO is the voice of registered practical nursing in Ontario. There are more than 30,000 registered practical nurses working in Ontario, playing a vital role in the province’s health care system. For more information about RPNAO and its mandate, please visit www.rpnao.org.

For additional information: Dianne Martin, Executive Director. Tel: (905) 602-4664 ext. 226.