

December 20, 2007

Alberta boosts efforts to recruit more registered nurses

Partnership with College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta key to assessing more registered nurses

Edmonton... The Alberta government is investing more than \$5 million this year to assess more internationally educated registered nurses and increase the number of registered nurses working in Alberta.

The College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) recently received \$500,000 from Alberta Health and Wellness to support the college's assessment of applications from internationally-educated nurses who want to practise in Alberta. CARNA recently hired two additional nurse consultants and support staff to handle increased applications from internationally-educated nurses.

To date, CARNA has received 1,012 applications from internationally-educated nurses, an average of 150 to 200 applications per month in the last six months.

Alberta Health and Wellness is also covering the costs of former registered nurses taking training to become re-licensed in Alberta. Grant McEwan College will receive \$750,000 to reimburse nurses enrolled in the nursing refresher program at any site in Alberta.

"Our investment in a range of initiatives will help us to get more qualified registered nurses working in the province," said Dave Hancock, Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness. "We know this is an untapped group of professionals. With a concentrated and collaborative effort by all our partners in government, the RHAs and CARNA, the benefits to the health care system will be enormous. This strategy is part of our Health Workforce Action Plan to address health workforce shortages."

Mount Royal College will receive more than \$4 million to expand its assessment program for internationally-trained registered nurses seeking to be licensed in Alberta. The funding will allow Mount Royal College to hire staff to increase the number of assessments it completes in an average year from 100 to 600. The funds will also support the addition of an office next month in the Oxford Tower in Edmonton to process assessment applications, as well as establish teaching space for Mount Royal College's Bridge to Canadian Nursing program in Edmonton.

"We have committed \$3.8 million this year to attract foreign nurses and other health professionals to Alberta, but getting them here is only part way to getting them into our workforce," said Iris Evans, Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry. "We depend on CARNA to process licensing applications from internationally-educated nurses. It's critical that we support their efforts to do this as efficiently as possible."

"This year, more than \$3.2 million of the Health Workforce Action Plan funding has been committed to creating 209 additional nursing spaces in Alberta," said Doug Horner, Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. "Since we announced the action plan, we have worked with all 11 involved post-secondary institutions to set a new goal for nursing graduates by 2012. Together, we are committed to reaching the goal of 2000 registered nursing grads - - a 53 per cent increase-- and 1,000 licensed practical nurses -- a 90 per cent increase, compared to 2006/2007. I am delighted that our institutions are rising to this challenge and look forward to working with them as they develop their individual plans in the new year."

"The nursing shortage can only be addressed by a collaborative approach involving government, the regional health authorities, Mount Royal College and CARNA," said Margaret Hadley, president of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta. "We appreciate the additional resources provided by government to address the three-fold increase in applications from internationally-educated nurses in the past six months."

"Establishing an assessment centre in Edmonton, as well as Calgary, will help to increase access to internationally-educated nurses across the province," said Brenda Hendrickson, Dean, Faculty of Health and Community Studies, Mount Royal College. "Mount Royal College is pleased to be part of this partnership with government, the health regions and the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta to address the shortage of registered nurses in Alberta."

These initiatives all fall under the Health Workforce Action Plan, which identifies ways to ensure an adequate supply of health workers so that service delivery changes can occur to guarantee the long-term sustainability and viability of Alberta's health system. The Alberta government has allocated \$30 million this year to begin implementing the plan.

Delivering quality health care is part of Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to secure Alberta's future by building communities, greening our growth and creating opportunity.

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Background attached on nursing in Alberta.

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Alberta registered nurse statistics

The Alberta government estimates the province needs an additional 1,400 registered nurses.

The number of nurses registered in Alberta has increased each year since 2000, from 24,364 RNs in 2000 to 29,997 in 2007.

The number of internationally-educated RNs licensed to practice in Alberta has increased every year since 2000, from 72 in 2000 to more than 700 in 2007.

Recent nursing recruitment and assessment initiatives

On October 22, Mount Royal College started an offshore assessment pilot program that performed assessments for nurses in the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates-Dubai, Qatar-Doha. The 22-day program received \$540,000 from Alberta Health and Wellness and \$536,000 from Health Canada.

In December, more than 200 people attended two information sessions in Edmonton and Calgary to bring more nurses into the health care system. The sessions were hosted by government officials, nursing regulatory bodies, employers and educators to answer questions on employment opportunities, credential assessments, education and the requirements to gain an Alberta licence to practice.

The Alberta government is working with health employers on international marketing and recruitment campaigns to recruit nurses to the province. These initiatives include nurse job recruitment fair in the United Kingdom in spring 2008 and a memorandum of understanding to recruit health-care workers from the Philippines in the New Year.

Other initiatives to support the nursing workforce

Government has committed to increase nursing graduates to: 1,000 licensed practical nurses (LPNs) by 2012 and 2000 RNs by 2012.

- For 2007-08 there will be 559 LPN graduates; in 2006-2007 525 LPNs graduated
- For 2007-08 there will be 1,375 registered nursing graduates; in 2006/2007 1,307 RNs graduated

Infrastructure completed in 2007 to support nursing programs: \$52 million for the Grant MacEwan Robbins Health Centre.

There have been more than 1,000 job offers by the province's RHAs to internationally-educated nurses in 2007.

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