



# Nursing Issues: Mission, Mandate, Functions, Key Activities and Current Priorities of the Office of Nursing Policy

## Mission

Health Canada's Office of Nursing Policy (ONP) was established by the federal Minister of Health in 1999 to help Canadians maintain and improve their health through the development of policy which integrates the views of nurses and the nursing profession.

The creation of ONP signalled that nursing and nurses' perspectives would be influential in shaping the future of health care in Canada — because optimal nursing care means improved health care and healthier Canadians.

## Mandate

The Office contributes to health policy and program development across Health Canada by providing evidence-based nursing perspectives on a wide range of policy issues. ONP is committed to developing and implementing viable, innovative solutions to nursing workforce issues through strategies integrated with other governments and professions for the overall improvement of the health system.

The ONP has established itself as a critical policy resource for Health Canada and, is relied upon by other governments and stakeholders across the health-care community.

Relationship-building and consultation have enabled the ONP to support Health Canada's role as an informed leader and partner in health policy discussions. The Office has put a face to government for nurses and has brought a practical angle to policy decisions.

## Functions

### Issue Identification and Synthesis

Identifying and building awareness of issues affecting nursing is one of ONP's key functions. No other similar structure exists at the national level to monitor trends and issues that affect nurses and nursing groups and the broader impact of those issues on health-care. The (ONP) monitors its own impact, following up on projects, observing and re-evaluating, and analyzing its effect on trends and emerging issues. This work is crucially important to its support of research on nursing.

### Enhancing the Evidence-base for Policy Development

By constantly surveying the health policy horizon through a nursing and patient-care lens, ONP identifies issues amenable to research and initiates discussions about how best to accomplish this work. ONP commissions and promotes research related to its



strategic priorities and to matters of emerging concern in Canada. For example, ONP has brought together a group of researchers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Scotland, England and the United States to examine the cost of nursing turnover and its impact on patient safety and outcomes.

### **Brokering of Knowledge**

ONP acts as a knowledge-broker for nursing and health-care research, interpreting, analyzing and disseminating results to provide evidence for Health Canada's policy decisions.

### **Creating Opportunities**

ONP creates numerous opportunities for government and health-care leaders to link with each other in policy meetings. A key strength of ONP has been its ability to bring together key experts, advisors, stakeholders and decision-makers in a timely fashion to address emerging issues. For example, ONP liaises with the principal nursing advisors in each of the Ministries of Health across Canada and with national-level nursing organizations.

### **Communicating**

ONP Update — an electronic newsletter—is ONP's main link with stakeholders. The newsletter is distributed to over a thousand people and organizations across Canada and around the world. It provides timely information about issues and trends, research funding opportunities, upcoming conferences, and the office's policy activities. To receive the bulletin, please contact us at [onp-bpsi@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:onp-bpsi@hc-sc.gc.ca).

ONP also has a listserve, which is a popular means of distributing important messages to the nursing community.

ONP's website ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca/onp-bpsi](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/onp-bpsi)) serves as its main communication tool, connecting ONP to the nursing community and offering information to all.

## **Current Priorities**

### **Health Care Access: Through Workforce Stability**

ONP will continue its efforts to enhance Canada's nursing capacity by: advancing health human resources planning to ensure the right number, mix and distribution of nurses to care for the population; increasing the number of professors of nursing; exploring evolving roles for nursing professionals; and promoting better use of the nursing workforce.

### **Health Care Quality: Through Workforce Development & Capacity Building**

ONP promotes the importance of quality workplace settings in Canada and around the world and the progress made to improve the health of health care workers and their workplaces. Healthy and safe workplaces will continue to be a key focal point among workplace health, safety and high quality patient care linkages.



## **Health Care Sustainability: Through System Transformation**

Through ONP, Canada's nurses continue to participate in health system policy-making to help create a system that promotes a healthier population and capable of caring for future generations. The Office continues to provide nursing policy advice, expertise and perspective on critical developments in Canada's health-care system.

## **Key Activities**

### **Understanding the Dynamics of the Nursing Workforce**

ONP continues to advocate for and participate in data collection for all categories of nurses to improve its ability to study the workforce. ONP supports efforts toward coordinated, national planning for human resources in health. Of particular focus is the recruitment and retention of nursing human resources.

### **Healthy Workplaces**

ONP's work on the quality of work life has positioned it as a national and international leader and knowledge-broker on keeping health workers healthy. ONP is leading a national initiative to promote healthy workplaces for all healthcare workers.

### **Nursing Education**

ONP is leading a national initiative to promote interprofessional education leading to collaborative patient-centred practice in all health professionals and across the continuum of care. It is also working with national and provincial nursing leaders on priority areas for renewing nursing education in Canada, including improving curriculum, ensuring the supply of teachers, and updating clinical education.

### **Nursing Research**

To meet the nation's growing need for relevant nursing and health science, ONP works with Canadian nurse scientists and policy-makers to: describe issues and opportunities that would improve the future of nursing science in Canada; increase the number of researchers and identify actions; and identify directions that stakeholders could consider (both individually and collectively) to move the nursing science agenda forward.