

Behind the Front Lines

A recap/critical look at health care news and the reality behind the reporting from the viewpoint of front-line Ontario registered nurses

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Three Things You'll Learn in This Issue:

1. **Private Versus Public Health Care: Standards Differ** – [go](#)
2. **ONA Staffer Now an MPP** – [go](#)
3. **Nurses and Patients Both An Aging Demographic** – [go](#)

Ottawa Clinic Scandal Reveals Public Ignorance About Private Clinics

The news that a physician at a private Ottawa clinic had been performing invasive procedures with improperly sterilized equipment was shocking enough. But more surprising to some is the revelation that private endoscopy clinics were not subjected to provincial standards that forced physicians to follow proper infection-control practices ([source](#)).

More than 6,800 letters were sent to Ottawa-area residents informing them that they may have been exposed to HIV and Hepatitis viruses while undergoing
continued on page 2

A Shift in Tone in Media Coverage as More Nurses' Wages Frozen?

Are the world-wide protests against financial institutions changing the way Ontario media outlets are covering new nursing contracts?

As the protests against corporate greed spread from Wall Street to Europe, Asia and even Canada, there's been a shift in tone in media coverage.

In June, Ontario's 47,000 registered nurses working in the hospital sector saw their wages frozen for two years in an arbitrated settlement. They will receive a wage increase in the third year of the contract, and they were awarded lump-sum payments (equal to approximately one per cent of the salaries) in lieu of an increase.

Media coverage was widespread and focused on the lump sum payments ([source](#)). The lead of the *Toronto Star* report read, "Despite calls for a provincial public-sector wage freeze, an arbitrator has awarded more than 50,000 Ontario nurses a lump sum bonus for the next two years."

Contrast this with the way a new mediated contract for Community Care Access Centre workers was reported in September ([source](#)).

While nurses in each sector saw their wages frozen for two years, coverage of the hospital-sector nurses' contract focused on the lump sum payments they
continued on page 2

Hospital nurses and those working for 10 of Ontario's 14 Community Care Access Centres have new contracts – both include a two-year wage freeze.





What is ONA?

The Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) is the union representing 57,000 front-line RNs and allied health professionals and more than 12,000 nursing student affiliates providing care in Ontario hospitals, long-term care facilities, public health, the community, industry and clinics.



Who is Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN?

ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN (pictured), is a veteran renal transplant nurse who is an expert spokesperson on a range of issues. Linda is available to comment on everything from workplace violence, patient care, health care policy in Ontario, the flu pandemic, nursing cuts, public health and much more. Simply contact ONA's media relations officer, Sheree Bond, at (416) 964-8833, ext. 2430 if you would like to interview Linda on a health-related issue.

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More Nurses' Wages Frozen,

cont'd from page 1

would receive – and said they violated the provincial government's desire for a two-year wage freeze.

By contrast, coverage of the CCAC-sector nurses led with copy such as, "Ten Community Care Access Centres have ratified a three-year deal with the Ontario Nurses' Association, meaning a raise for staff – but not for two more years."

Does the change in tone and angle of contract coverage reflect the growing public awareness of the stagnation of worker wages and increase in the wealth of the rich?

The *Toronto Star's* Jim Coyle recently ran a column on the new Canadian Index of Wellbeing ([source](#)) that shows how poorly shared Canadian prosperity is and how "our workers are run ragged." By that measure, nurses' wage freezes are just part of the ongoing stagnation of wages for most Canadians.

Ottawa Private Clinic Scandal,

cont'd from page 1

procedures at the clinic of Dr. Christiane Farazil. What is so striking is the fact that so many were unaware of different standards for public and private health care facilities.

The *Ottawa Citizen's* Pauline Tam quotes one patient as saying she assumed the clinic was regulated like a hospital.

Tam reports that there is "visceral anger" at the fact that provincial regulations changed just recently (2010) to force physicians such as Farazil to follow proper infection-control practices.

Tam followed up with an interview with University of Ottawa Professor Doug Angus who advocates for private clinics to be policed directly by the government rather than the province's medical watchdog ([source](#)).

Angus says that Canada is dragging behind the rest of the world because "other countries are doing this in a very explicit way."

Dr. Farazil's failure to follow infection control protocols came to light when the College of Physicians and Surgeons conducted a spot check. Reports of these sorts of spot checks are not made public, and the only reason the public was notified was because of the potential public-health threat.

The clinic is part of a "national explosion" of private health facilities that have moved into new areas of medicine over the past decade with little or no supervision. Budget cuts continue to force hospitals to outsource a growing number of routine medical procedures.

Angus adds that these clinics "are basically extensions of the hospitals because the doctors get paid through OHIP whether they do these procedures in a hospital" or a private clinic.

The revelation of different standards for private/public providers is food for thought for proponents of privatizing Canadian health care.



Welland MPP is Former ONA Staff Member

ONA sends best wishes to (now-former) staff member, Labour Relations Officer Cindy Forster, as she takes her place in the Ontario legislature ([source](#)).

Forster was the successful candidate in the provincial election earlier this month as she sought to fill the seat of long-time MPP Peter Kormos, who did not run. She is also a registered nurse and was a Labour Relations Officer with the Ontario Nurses' Association until her election.

ONA will be watching as Forster tackles the issues important to her constituents. Interestingly, the beleaguered Niagara Health System falls within Forster's area. Forster says she has "set her sights" on improving conditions in health care, and her 21 years of experience with ONA should give her a good start.

UNDER THE RADAR

News the Media is Missing

Rural Health Care Suffers From Aging Population – of Both Patients and Health Care Workers



Both patients and nurses are part of an aging demographic. ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN, shown here speaking to nursing students at the Canadian Nursing Students Association annual conference, works hard to help young nurses maintain their passion for the profession.

The ongoing debate about the impact of an aging Canadian population's impact on the sustainability of the health care system is especially significant to those in rural areas.

As the *Huron Expositor* has reported ([source](#)), rural Huron and Perth counties have an aging population (which means possibly more patients) as well as aging health care providers.

The Huron Perth Providers Council had commissioned a health human resources study as part of its work in attracting more health care workers to the area.

An unexpected finding was that the report showed this rural area has an aging health care workforce that is keeping pace with its aging population. Nurses and doctors comprise the two largest groups of health care providers, with nurses representing more than half of health care professionals.

Huron Perth Counties offer a limited number of full-time nursing positions – even fewer than most communities – and needs to attract and retain many more nurses as its current supply is nearing retirement age.

Among the recommendations is one to review the role of nurses with a view to exploring how to expand their role; the community is also considering promoting nursing opportunities in long-term care facilities and ensuring that orientation exists for those practicing nursing in rural areas.

Looking for the *real* story?

Speak to front-line nurses!

The Ontario Nurses' Association has a whole host of experts in health care. ONA members work in hospitals, long-term care, public health, the community and industry and can answer your questions as health continues to evolve in this province.

Need a reliable and informed source? Contact ONA.



www.ona.org

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