Ontario needs to bolster its complement of registered nurses (RNs) to ensure safe, high quality patient care.

Yet, for the second year in a row, Ontario is last in the country in the nurse-to-population ratio, with 703 RNs per 100,000 people, while the ratio for the rest of the country is 839 RNs per 100,000 people.

Across the province, our hospitals have more than 10,000 vacant RN positions. But rather than filling these RN positions, employers are eliminating RNs and replacing them with lower-cost care providers who have a different scope of practice than is required for the high acuity patients in our hospitals today.

Since January 1, 2018, Ontario has lost 127 full-time equivalent nursing positions, amounting to 130,650 RN hours lost from patient care. Since ONA started tracking RN cuts in 2009, Ontario has lost almost 20 million nursing care hours.

This has meant higher rates of complications and infections and less than optimal outcomes for patients.

The research is clear: more RNs means lower patient mortality and morbidity rates. Keeping RNs working means overall savings to the health-care system through fewer complications and readmissions.

ONA has the solution: The RN Advantage.

In the following pages, read how RNs are the answer for better patient outcomes and lower costs.
The Problem.

Registered nurses’ (RN) share of nursing employment in Ontario has fallen significantly: from 76.4% in 2003 to 69.8% in 2017.

The international best practice ratio of 1:4 RNs to patients in hospital settings is not being met in Ontario hospitals.

The ratio can be as high as 1:9 during the day and 1:20 overnight.

Ontario has been last in the country in nurse-to-patient ratios for two years running, according to Canadian Institute for Health Information data, and we expect that will hold true for this year as well.

RN

Four-year university baccalaureate degree in nursing

Able to care for patients with a more complicated, unpredictable medical history with a higher risk of negative outcomes

"RNs have a greater breadth of knowledge and experience, allowing for greater foundational knowledge in clinical practice, decision-making, critical thinking, leadership, research utilization, and resource management."

— The College of Nurses of Ontario
Ontario needs to prioritize patient needs.

RNs are patient advocates, primary coordinators of care and lead on determining risk of complications and progress. RN education and skills in patient assessment and intervention are heavily utilized to prevent adverse outcomes.
RNs provide better patient outcomes.

Hospitals with a higher proportion of RNs are associated with fewer adverse patient outcomes, lower patient mortality and higher patient satisfaction with the care they received.

For each 10% increase in the proportion RNs, there is a decreased risk of patient mortality by 5%.

An increase in one full-time RN per patient day was associated with a reduction in risk of death: 16% in surgical patients, 9% in ICU patients, 6% in medical patients.

RNs provide exceptional value.

Annual savings from prevented adverse events in nursing care ranged from $2.2 to $13.2 million, while RN staffing costs amounted to only $1.36 million.

When each RN cares for fewer patients, patients are less likely to be readmitted to the hospital: 24% less for medical patients, 63% for surgical patients.

Any economic savings assumed to result from replacing RNs with other health care professionals is offset by higher costs from increased patient mortality and longer lengths of stay.
When care is provided by RNs, costs due to adverse events, readmissions, length of stay and patient mortality are lower.

Ontario’s nurses are calling for the government to support three major goals:

#1 Ensuring “exceptional” patient care: the right care provided by the right care provider at the right time as defined by the College of Nurses 3 Factor Framework.

#2 Protecting the safety of health-care workers.

#3 Supporting marginalized and disadvantaged women.
In a review of hundreds of research studies, the results undeniably showed the advantages to patients of RN care.

1. Ensuring exceptional patient care.

Exceptional care is only possible with exceptional caregiving: Ontario needs to prioritize patients by prioritizing RN employment.

ONA calls for a four-year plan to fund improved RN care in all sectors, amounting to an increase of at least 10,000 RNs across the province.

Supporting this goal will ensure that Ontarians receive the highest standard of care, and loosen the financial strain that readmission and inadequate care places on the health-care system.
2. Protecting the safety of health care workers.

Nurses are facing assault at work: **54%** of nurses have been physically assaulted, and **80%** have been verbally assaulted.

The government must act on all recommendations put forth by the *Workplace Violence Prevention in Health Care Leadership Table*.

Nurses strongly encourage the addition of the following recommendations:

1. Adequate risk assessments in each health-care facility.
2. Providing training on de-escalation techniques.
3. Alert and flagging systems to identify high-risk patients.
4. Panic alarms to summon security and locate the person activating the alarm.
3. Supporting marginalized and disadvantaged women.

Women living in poverty or facing violence are marginalized and disadvantaged in our society, leading to many challenges including health issues.

ONA takes a systems view: the social determinants of health influence the health of populations. They include:

- Income and social status
- Social support networks
- Education
- Employment/working conditions
- Social environments
- Physical environments
- Personal health practices and coping skills
- Healthy child development
- Gender
- Culture

ONA members work closely with organizations supporting women, such as homeless shelters and transition houses.

While the complexity of issues faced by women seeking support from these organizations has increased, the funding for these organizations has not.