

**Via Email and Mail**

May 4, 2022



Dr. Megan Hayes  
Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Professional Recruitment and Retention  
Department of Health and Community Services  
Confederation Building, West Block  
P.O. Box 8700  
St John's, NL A1B 4J6

Dear Dr. Hayes,

On behalf of the Registered Nurses' Union Newfoundland & Labrador (RNU), I would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Deputy Minister of Health Professional Recruitment and Retention. I am sure your experience as a physician on the frontlines of our health care system will serve you well in this new leadership role. We applaud the creation of this position and look forward to hearing more about plans to increase staffing resources within the new office of Health Professional Recruitment and Retention.

RNU is the provincial voice of 5,300 registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs), the largest group of health care providers in our province. Our members have worked through inconceivable circumstances with little to no relief for more than two years. A crisis in staffing that predates the pandemic is pushing our cherished public health care system to its limits, leaving both workers and patients to suffer the consequences.

This is a pivotal time for health care and nursing. There are more than 600 vacant RN positions and another 900 RNs intend to retire within the next two years. Fewer RNs working in the public health system impacts patient safety and erodes our ability to provide the high quality of care that everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador deserves.

Joint research conducted with the Provincial Government in March 2022 shows:

- 1 in 2 permanent RNs are considering resigning their position to go casual;
- 16% of RNs are seriously considering leaving the nursing profession;
- 90% of RNs and NPs identify as experiencing burnout; and
- 69% have experienced workplace violence in the last month.

Immediate, short term actions are needed to improve workplace conditions and retain RNs and NPs over the coming months. Robust human and financial resources must be committed to stop the bleeding of the nursing workforce and protect patient care.

RNU partnered with the Provincial Government to hold a Nursing Think Tank on April 4-5. The goal of this event was to strategize innovative short-term measures to improve the

workplace and the retention and recruitment of RNs and NPs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

More than 100 people participated in the event, including RNU members, RNU Board of Directors and staff. Managers, staff and senior officials from the Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and various Provincial Government departments also participated. A committee has been struck with the department, RNU and RHAs to move forward a plan to retain RNs, and recruit many more to match our growing needs. Action is needed now and RNU is calling for concrete measures to be announced this month.

We look forward to engaging with you as this work proceeds, and we stand ready to continue working together on offering solutions to the most pressing challenges facing our public health care system today.

I would appreciate meeting with you at your earliest convenience. Please contact Donna Walsh at 753-9961 or [dwalsh@rnunl.ca](mailto:dwalsh@rnunl.ca) if further information is required. I look forward to working with you on this portfolio and I wish you all the best in your new position.

Sincerely,



Yvette Coffey  
President RNUNL  
:km

cc Premier Furey  
Minister Haggie, Department of Health & Community Services  
Andrea McKenna, Deputy Minister, Health & Community Services  
Vanessa Mercer-Oldford, Assistant Deputy Minister Services  
Daphne Osborne, Chief Nurse