

NEWS RELEASE

January 2, 2006



New Healthy Workplace Best Practice Initiative Announced

The Challenge

Health care systems are under mounting pressure to control costs and increase productivity while responding to increasing demands from growing and aging populations, advancing technology and more sophisticated consumerism.

In Canada, health care reform is currently focused on the primary goals identified in the Federal/ Provincial/Territorial First Ministers Agreement of 2000 and the Health Accords of 2003 and 2004:

- The provision of timely access to health services on the basis of need
- High quality, effective patient/client centred and safe health service
- A sustainable and affordable health care system

Health care staff are vital components in achieving these goals. But numerous reports document challenges in recruiting and retaining a healthy workforce.

In a time of rapid health system change, the increasing physical, social and psychological demands on health care workers are having a detrimental effect on their health. As we move forward with health system renewal, strengthening and supporting healthy work environments are critical to maintaining a sufficient supply of staff to ensure timely access to care and to sustain our health system.

Our Proposed Solution

It is with this intention that the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) Centre for Professional Nursing Excellence has led the development of guidelines to improve the health of nursing workplaces, beginning with guidelines on *Developing and Sustaining Nursing Leadership*. RNAO believes that full implementation will make a difference for nurses, their patients/clients and the organizations and communities in which they practice. It also believes that best practice guidelines can be successfully implemented only if there is adequate planning, resources, and organizational and administrative supports.

Three health care institutions have come together under the leadership of West Park Healthcare Centre to work collaboratively as the Healthy Workplace Best Practice Initiative. The project partners are a subset of a group known as "Spotlight Organizations" by the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) that are currently working closely with the RNAO to implement one or more best practice guidelines. Working with the RNAO and with a financial contribution from Health Canada, they will pilot aspects of RNAO's healthy work environment best practice guidelines: *Developing and Sustaining Nursing Leadership* and *Professional Practice*.

The Anticipated Outcomes

This pre-existing network has the potential, by working collaboratively, to further gains in knowledge and resource sharing. Healthier workplaces, improved communication and team effectiveness, and increased employee

and patient satisfaction are expected to result. Healthier workplaces lead to enhanced retention and recruitment of health care workers and improved patient care.

The Timing

The partners are currently selecting and developing educational programs for each of the specific best practice guideline healthy work environment strategies, as well as completing the design of evaluation methods.

Implementation of the educational efforts will take place between Spring 2006 and March 2007. Evaluation of the project will take place between April and July 2007.

The Funder

Health Canada has made federal contribution of \$286,938 to the project. This highlights the commitment the governments of Canada and Ontario have made to renewing the health system and revitalizing its workforce by improving the working environment of health care providers.

The funding, to be delivered over the fiscal years 2005/2006, 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, is part of the federal Pan Canadian Health Human Resources Strategy (HHR Strategy), which allocates \$20 million annually. The HHR Strategy responds to the commitment made by the First Ministers in the 2003 Accord on Health Care to develop collaborative strategies to ensure the supply of needed health care providers. It was developed to support reforms aimed at sustaining Canada's publicly funded health care system into the future and ensuring timely access to quality care.

- 30 -

The Partners include:

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario is the professional association representing registered nurses wherever they practice in Ontario. Since 1925, RNAO has lobbied for healthy public policy, promoted excellence in nursing practice, increased nurses' contribution to shaping the health-care system, and influenced decisions that affect nurses and the public they serve. In July of 2003, The RNAO Centre for Professional Nursing Excellence, with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and in partnership with Health Canada's Office of Nursing Policy, commenced the development of evidence-based best practice guidelines for healthy work environments for nurses.

The Niagara Health System (NHS) is Ontario's largest multi-site hospital amalgamation comprised of six hospital sites and an ambulatory care centre serving 411,000 residents across the 12 municipalities making up the Regional Municipality of Niagara. The NHS employs approximately 4,200 employees, of which about 1,800 are nurses, and has approximately 800 hospital beds. It is supported by a medical staff of about 500 physicians and is served by more than 1,000 active volunteers. The NHS provides care to approximately 32,000 in-patients annually. More than 195,000 patients are treated annually at our five 24/7 Emergency Departments and one 14-hour Prompt Care Centre.





Established in 1908, **Saint Elizabeth Health Care (SEHC)** is a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization who shares its talent and wisdom in the areas of direct service delivery, consultation and eSolutions, to support the transformation of care for health organizations and the people we serve. With a talent team of over 3,700 staff and a vision to be a *phenomenal knowledge and care exchange company*, SEHC provides high quality and compassionate home and community based health care services throughout Ontario, delivering nearly three million visits annually.

VON Canada is a not-for-profit, national health organization and registered charity offering a wide range of community health care solutions that meet the needs of Canadians. VON delivers compassionate care and supports in 60 branches across the country, in more than 1,300 communities coast to coast, through a dedicated team of more than 20,000 staff and volunteers. VON is dedicated to being a leader in the delivery of innovative comprehensive health and social services and to influencing the development of health and social policy in Canada. VON is accredited by the Canadian Council for Health Services Accreditation.

West Park Healthcare Centre is a 481-bed facility located in the Jane and Eglinton neighbourhood of Toronto that provides clinical services through three major programs – Rehabilitation and Community Living (133 beds), Complex Continuing Care (148 beds) and Long-Term Care (200 beds). The centre is known as the adult rehabilitation centre for the western Greater Toronto Area and has 829 employees, 59 medical staff and 235 volunteers. West Park is home to Ontario's only in-patient TB unit, and is internationally renowned for its expertise in respiratory and physical medicine. West Park also provides an array of ambulatory services, most of which are aligned with its inpatient programs. It is affiliated with the University of Toronto and a number of other major academic institutions.

For more information, please contact:

Caroline Bourque Wiley, Consultant, Public Affairs, Niagara Health System
905-378-4647, ext.43113

Madonna Gallo, Communications, Saint Elizabeth Health Care
905-940-9655, ext. 2269

Jennifer Stevens, Communications Manager, VON Canada
(613) 288-3494

Sandra Fawcett, Director, Public Relations, West Park Healthcare Centre
416-243-3730

Kimberley Kearsey, Communications Project Manager, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario
1-800-268-7199, ext 233