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Meeting the Demographic and Retirement Challenge: Potential Solutions to Address Ontario's Health Human Resource Issues

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Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan Executive Summary
March 2010



HOOPP

Healthcare of Ontario
Pension Plan

Meeting the Demographic and Retirement Challenge: Potential Solutions to Address Ontario's Health Human Resource Issues

In October 2009 the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan brought together a group of healthcare stakeholders at a special Symposium event at the MARs Centre in Toronto.

After listening to speakers John Crocker, President & CEO of HOOPP, the Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, David Herle and Jennifer Espey of the Gandalf Group and noted demographer Prof. David Foot, the group – which featured representatives from government, hospitals, unions, the community sector, and others – were asked to identify the current challenges in healthcare human resources, as well as potential solutions.

Here are the challenges the stakeholders identified:

Competition for HHR

- Competition is a problem for both hospitals and the community health sector – from peer hospitals and other countries.
- It's difficult to attract young people to jobs in the healthcare professions.

Working conditions

- Hospitals are perceived more negatively – as a higher-stress work environment featuring shift work, less work-life balance, and safety issues.
- While the community sector offers better work-life balance, demand for services is moving to a 24/7 basis. Facilities tend to be inferior, and there is often isolation for healthcare workers and no access to mentors, training or technology.
- Nurses' average age is 48 to 50, and they are looking forward to retirement this decade. A lot of the HHR knowledge base will be lost when they leave.

Pension and benefits laws, regulations, policies and practices

- Older workers want to be able to collect part of their pension while still contributing on a part-time or more flexible basis – this is known as phased retirement.
- Non-pension benefits are often not offered past age 65.
- Associations and other medical groups are not considered “employers” and are not currently able to offer pension benefits to the members they serve.



Competition in the community sector

- Hospitals represent a declining portion of total health spending, as more and more care moves into the community setting.
- Hospital workers enjoy better wages and benefits than their counterparts in community health.
- Community health providers can't always afford to provide the same level of wages and benefits as the hospital sector.

Mobility and portability issues around seniority, pensions and benefits

- A “dual labour force” has emerged – there's disparity between the hospital and community sector in terms of wages and benefits, and therefore, movement tends to be “one way,” from the community to hospitals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The symposium participants identified the following potential solutions and strategies to address these key HHR challenges:

- Allow inclusion of CHCs, FHTs and other community based employers in HOOPP
- Allow community physicians to join pension plans
- Improve pension portability
- Provide a more flexible healthcare workplace
- Attract young people to healthcare careers
- Create a platform to train newly graduated students
- Create a coordinated HHR Community Planning and Management Group
- Maximize HHR through increased scope of practice

Full details of the discussions can be found in the White Paper; details on the presentations made to the group can be found in the Symposium Summary. Should you have questions about the stakeholder symposium, please contact Danielle Kotras, Senior Director, Healthcare, at 416-369-8057 or by e-mail at dkotras@hoopp.com.

