



MEDIA RELEASE

Ontario Nurses' Association

Independent Expert Nursing Panel agrees with ONA that more could be done to retain, recruit RNs to Kingston Health Sciences Centre

December 8, 2022, KINGSTON, ON – An independent panel of nursing experts has made 64 recommendations to improve patient care in the Mental Health and Addiction Care Program (MHAP) at Kingston General Hospital, many of which Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) members have been raising for several years.

The Independent Assessment Committee (IAC) – which is a last-resort, extreme measure to try to settle issues that cannot be resolved between nurses and employers – made dozens of recommendations that addressed the following areas of deep concern. Recommendations include those to address:

- Human Resource Planning and RN staffing levels.
- Education, Training and Professional Development.
- Violence Risk, Patient Acuity and Complexity.
- Morale and a Toxic Work Environment.
- Leadership and Communication.

“The IAC Panel has agreed with ONA and concluded that if the hospital is to retain the MHAP nurses and create a quality practice setting, there must be a change in this hospital’s senior leadership behaviours and actions,” says ONA Interim Provincial President Bernadette Robinson, RN. “The recommendations address what our nurses know is the primary issue – the lack of a thoughtful approach to solving inadequate staffing resources and ineffective retention and recruitment strategies. This is what has left our dedicated RNs unable to provide the quality of care to meet their professional practice standards and care for this vulnerable patient population. It is unfortunate that it has taken so long to have this investigation happen, leaving our patients at risk and in harm’s way. Changes must be made and ONA will continue to push for them.”

The IAC Panel concurred with ONA’s assessment that there is a critical need for the hospital to promote standardized, evidence-based practice and reduce the variability of care by implementing Quality Standards in mental health. The Panel says the hospital’s leadership team is responsible for doing so and can make this a reality and says there are many resources available to support nurse leaders. Given the high number of reported violent and aggressive incidents nurses are concerned about, it is also critical the hospital optimize training practices, adherence and oversight.

“While the employer has indicated interest in working with the union, evidence of this intent has yet to be seen, says Robinson. “Our hope is that this report will stimulate the necessary change and action required by Kingston General Hospital’s management team to implement the IAC’s recommendations without delay.”

ONA is the union representing 68,000 registered nurses and health-care professionals, as well as more than 18,000 nursing student affiliates, providing care in hospitals, long-term care facilities, public health, the community, clinics, and industry.

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