

PRESS RELEASE

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STATEMENT FROM BARBARA BROOKINS: PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND NURSES' UNION ADVOCATES FOR WIDER INCLUSION OF NURSE PRACTITIONERS IN PEI HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Charlottetown, PE — In the ongoing dialogue surrounding healthcare challenges on Prince Edward Island, the Prince Edward Island Nurses' Union, representing Nurse Practitioners (NPs) in the province, wishes to further emphasize the pivotal role NPs play in addressing the current healthcare crisis.

Our island community struggles with an acute shortage of healthcare providers and a heavy focus is being put on the need for family doctors to address the extensive waitlists for primary care and long wait times in the emergency rooms. Nurse Practitioners, often an overlooked solution, are independent healthcare providers with the expertise to autonomously diagnose and treat illnesses, order, and interpret tests, prescribe medications, and perform medical procedures.

The primary care provider shortage (Nurse Practitioners and Family Doctors) significantly contributes to the strain on the healthcare system, as evidenced by the 35,145 patients currently on the patient registry. To address this urgent situation, the Prince Edward Island Nurses' Union calls for a comprehensive understanding of the crucial role NPs play in healthcare delivery.

There must be emphasis on the importance of community education to bridge the awareness gap surrounding NPs with the public and those working within the system in a clinical and administrative capacity. NPs are independent practitioners who provide holistic care, addressing both physical and mental health, gathering comprehensive medical histories, and offering invaluable support to individuals and their families.

While the government's willingness to explore new designations, including physician assistants, associated physicians, midwives, and Registered Psychiatric Nurses, is commendable, it is essential to consider the potential impact on professionals already actively contributing to the PEI healthcare system. The implementation of additional designations, with few practitioners expected to actively practice in PEI, will divert resources and attention away from the immediate needs of the current healthcare workforce. Instead, there is a pressing need to prioritize the enhancement and upskilling of existing professionals who are already dedicated to serving the community.

It is critical that Nurse Practitioners are recognized as a critical asset to our healthcare system. By embracing their contributions and expanding the use of their skills throughout the healthcare system, we can collectively take a significant step towards overcoming the current healthcare challenges in our province.

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