



CANADIAN
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OF NURSES
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February 21, 2024

Darren Noonan
Auditor General of Prince Edward Island
By email: treid@assembly.pe.ca

Dear Mr. Noonan,

Re: Urgent call for fiscal accountability on use of private nursing agencies

On behalf of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) and Prince Edward Island Nurses' Union (PEINU) respectively, we are writing again with great urgency asking you to investigate and report on the use and cost of private nursing agencies in Prince Edward Island.

Evidence continues to mount that there is a lack of transparency and accountability when it comes to the practices of these agencies, while their use continues to balloon.

We brought these concerns to your office's attention in both April 2022 and December 2023. The Globe and Mail's recent investigation found that not only has spending on private for-profit nursing agencies dramatically grown since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is also a shocking lack of transparency and accountability when it comes to what these agencies are charging.

The Globe's report delved into the operations of one nursing agency, Canadian Health Labs (CHL), and found they charged six times what a nurse working in the public system earned. They charged expenses such as meal allowances, but never provided this benefit to the nurses working for them.

Additionally, Acting Auditor General Nick Stavropoulos's office released their report on December 6th 2023, which highlighted concerning trends in the overreliance on costly nursing agencies in Ontario. These agencies are unsustainable, but are being used as expensive, quick fix to address rising job vacancies, the disturbing number of emergency department closures, and the failure to staff minimum care hours per resident per day in long-term care homes.

It is imperative that your office investigate the overreliance on agency nurses in Prince Edward Island. The services provided by these companies must be subject to the same transparency and accountability standards required for the use of public funds.



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The Globe and Mail report was only able to dig into the operations of one provider of agency nurses but there are many others providing these services. Auditing patient and resident access to timely and quality care in our health and long-term care systems would also serve the interests of residents of Prince Edward Island as it does not appear that the exorbitant cost of private nursing agencies is improving services to the extent that these costs are justified.

Overreliance on private, for-profit nursing agencies is only exacerbating the health human resources crisis in this country.

We kindly request a meeting with you to discuss these critical issues of concern to all residents of Prince Edward Island at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Silas', written over a horizontal line.

Linda Silas, President
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Barbara Brookins' in a cursive style.

Barbara Brookins, President
Prince Edward Island Nurses' Union