

2015

**PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION
SUBMISSION TO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**



Association of
Registered Nurses
of Newfoundland
and Labrador



The Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL) is the regulatory body and professional organization representing all 6,300 registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) in the province. In pursuit of its mission, "Nursing Excellence for the Health of the Population," ARNNL exists so there will be accountability for self-regulation, professionalism, quality professional practice environments and healthy public policy.

Introduction

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has acknowledged that it is presently facing a "significant fiscal challenge." The Honourable Ross Wiseman, Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board recently stated: "As a government, the decline in oil prices places a great strain on our revenues and we need to adjust our course to meet this new reality head-on." As Government evaluates how best to adjust its course in light of the new economic reality, ARNNL recommends that Government reinforce its investment in proven public policy strategies.

Demonstrated Governmental Leadership Lays a Solid Foundation

Strategies that support healthy aging, improve long-term care and community support services, prevent and manage chronic disease and reduce poverty rates and emergency room wait times demonstrate Government leadership by embracing initiatives that positively influence the health of the population. Government has also pledged its commitment to address the importance of mental health and promote community-based programs that target health and wellness initiatives. In addition, Government has made efforts to diversify where and how services are offered through initiatives such as telehealth, HealthLine and the Electronic Health Record. Most recently, the Premier's Health Summit on Primary Health Care, subsequent establishment of a Primary Health Care Advisory Committee (of which ARNNL is a member) and consultations on Phase II of its Poverty Reduction Strategy further solidifies Government's commitment to the value of establishing strong strategies.

ARNNL applauds Government for its leadership in these areas, and believes there is an opportunity for the nursing profession to work with Government to ensure that advances made are sustained. A longer-term vision for, and commitment to, these strategies is essential to fully realizing cost savings and better population outcomes. Despite our province's fiscal constraints, ARNNL urges Government to avoid funding cuts to proven strategies that work. We believe that the next step to success is to develop a comprehensive framework, grounded in the principles of Primary Health Care (PHC), which encompasses the strategies discussed above to maximize the impact of current and future investments and thus, ensure sustainability of the health care system.

Supporting the Value of a Primary Health Care Framework

The World Health Organization (WHO, 1978) defines primary health care as essential health care made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community by means acceptable to them through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination. Essential health care includes health promotion, disease prevention, curative, rehabilitative and supportive care. Primary health care is further described as both a philosophy of health care and an approach to providing health services.

In January 2015, ARNNL was among over 300 health care professionals, stakeholder groups and residents who participated in an important dialogue related to the delivery of PHC in our province at the Premier's Summit on Health Care. ARNNL is pleased with Government's commitment to the principles of PHC, and encourages Government to continue to implement meaningful PHC approaches in current – and future – programs and initiatives.

However, we have not yet established a comprehensive framework that encompasses community-based health promotion and prevention initiatives. We have not advanced the use of technology to improve access and efficiencies as much as possible. Community involvement happens, but primarily through a participatory role versus a true partnership. Measures to support people to stay at home as long as possible are unevenly disbursed across the province. A PHC framework can achieve these objectives.



The focus of health care resources and service emphasis must continue to shift from primarily institutional-based illness care to more comprehensive community-based services. These services must not only encompass the full range of health (from preventative to supportive, and throughout the lifespan), but also help address other social determinants of health prioritized through community engagement within the framework of primary health care. Research has shown that health care is best understood and more effectively managed at the community level. Adequately funded community initiatives can make a difference and save money – as they address social concerns before they become health concerns. Better utilizing RNs and NPs within the collaborative team, in a model of primary health care, can ensure efficiencies, improve population health and help Government achieve its goals.

Charting the Course to Success

Stay Committed: Small Investments Have Big Impact

Already established strategies that include initiatives that target the most vulnerable in society often have the greatest impact. Investments in programs that assist vulnerable individuals, families and communities improve their situations are likely to be in even greater demand in the current fiscal climate.

The broad spectrum of programs in Government's current strategies that support diverse populations – from grants for community development, to daycare and adult education programs, to seniors care and transportation initiatives – touch on all of the social determinants of health. These programs also support Government's Primary Health Care agenda and, ultimately, will result in cost savings.

Phase I of Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy, *Reducing Poverty: An Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* (2006), is a strong example of the benefits of setting a PHC philosophy into action. Further, a particular strength of the Strategy is its whole-of-government approach. The success of this approach is evident in initiatives that cross departments/sectors such as health, education, employment and social programming.

Working Together to Implement a Primary Health Care Approach

Taking steps to create environments that promote and support opportunities for enhanced collaboration and communication amongst health care providers will result in improved team and health care system effectiveness in the utilization and delivery of quality client care. Government and regional health authorities must collaborate to realign health and social policy, as well as funding processes, to establish the infrastructure that will make PHC a reality.

Government must endorse a model comprised of multiple practitioners in team-based settings where clients can access the care that they need in a timely manner. Improving care and access is more about how care is delivered, *not how much*.

One of the key features of PHC is a shift to interdisciplinary/intersectoral teams of providers who are accountable for providing a comprehensive range of essential health care services (i.e., health promotion, disease prevention, curative, rehabilitative and supportive care). Areas with strong PHC infrastructure tend to experience better outcomes and efficiencies, lower health care costs and higher patient satisfaction (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, 2010).

Significant progress towards the integration of PHC into the Regional Health Authorities was made with support from the Primary Health Care Transition Fund. ARNNL believes that committed provincial support for a PHC framework is required to ensure that the cost-saving benefits and positive impact on the health of the population are realized now and into the future.

Creating the Roadmap

To ensure sustainable spending and a more efficient and effective health care system, we need a comprehensive framework that ensures that Government strategies that have been proven to work keep working. This



framework, grounded in PHC principles, will increase the capacity to significantly improve positive health outcomes, build the capacity of our people and communities, and focus on what is proven to positively impact health. It will also cut costs now, chart a course to reduce spending in the coming years and lay a foundation that supports initiatives that can cross departments/sectors, thus maximizing a whole-of-government approach.

Conclusion

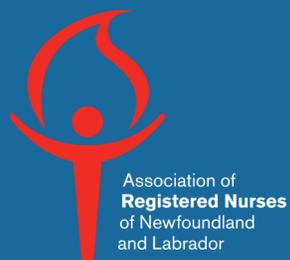
The Department of Finance has expressed that, through the Pre-Budget Consultation process, it is seeking to have “a new conversation” about how to reduce spending in response to the current fiscal climate. ARNNL, on behalf of the province’s RNs and NPs, thanks Government for the opportunity to participate in this important dialogue. RNs and NPs possess the knowledge, skills and expertise required to work collaboratively with other members of the health care team to improve population health and health care services, and maintain a sustainable health system into the future.

ARNNL is keen to continue to work with Government to build on its past achievements and future endeavours, and appreciates this opportunity to discuss the financial approach the nursing profession believes is necessary for Government to effectively and efficiently advance health care in the province.

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