



Retention and Recruitment Plan for The Northwest Territories' Allied Health Care Professionals, Nurses and Social Workers

2002



Northwest Territories

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Introduction

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) and the Health and Social Services (HSS) Authorities recognize that health and social service providers are the backbone of the health and social services system. Without the continued dedication and commitment of the people that make up the system the high level of health and social services provided to residents of the Northwest Territories (NWT) would be in jeopardy.

The GNWT is committed to ensuring there are adequate allied health care professionals, nurses and social services workers in the NWT to ensure quality health care continues to be provided to NWT residents.

To ensure there are adequate human resources available to deliver health and social services and programs, a three-pronged approach is necessary.

1. Retention – one of the best recruitment strategies is the retention of current employees.
2. Northern Workforce – the development of a northern workforce is a medium to long term strategy that will assist in recruitment and retention.
3. Recruitment – creative and proactive recruitment initiatives that highlight the benefits of providing health and social services care in the NWT are required to ensure successful recruitment.

Retention and recruitment initiatives for physicians in the NWT will be addressed separately.

Northwest Territories' Approach

The NWT faces the same challenges as the rest of Canada in recruiting professional staff and retaining existing staff. The competition to hire and retain health and social services professionals is intense and requires a focused and determined effort.

The Department of Health and Social Services and the seven HSS Authorities will continue to work together with employees, the unions and professional organizations to identify, develop and implement initiatives that will support the retention and recruitment of health and social services professionals.

The research and preparation of this plan included consultation with a broad range of individuals across the NWT. Consultation resulted in input and a number of initiatives coming from members of the Joint Leadership Council; front-line staff and managers within the system; the Union of Northern Workers; the Public Service Alliance of Canada; and from professional associations including the NWT Registered Nurses Association and the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada.

Current Initiatives

Over the last few years, the GNWT and HSS Authorities have undertaken a number of initiatives to assist in the recruitment and retention of health and social services professionals both from short term and long term perspectives.

These initiatives will continue to be monitored and adjusted as necessary to ensure they are accomplishing the goal of assisting in the retention and recruitment of health and social service professionals.

The following provides a brief description of each of the current initiatives.

Northern Nurse Diploma Program

One of the most critical investments in creating a stable northern workforce has been the establishment of a Nurse Diploma Program. This program is funded by the GNWT and delivered through Aurora College. Since its inception, 72 graduates have successfully completed the program and 52 of these graduates are currently employed in the provision of health care services throughout the NWT. For the past few years, the annual graduation numbers have been between 10 and 15 per year.

To assist in the recruitment of northern nurses, Aurora College expanded the program three years ago to include a broader range of regionally based Nursing Access Programs as well as several additional course sections to accommodate a larger complement of students. As a result, we expect 26 new northern nurses will complete the national accreditation in January-April 2003. Some graduates will be available for direct entry to employment in the field in January. Others will pursue the 16-week mentorship program at the beginning of their employment. This program is offered by the Department of Health and Social Services through the Maximizing Northern Employment Initiative.

As of September 30, 2002, there were 34.5 nursing positions vacant within the seven HSS Authorities. We can expect the Northern Nursing Program to play an increasing role over the next few years toward the staffing of northern nursing positions. For example, the expanded program has 28 students in year 2, with 31 students accepted in year 1. The Premier has guaranteed job offers to all northern nursing graduates upon the successful completion of their program. This commitment supports the development of a northern workforce that will, over time, reduce the nursing turnover in the NWT.

Social Worker Diploma Program

Aurora College, in partnership with the University of Regina, offers a Social Work Diploma Program. The program provides individuals with the counselling skills and professional values essential in providing the solid foundation required of social workers.

Current Initiatives

The Aurora College program provides a series of theoretical and practical hands-on experiences, and has a strong focus on the social issues, cultural groups and the programs and services available in the NWT. Graduates from the program will have a Social Worker Diploma, which enables them to work as community social workers in the NWT.

Individuals who have graduated from the Aurora College program can transfer directly to the University of Regina where they can pursue further education to receive a Bachelor of Social Work Degree or a Masters of Social Work.

Nurse Mentorship Program

Since the inception of this program in 1997, there have been 62 mentorships supported. Most of these mentorships have been hosted by the Stanton Territorial Health Authority because graduate nurses require consolidation of acute care skills and knowledge. Recently, the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority and Aven Manor have participated in mentorships.

The GNWT Maximizing Northern Employment Initiative provided for the creation of seven Nurse Educator/Mentor positions. The main duties of the Nurse Educator/Mentors are focused on mentorships and practicums. However, they also coordinate and deliver in-service courses for front-line nurses. Discussions are currently underway with the HSS Authorities to dedicate resources to the creation of a Nurse Educator/Mentor float position that will be available to provide services to communities where there is no permanent Nurse Educator/Mentor.

An advanced Nurse Mentorship Program has been developed to provide experienced NWT nurses with an opportunity to develop skills and knowledge in other areas of nursing.

Introduction to Nurse Practitioner Program

Aurora College can deliver up to three Introduction to Nurse Practitioner Programs per year. Two courses were held in 2001/02.

HSS Authorities who support nurses in this program are provided with financial assistance to help with the costs of tuition, travel and replacements required to replace nurses taking the program.

Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Program

This program was offered for the first time in September 2001, with three students enrolling for the 16-month program. Bursaries were awarded to each student and two HSS Authorities were provided with financial assistance to provide their nurses with partial salaries and offset costs for replacement nurses while their staff participated in the program.

Current Initiatives

Students currently in the program will graduate in December 2002. Although the next program was scheduled to commence in September 2002, the commencement date has been postponed to provide the College and the Department of Health and Social Services with an opportunity to work together in marketing the program to increase enrolment. If the HSS Authorities agree to support nurses in taking the program early in the fall active, recruiting for replacements can commence.

With the completion of the first 16-month program, a review of the academic and bursary programs will be conducted and any necessary adjustments made to ensure these programs are effective and accomplish their goals.

Education Leave Program

This program is available to all GNWT health and social services employees who wish to further their education in an area that will provide a benefit to the GNWT upon their return. Depending on individual student costs, the program supports between six to eight students a year.

Relief Pool

The GNWT has a relief pool to provide staffing coverage in situations where HSS Authorities are short staffed. There are a number of situations that result in the resources of the relief pool being called upon such as turnover, employees taking professional development and vacation leave.

The relief pool currently has 17 nurses and interest from individuals to do social work, physiotherapy and x-ray relief.

Job and Career Fair Participation

Participation in job fairs provides the GNWT and HSS Authorities with an opportunity to provide information in person to individuals interested in working in the health and social services system in the NWT.

Recruitment teams completed a four-city recruitment drive to Vancouver, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Calgary in September 2002. When possible, front-line workers such as nurses from the authorities accompany the recruiters to the fairs. Involvement in these recruiting activities provides front-line workers with an opportunity to speak to potential candidates about the benefits and challenges of providing health and social services care in the NWT.

Current Initiatives

In addition to having exhibit space at job fairs, some of the organizing companies offer the following services and opportunities:

- comprehensive advertising in local newspapers;
- radio coverage throughout the event with the radio station on site;
- health and social services students (located within a 4-hour radius) are bussed to the event;
- attendees are provided with a detailed program that includes ads from all exhibitors;
- a data base of registrants is maintained and sent to all exhibitors;
- private areas are provided to conduct interviews; and
- a networking session to allow exhibitors to interact with each other and share information.

Employee Development Program

The Employee Development Program provides funding opportunities for enhancement of education, training and development to front-line health and social services employees.

In 2001/02, 346 nurses delivering front-line client care and 25 allied health care professionals benefited by receiving financial assistance for educational, training and developmental opportunities.

Student Support Programs

Long-term recruitment strategies include bursary and employment programs that target NWT youth and residents. These bursaries provide financial assistance to residents who attend nursing programs in either the NWT or other jurisdictions. Recipients agree to return/remain in the NWT to fulfill a return of service agreement.

On average 150 students per year are provided with support within eight programs.

In 2002/03, the careers promotion component expanded to include public and secondary school students.

New Initiatives

While much has been accomplished under current retention/recruitment initiatives, the GNWT and HSS Authorities recognize that, in order to develop a northern workforce and reduce turnover and vacancy rates, there is additional work that needs to be done.

The following new initiatives are aimed at improving retention and recruitment of health and social services professionals in the NWT Health and Social Services System, and are the result of the Department and the seven HSS Authorities working in consultation with front-line health and social services workers, the Union of Northern Workers, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the NWT Registered Nurses Association and the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada.

Professional Development

Professional development and training opportunities have been identified as high priorities by both the Union of Northern Workers and employees. In the Nurse Recruitment and Retention Survey (conducted by the NWT Registered Nurses Association), 93.5% of nurses who participated in the survey responded that continuing education or in-service training was important to them. Survey respondents further indicated that the major factors influencing their continued employment in the NWT were opportunities for professional development and an appropriate salary.

The Employee Development Program (see Current Initiatives section) currently being offered by HSS Authorities is being supplemented to provide eligible employees with:

- a minimum of one professional development opportunity per year of up to five days with pay;
- financial assistance of \$2,000 for employees residing in Yellowknife, Hay River or Fort Smith to assist with expenses such as tuition and travel; and
- \$3,000 for employees residing in all other communities in the NWT to assist with expenses such as tuition and travel.

Eligible employees will participate in professional development opportunities that enhance or increase their knowledge or skills in health and social services professions and/or management.

This initiative is linked to training and professional development requirements identified in the employee's annual performance development report.

Actions and Timelines:

- Request approval for funding support to implement this initiative during the 2002/03 fiscal year (November 2002)

New Initiatives

- Finalize the guidelines and procedures for implementation of the professional development fund including a list of eligible employees within the seven HSS Authorities (November 2002)
- Initiate contributions to the HSS Authorities (December 2002)
- Prepare an implementation report (May 2003)

New Initiatives

Staffing Mix Review

In conjunction with the implementation of the Integrated Service Delivery Model, the staff mix will be reviewed to determine the appropriate complement of professionals for the delivery of health and social services in the NWT. The review of the staff mix will include assessing the scope of practice for Licensed Practical Nurses, Registered Nurses (both diploma level and baccalaureate prepared) and Nurse Practitioners. The review will also take into consideration the differences in the different types of facilities, such as hospitals, health service centres and long term care facilities.

Currently, the practice in the NWT is to rely on registered nurses in hospitals. In some community settings, Registered Nurses are required due to the nature and scope of the work involved. There is no real opportunity to take advantage of staff mix options other than to consider having Licensed Practical Nurses in a supportive role to the Registered Nurse. For example, the Nurse in Charge is responsible for all clinical activities – in many cases they are overloaded with paperwork and administrative tasks. The addition of Licensed Practical Nurses would ease the burden and create opportunities for other staff to work in the communities under the direction of the Nurse in Charge. This could potentially be incorporated in conjunction with a succession planning strategy.

A second element for the review is to explore ways in which diploma prepared Registered Nurses could play a direct role in the provision of services in multi-nurse health centres. Currently the practice is to require Community Health Nurses (levels II and III) and the Nurse in Charge to be a baccalaureate-prepared nurse with additional training in outpost nursing.

A third element of this review is to examine how to effectively integrate Nurse Practitioners into both hospitals and community health centres.

The review of the staffing mix at the community level will require an examination of developmental roles for both Licensed Practical Nurses and Diploma-prepared Registered Nurses. This is particularly the case in health centres that have three or more nurses.

Action and Timeline:

- Undertake a review of the mix of nursing staff across all health centres, hospitals and extended care facilities within the NWT health care system. This review will provide recommendations on the appropriate mix of nurses (licensed practical nurses, diploma-prepared nurses, baccalaureate-prepared nurses and nurse practitioners). (March 2003)

New Initiatives

Licensed Practical Nurse Program

If it is determined, as a result of the Staffing Mix Review, that an appropriate staff mix requires an increase in the number of Licensed Practical Nurses in the NWT, a LPN Program will be developed and offered in the NWT.

The development of such a program, offered through Aurora College, would support the development of a northern workforce. The program will be offered on an alternating basis between the Fort Smith and Inuvik Campuses. The decision to provide the program through the Fort Smith and Inuvik Campuses is two-fold. First, the Yellowknife Campus is already crowded and does not have the housing that would be required to accommodate students from across the NWT. Second, if the program is offered in more than one location in the NWT, northerners will be able to access the program closer to home.

Actions and Timelines:

- If the need is identified for delivery of a Licensed Practical Nurse Program (as per the Staffing Mix Review), prepare a three-year implementation plan for the program to begin September 2003. The implementation plan will include provisions to alternative the delivery of the program between Fort Smith and Inuvik. (April 2003 and ongoing)
- Using the previously established Nurse Mentorship Program, prepare in-service training programs to introduce staff to a revised scope of duties (September 2003)

New Initiatives

Nursing Family Job Evaluation Review

The current family of nursing positions under the Hay Job Evaluation System includes the following:

- General Duty Nurses;
- Homecare/Public Health Nurses;
- Community Health Nurses (levels II and III); and
- Nurse in Charge.

A review of the nursing family under the Hay Job Evaluation System is to be undertaken to ensure the evaluations accurately reflect the relativity of the jobs within the GNWT as well as the knowledge, skills, abilities and working conditions required to do the jobs. The review committee will consist of representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services, the Financial Management Board Secretariat, the Union of Northern Workers and a HSS Authority.

Actions and Timelines:

- Establish a review committee (November 2002)
- Provide training to the review committee as required (December 2002)
- Update job descriptions (December 2002 – February 2003)
- Conduct the review (March 2003)
- Implement evaluation changes (April 2003)

New Initiatives

Remissible Bursaries – Southern Education Programs

The Department of Health and Social Services administers a Return of Service Bursaries Program to assist in attracting students who are: (a) attending southern educational institutions in difficult to recruit allied health care fields; (b) nurses obtaining their Baccalaureate Degrees; and (c) individuals obtaining a degree in Social Work. Students in their last two years of their program of study have access to \$5,000 per year (to a maximum of \$10,000) in exchange for entering into service agreements where they agree to work and reside in the NWT in their respective occupation upon successful completion of their program.

These bursaries must be repaid unless the student meets the following remissibility conditions:

- students will have their bursaries forgiven at a rate of \$1,000 for every complete three-month period that they reside and work in their respective occupation in an NWT tax-based municipality; or
- students will have their bursaries forgiven at a rate of \$2,000 for every complete three-month period that they reside and work in their respective occupation in a non-tax-based NWT municipality.

Actions and Timelines:

- Request approval for funding support to implement this initiative during the 2002/03 fiscal year (November 2002)
- Prepare administrative guidelines, student applications and promotional material to launch the program (December 2002)
- Prepare a list of the top ten difficult-to-recruit occupations/locations to target (January 2003 and in September of subsequent years)
- Identify training institutions that offer the programs of targeted occupations (January 2003)
- Directly market to students in targeted programs/institutions in Southern Canada (February/March 2003)
- Based on a formalized interview process, provide written job offers based on a preapproved direct appointment process (multi-year terms only)

New Initiatives

Return of Service Bursaries

To attract and retain students in the nursing and social work programs at Aurora College, one-time Return of Service Bursaries are available in the 2002/03 academic year.

The bursaries will be provided to individuals who, through Return of Service Agreements, reside and work in their respective occupation in NWT upon completion of their studies.

Bursary amounts are dependent on the year of study as follows:

- 3rd year students \$11,000
- 2nd year students \$6,000
- 1st year students \$3,000

The one-time bursaries are repayable unless the student meets the following remissibility conditions:

- students will have their bursaries forgiven at a rate of \$1,000 for every complete three-month period that they reside and work in their respective occupation in an NWT tax-based municipality; or
- students will have their bursaries forgiven at a rate of \$2,000 for every complete three-month period that they reside and work in their respective occupation in a non-tax-based NWT municipality.

To continue to attract students into the nursing and social work programs at Aurora College, the Department of Health and Social Services will be developing a proposal to extend the intent of this program to future years. The new proposal will consist of tiered loans depending on the year of study in the program, service agreements and variable remissibility rates.

Actions and Timelines:

- Request approval for funding support to implement this initiative during the 2002/03 fiscal year (November 2002)
- Prepare detailed guidelines for promotion and administration of this program (November/December 2002)
- Introduce the program to current students as a part of the streamlined hiring process (December 2002)

New Initiatives

Social Worker Mentorship Program

Front-line NWT social workers identified that newly hired social workers would benefit from having a mentor to assist them in achieving a smooth transition into their jobs and communities.

To accommodate this, the Social Worker Mentorship program was developed in consultation with the Association of Social Workers of Northern Canada, over 50 front-line social workers and staff of the Department of Health and Social Services. The Mentorship Program is intended to assist HSS Authorities with facilitating the transition of new social workers into their jobs and communities through mentorship relationships with experienced social workers.

The mentorship program is mandatory for all social worker graduates. The duration of the mentorships are between 4-16 weeks depending upon each situation. The program includes full time mentors to assist on-site mentors in providing graduates with the assistance and guidance required to make a smooth transition into their new jobs and communities.

To allow for current turnover rates, the program is designed to provide mentorship for five social worker graduates hired into the NWT Health and Social Services System each year.

Actions and Timelines:

- Hire a full time mentor and identify two on-site mentors (January/February 2003)
- Provide mentorship training (March 2003)

New Initiatives

Streamlined Hiring Process

A streamlined hiring process for graduates from the nursing and social worker programs at Aurora College enables the HSS Authorities to hire graduates into the system without having to go through the normal competition process. The GNWT supports the development of a northern workforce and is committed to guaranteeing jobs to graduates of the Northern programs. This streamlined process supports this commitment by enabling HSS Authorities to effectively integrate graduates into the NWT Health and Social Services System.

The second streamlined hiring process would enable the Health and Social Services System to fast track the hiring of individuals into specific hard-to-recruit positions.

Actions and Timelines:

- The Department of Health and Social Services and the HSS Authorities work with students to match students and positions (November/December 2002)
- Ensure the mentorship programs are fully utilized to support the graduates in their new positions (November/December 2002)
- Provide a job offer (either multi-year term or indeterminate position) for each new graduate prior to graduation (December 2002)
- Assist Corporate Human Resource Services in establishing a streamlined hiring process for hard-to-recruit health and social services professionals.

New Initiatives

Compensation Recognizing Experience

The GNWT's staffing practice is to hire new employees at step one of the applicable pay range for the position. In the case of health care professionals, the Collective Agreement between the GNWT and the Union of Northern Workers requires that all health care professionals be credited with a one pay level increment for each two years of prior experience they have in their field to a maximum of three steps. In situations where individuals have extensive prior experience in their field, Deputy Heads have the authority, on a case-by-case basis, to place individuals at a higher step up to and including step six.

Action and Timeline:

- Make job offers at the appropriate pay step to health and social services professionals taking into consideration the relevant experience of the applicant (October 2002 and ongoing)

New Initiatives

Northern Remote Experience for Nurse Practitioners

Nurse Practitioners in other jurisdictions are required to work a certain number of hours to maintain their registration as nurse practitioners. Under this initiative, discussions will be undertaken with registering bodies in other jurisdictions to see if they will count northern remote nursing experience in the NWT towards the required hours to maintain registration as a nurse practitioner.

If agreements can be reached with other jurisdictions, the possibility of entering into partnerships with employers from other jurisdictions will be explored. The partnerships would enable employers from other jurisdictions, that are currently only able to provide part time work to nurse practitioners, to provide nurse practitioners with full time work. This partnership would permit nurse practitioners to provide relief services to the NWT HSS Authorities during the periods of time they are not required by their employer.

Actions and Timelines:

- Initiate discussions with nurse practitioner registering bodies in other jurisdictions to determine if northern remote nursing experience can be counted towards nurse practitioner hours (April 2003)
- If applicable, finalize agreements with jurisdictions on northern remote nursing job duties that would qualify towards nurse practitioner hours (May 2003)
- Identify and initiate discussion with potential employers (June/July 2003)

New Initiatives

Exchange Program

Under this initiative, discussions will be undertaken with large urban hospitals to develop short-term exchange programs between NWT nurses and allied health care professionals and those of urban hospitals. These programs, if developed, will provide NWT nurses and allied health care professionals with opportunities to maintain and update their skills in areas where they do not have the opportunity to practice these skills in the NWT. In return, the program will provide nurses and allied health care professionals from large urban hospitals with opportunities to gain experience in rural hospitals and in community health centres.

Actions and Timelines:

- Identify three large Canadian urban hospitals and initiate discussion on an exchange program (April 2003)
- If urban hospitals are responsive, develop an exchange program (April 2003)
- Develop guidelines and application process (May 2003)
- Promote program and accept applications for a pilot exchange (June 2003)
- Implement pilot exchange (July 2003)

New Initiatives

Daycare for Shift Workers

One of the difficulties identified by employees who work shift work is the inability to find child care that fits in with shift schedules. This is primarily an issue for employees who work 12-hour shifts as day care providers do not provide day care 24 hours a day.

A working group consisting of representatives from the HSS Authorities; the Department of Health and Social Services; the Department of Education, Culture and Employment; the Financial Management Board Secretariat and the Union of Northern Workers has been struck to examine child care needs and possible solutions to assist shift workers.

Actions and Timelines:

- Working group identifies and examines possible solutions to assist in identified child care needs (November/December 2002)
- Prepare a discussion paper on child care requirements and recommendations in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding contained in the Collective Agreement between the GNWT and the Union of Northern Workers (June 2003)

Other Areas Requiring Further Research and Analysis

Housing

The lack of housing – and in some instances the lack of affordable housing – has been cited as one of the main stumbling blocks when recruiting new employees.

Given the complexity of the housing issue, initiatives to address this area could not be fully examined during the course of the development of this plan. Extensive consultation, research and analysis in this area would be needed to determine the feasibility and impacts of initiatives to address this area of concern.

A potential area to be explored is housing being owned and rented to health care professionals by non-government organization to address the shortage of available housing.

Action and Timeline:

- A working group consisting of representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services, the HSS Authorities and the Financial Management Board Secretariat will examine housing to determine what, if any, issues exist (April 2003)

Other Areas Requiring Further Research and Analysis

Shift Length

The length of shifts, particularly the 12-hour shifts of hospital nurses, has been raised as an issue that should be examined. Concerns have been raised that 12-hours shifts contribute to burnout and impact the ability of health care professionals to experience a good work-life balance.

In-depth research and consultations with health care professionals working shift work, the Union of Northern Workers and the Public Service Alliance of Canada are required prior to making a recommendation on this issue.

Actions and Timelines:

- Conduct research into the shift lengths and different approaches to shift scheduling being used by other jurisdictions (July 2003)
- Conduct an analysis to determine the number of nurses currently working 12-hour shifts in the NWT and the estimated cost that would result from changing the shifts from 12 hours to 8 hours (July 2003)
- Initiate discussion with the Union of Northern Workers and the Public Service Alliance of Canada to receive input from their members regarding shift lengths and whether or not they would be receptive to moving to 8 hour shifts or exploring other approaches to shift scheduling (August 2003)

Other Areas Requiring Further Research and Analysis

Base Staffing Levels

Concerns have been expressed regarding working conditions specific to safety, lack of support, overtime and excessive periods of being on-call. This is especially true for Community Health Nurses who work in one- and two-nurse health centres : these nurses are on-call for a minimum of 50% of the time in two-nurse health centres, and 100% of the time in one-nurse health centres. Base staffing levels in hospitals and security in hospitals after normal hours (in emergency rooms or on wards at night) have also been raised as concerns.

In conjunction with the implementation of the Integrated Services Delivery Model, a review of the base staffing levels in the Health and Social Services System will be undertaken.

Actions and Timelines:

- Prepare an options paper that fully describes current circumstances related to workload in small, one- and two-nurse health centres. Provide options and estimated costing for interventions to address this issue. A multi-year implementation plan will be considered. (February 2003)
- Conduct base staffing reviews of NWT facilities (March 2003)

Initiatives Considered and Not Recommended

Agency Nurses

The GNWT and HSS Authorities are limited in the ability to utilize agency nurses. Agency nurses, or temporary nurses, hired through a recruitment agency are considered to be employees of either the GNWT or the Hay River Community Health Board. As such, these employees must be hired as bargaining unit employees and provided with the terms and conditions of employment contained in either the Collective Agreement with the Union of Northern Workers or the Collective Agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

If agency nurses are hired outside of the respective Collective Agreement, either the Union of Northern Workers or the Public Service Alliance of Canada would have the ability to grieve that they are bargaining unit members and should be provided the terms of the respective Collective Agreement. Jurisprudence on similar situations in other jurisdictions supports that these individuals must be afforded the rights of the Collective Agreement.

Previously, when agency nurses were hired outside the Collective Agreement the Union of Northern Workers filed a grievance that was resolved through an agreement between the parties that agency nurses would not be hired outside the Collective Agreement. This eliminates the ability for HSS Authorities to pay recruitment agencies to provide nurses where the nurses are recruitment agency employees. The utilization of recruitment agencies is therefore restricted to recruitment services to provide nurses that are then hired by HSS Authorities as casual employees.

Action and Timeline:

- To avoid contravening the Collective Agreements, utilize recruitment agencies as “head hunters” to provide temporary nurses that are hired by the HSS Authorities as casuals in accordance with the respective Collective Agreement.

Initiatives Considered and Not Recommended

Market Supplements (Retention and Recruitment Bonuses)

Under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, temporary market supplements can be provided where a market shortage has resulted in the inability to recruit and retain individuals in the occupation experiencing the shortage. There is currently a recognized national nursing shortage. To alleviate the pressure of the nursing shortage, both recruitment and retention temporary market supplements, which have both now expired, were negotiated between the GNWT and the Union of Northern Workers in 1999.

Although the implementation of temporary market supplements may assist in alleviating current shortages, there is no evidence that the previous market supplements were successful in either recruiting or retaining nurses. The average turnover rates for NWT HSS Authorities, as reported in both the 2000 and 2001 Public Service Annuals Reports, when market supplements were in place was 20%.

The ability to provide market supplements would be limited to occupations where a national and international shortage could be demonstrated which would result in the supplement not being available to all health and social services professionals. As was experienced by the NWT Health and Social Services System, negotiating market supplements causes equity and morale problems with groups that do not receive the supplements. In addition, if a new human rights complaint were filed, supplements for nurses may be defensible but supplements for other health and social services professionals may not be defensible.

Action

- No further follow up is recommended in this area.

Initiatives Considered and Not Recommended

Separate Employer/Bargaining Unit

The option of creating a separate bargaining unit for health and social service professionals was raised as a way of addressing the unique concerns of these professionals and more specifically nurses. Bargaining units for employees of the Public Service are established under the *Public Service Act* and thus the creation of a separate bargaining unit for health and social service professionals would require a legislative amendment.

The creation of a separate bargaining unit would not enable the GNWT to provide a different compensation package without putting the GNWT at a high risk of a human rights complaint under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. The *Canadian Human Rights Act* states “it is a discriminatory practice for an employer to establish or maintain differences in wages between male and female employees employed in the same establishment who are performing work of equal value.” The Act further goes on to define wages as “any form of remuneration payable for work performed by an individual...” and includes salaries and benefits. The *Canadian Human Rights Act* also states “Separate establishments established or maintained by an employer solely or principally for the purpose of establishing or maintaining differences in wages between male and female employees shall be deemed for the purposes of this section to be the same establishment.”

Therefore, in order for a new bargaining unit to be considered a separate establishment, it would need to have very different terms and conditions of employment from the rest of the Public Service, including a different job evaluation system, different pay plan, different benefit plans (including a different pension plan) as well as completely separate administration.

Provincial jurisdictions and the Yukon Territory have their own human rights legislation governing equal pay and have a greater ability to address market conditions as a result. The *Canadian Human Rights Act*, and the way it is being interpreted and applied is very restrictive. In addition, in many jurisdictions, health care workers are not formally part of the provincial public service so they are regulated as separate employers.

To provide health and social service employees with a separate bargaining unit would require removing the HSS Authorities from the Public Service and structuring them under one umbrella authority with the separate authorities flowing from it. This would provide separate employer status from the GNWT. Separate Employer Status would result in the employees of the Authorities not being employees of the public service, similar to the employees of the Yellowknife Education Boards, which in turn would result in a bargaining unit for employees of the authorities that is separate from the bargaining unit for public servants. This would place the employer in a position where they could provide compensation packages that are different from the GNWT.

Initiatives Considered and Not Recommended

The process of moving the six authorities that are currently in the Public Service out of the Public Service under an umbrella authority would be a complex process. In order to make an informed decision on whether or not to proceed on this option, dedicated human resources would have to be identified to conduct extensive analysis of the impact and costs associated with such a move.

An umbrella authority, as a separate employer would still be subject to equal pay provisions applicable to their own employees depending on the equal pay provisions in the applicable human rights legislation.

Draft Human Rights Legislation for the NWT is currently in the consultation process and includes equal pay provisions that, if enacted, will require employers to provide equal pay for the same or substantially similar work. Under these provisions, equal pay provisions are restricted to similar work. If this legislation is enacted in the NWT, and it is determined an umbrella health and social services authority falls under it, separate bargaining units may be established based on type of work. This approach would enable the bargaining unit the ability to address specific issues of concern.

It is important to note that, consistent with the equal pay provisions in the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, the GNWT has committed to provide Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value for public servants of the NWT.

Action and Timeline:

- The Financial Management Board Secretariat, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services, will prepare a discussion paper on the feasibility of establishing a separate bargaining table within a bargaining unit for shift workers who are employees of the Public Service (January 2003)

Summary of Investments

Current Investment

Currently, within the NWT Health and Social Services System, there is approximately \$4 million per year dedicated to retention and recruitment of health and social services professionals. Highlights of dedicated funding include:

Planning and Development Staff	450K
Retention and Recruitment Initiatives (previously used for nurse market supplements)	\$1.2M
Nurse Educator Mentors	300K
Advanced Nurse Mentorship Program	240K
Student Bursaries	230K
Education Leave	110K
Aurora College Nursing Programs	350K
Summer Student and Health Careers Orientation	250K
Employee Development Program	450K
Locum Relief Pool	150K

Summary of Investments

New Investments

Initiative	2002/03	2003/04 & ongoing
Professional Development	701,000	1,681,750
Staffing Mix Review (one time expenditure)	150,000	
Health and Social Services Bursaries (one time)	595,000	
Health and Social Services Bursaries (ongoing)	100,000	100,000
Social Worker Mentorship Program	72,600	156,500
Sub Total	1,618,600	1,938,250
Less funds previously allocated for retention and recruitment initiatives	(1,200,000)	(1,200,000)
New Investment	418,600	738,250