

Readying the Nursing Workforce to Embrace an Ever-Changing World

It's no surprise to anyone to have us say that we are living in challenging times. Though some may have thought that a postpandemic world would see the recovery and stabilization of economies, healthcare systems and workforces, at times it feels somewhat similar to a never-ending era of calamity. We continue to live in a time of polycrisis – from economic instability exacerbated by ongoing global trade wars, struggling health workforces impacting the accessibility and availability of healthcare services, to worsening planetary health exacerbating food and water insecurity, physical and mental health issues, health inequities and forced migration and displacement. We are severely off track to meet the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 (UN 2015). Nurses and nurse practitioners are leaving the profession at record numbers, with many leaving just within the first few years of being licensed (Faubert 2025). Working conditions remain a challenge across provincial and territorial health systems (CFNU 2025). Yet, while the future may look bleak, these wicked problems are not impossible to fix. Indeed, this is our new normal – a constantly changing world that, now more than ever, needs our resolve to create a healthier future for all.

As Prime Minister Mark Carney often says in the context of his economic strategy for building a stronger Canada, we must focus on what we can control. And in the context of preparing the nursing workforce (we use the terms “nursing” and “nurses” broadly to encompass all nursing designations) in this changing world, there is a whole lot that is within our control. However, it requires nursing leaders to have foresight, strategy and a courageous and discerning openness to change and to doing things differently.

As we reflected on the direction of this issue, we discussed the many challenges confronting the nursing workforce and the incredible research, education, practice and policy ideas and innovations that are being implemented to prepare nurses for

complex environments. We were reminded that, as nurses, we do not sit in despair and wait for solutions to come to us. We take the lead to speak up and speak out for health. We do not just stand by and let policy decisions impact us; we engage in political discourse and make known what policies ought to be. We do not operate within the comfort of our own bubbles; we move beyond silos and strategically build coalitions with system partners for collective impact. And, we remember that when challenges come to the fore, it becomes an opportunity to move beyond the status quo, reimagine and transform the way we think and operate.

How do we navigate these challenges as nurses and health system leaders? How do we prepare the nursing workforce to meet changing social, technological, legal, economic, ethical and political landscapes? How do we create an environment where nurses are respected, supported and empowered? How can we think beyond what is happening within the borders of our country and be sensitive to the fact that the policy decisions we make at home impact the well-being of those around the world and vice versa? Just as importantly, what are we already doing well, and what can be spread and scaled to not only sustain but also ensure that the nursing workforce thrives while achieving its social mandate to serve the public?

In This Issue

The collection of articles and commentaries in this issue of the *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* reminds us that solutions do exist, but progress requires action, trust, collaboration and an openness to being guided by evidence and values to discern what to do and how to do things differently and impactfully. The authors provide us with timely examples of how the profession is navigating turbulent times and preparing nurses for the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Preparing the nursing workforce for a changing world requires us to think globally and be mindful of how shifts in global public policy influence and shape the nursing workforce. This issue begins with an article by Little (2026), who reminds us that nursing is a global workforce essential to the achievement of health and the SDGs. There is much we can learn from other countries about workforce and health system planning to strengthen the nursing workforce in Canada, including how to be self-sufficient and respect and uphold principles of ethical recruitment in the context of internationally educated nurses (IENs). Ensuring that nurses are central in these policy discussions provincially, nationally and globally remains critical to shaping health policy.

Chiu and Leslie (2026) challenge us to reflect on how institutions within our healthcare systems, specifically nursing regulators, must also evolve to ensure that they are fit for purpose, given emerging challenges and risks to public safety. They encourage us to challenge legacy approaches and be open to thinking differently

about the role that nursing regulation has in creating an agile, mobile and competent workforce in the public interest.

A key challenge to our ability to engage in proactive health workforce planning is connected to gaps in data – what we collect, how we collect it and how we use and share it. Myles and Bourgeault (2026) share promising initiatives and make the case for why standardized, comprehensive and interoperable data will continue to be a key ingredient to creating high-performing healthcare systems across the country.

Although significant attention has been paid to reducing barriers for IENs to contribute to a steady supply of nurses to meet the needs of Canadians, there is evidence that many IENs are either not employed in nursing or are employed but continue to struggle with workplace integration. Indar and Alostaz (2026) remind us to see beyond the numbers and encourage us to recognize that supporting IENs goes beyond reducing immigration and licensure barriers. To retain IENs, practice environments must be psychologically safe, resourced with mentorship opportunities and attend to equity, diversity and inclusion.

The article by Yoon (2026) illustrates the value of integrating a trauma-informed approach to organizational and leadership practices. They explore practical strategies for creating cultures of care and prioritizing the workforce's well-being and psychological safety as a means to sustain and empower the nursing workforce.

In addition to addressing recruitment and retention challenges, it is also important to be mindful of how nursing practice must evolve in the context of macro-level developments that impact entire economies and societies. Kleib and Vogelsang (2026) discuss the rapidly changing landscape of artificial intelligence (AI) and how the profession can continue to lead, shape and influence the integration of AI into healthcare. Radu and Black (2026) write about our roles as nurses in planetary health and provide practical examples about how nurses can work across sectors to protect this public good.

With significant rollbacks in equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism (EIDA-R) policies within and beyond the borders of our country, the profession must continue to speak out and challenge regressive policies that threaten progress in equity. Louie-Poon's (2026) thought-provoking commentary reflects on the importance of acknowledging anti-racism work within nursing as a political imperative and not merely a moral imperative to bring about transformative change. Olatubi et al. (2026) highlight examples of how research is critical to informing policies and practices that can drive actionable change to advance EIDA-R.

A common theme threading through the articles in this issue is the importance of collaboration, trust and systems thinking to guide and support navigation of the challenges. Related to this, we end this issue with an inspiring commentary from Grdisa (2026), who reminds us about the power of being connected to our professional associations and how we continue to unify as nurses for collective impact.

We hope the ideas communicated through these articles provide you with fresh perspectives, motivation to challenge the status quo and the realization that while there is much we cannot control in uncertain times, we can control how we show up, govern and lead as nurse leaders to improve the working lives of nurses, the quality of healthcare received by Canadians and the planet that we all call home. We welcome your feedback and encourage you to contribute your research, practice and leadership insights to the *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership*.

Patrick Chiu, PhD, RN, CGNC
Guest Editor
Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Nursing
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB

Ruth Martin-Misener, NP, PhD, FAAN, FCAN
Editor-in-Chief
Director and Professor, School of Nursing
Assistant Dean, Research,
Faculty of Health Dalhousie University
Affiliate Scientist, Nova Scotia Health
Affiliate Scientist, Maritime SPOR Support Unit
Halifax, NS
Co-Director, Canadian Centre for Advanced Practice Nursing Research
Hamilton, ON

Correspondence may be directed to Patrick Chiu at pakcheon@ualberta.ca.

References

- Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU). 2025, March 26. National Nurses' Survey Confirms Urgent Need for Federal Bill to Address Patient and Worker Safety on Eve of Federal Election. Retrieved January 3, 2026. <<https://nursesunions.ca/national-nurses-survey-confirms-urgent-need-for-federal-bill-to-address-patient-and-worker-safety-on-eve-of-federal-election/>>.
- Chiu, P. and K. Leslie. 2026. Leveraging Nursing Regulation to Achieve Workforce, Health System and Societal Goals. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 20–28. doi:10.12927/cjn.2026.27791.

- Faubert, E.B. 2025, October 22. The Evolution of the Nursing Supply in Canada. *Montreal Economic Institute*. Retrieved January 3, 2026. <<https://www.iedm.org/the-evolution-of-the-nursing-supply-in-canada/>>.
- Grdisa, V. 2026. Reflections on the Evolving Purpose and Power of Nursing Associations in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 100–08. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2026.27783.
- Indar, A. and N. Alostaz. 2026. Preparing the Nursing Workforce for Internationally Educated Nurse Integration: Implications for Nursing Leadership and System Transformation. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 40–50. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2026.27789.
- Kleib, M. and L. Vogelsang. 2026. Artificial Intelligence and the Sustainable Development Goals: Implications for Canadian Nurses and Nurse Leaders. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 64–75. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2026.27787.
- Little, L. 2026. The Importance of Embedding a Global Perspective Into Canadian Nursing Workforce Policy and Planning. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 10–19. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2026.27792.
- Louie-Poon, S. 2026. Rebuilding Nursing on Foundations of Anti-Racist Worldmaking: A Political Imperative. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 82–90. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2026.27785.
- Myles, S. and I. Bourgeault. 2026. The Strategic Role of Nursing Regulatory Leaders in Leveraging Data to Support the Nursing Workforce. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 29–39. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2026.27790.
- Olatubi, M.I., E.A. Marfo and B. Salami. 2026. Advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Nursing: Reflection on Over a Decade of Research. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 91–99. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2026.27784.
- Radu, R. and A. Black. 2026. Mobilizing Nursing Leadership for Planetary Health: Preparing the Healthcare Workforce for a Warming World. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 76–81. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2026.27786.
- United Nations (UN). 2015. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved January 5, 2026. <<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>>.
- Yoon, R. 2026. Leading Trauma-Informed Cultures of Care in Times of Uncertainty and Change: How Trauma-Informed Organizational and Leadership Practices Can Bolster Psychological Health and Safety. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Leadership* 38(3): 51–63. doi:10.12927/cjnl.2026.27788.