

Message from UPSE:

We have been receiving numerous requests from the membership for clarification on the Union's position regarding the "*Nursing Retention Incentive Program*" announced by Government, on October 17, 2022.

To be clear, UPSE was not consulted on this program, nor did it agree to the program before it was announced. The Union has been advocating for pay incentives for our members for over three years. The need for pay incentives goes beyond those employees included in the current program, and since the announcement, UPSE has advocated for its expansion. Unfortunately, the Employer has refused to make any adjustments.

The Union met with the Minister and Deputy Minister on October 26, 2022 and followed up with a detailed letter on October 31, 2022, with our concerns, highlighting that the rates should be the same for all the classification groups announced in the program. The program should also include all classification groups, and our members in private LTC should be recognized. Why should our members not be valued the same as other classifications when it comes to retention incentives?

During the many conversations I have had with Government, I was led to believe that there was talk about opening up the program to other classifications, and confidentially, that the amounts were also being looked at. On November 23, 2022, the Minister wrote rejecting our suggestions, and we have since been advised that Government will not "reopen the file" or "expand the program further than what was identified."

The failure to meaningfully consult with the Union about this issue is a breach of our collective agreement and shows a disrespect for the Union, and more importantly, for the workers we represent.

From the date of the announcement, I have advocated in the best interests of the whole membership. The Employers expedited roll-out of this program has unfortunately achieved the opposite of what it was intended, which we understand was retention, and the employee(s) feeling of being valued. Instead, those workers who aren't being offered a retention incentive feel devalued, disrespected, and are much more likely to leave the workplace. This includes the members of our sister unions, who many of our members work side-by-side with on a daily basis.

Unfortunately, it has also created anger on the part of those covered by the program, against the Union, since UPSE refused to sign an agreement that was not equitable for all. It was the short sightedness and lack of consultation from government that resulted in disparities, unfairness, and confusion surrounding this retention incentive program. I understand that members included in the program are frustrated with the delays, however, please understand that UPSE is working on behalf of all members. I will not accept or tolerate disparaging comments directed at my staff for doing their jobs and advocating on behalf of the membership. I would ask those members who are upset to show respect when presenting concerns as UPSE staff are only working in your best interest.

The Union has signed the agreement; however, we will continue to advocate directly and publicly for fair treatment for all our members, and for the expansion of this program to other deserving employees. We encourage you as UPSE members to show solidarity and to address this issue directly with your district MLA.

For those of you eligible for the program and to ensure you can make an informed decision, I have requested clarity on some of the key issues you need to consider prior to making application. To assist you with this decision, my team has compiled a Q&A from the numerous discussions and correspondence from HPEI representatives. Please see the attached “FAQ sheet.”

For my members who are not identified or recognized in the *Nursing Retention Incentive Program*, I will continue to advocate for your recognition and exhaust all means necessary to ensure you are valued for your contributions. I was advised in the Ministers response letter dated November 23, 2022, that “there are two other facets of the incentive program that will apply to other healthcare workers...the *Retirement Retention Program*.. and a *Priority Vacancy Program*.” I assure you that there will be consultation on these two additional programs to ensure you are included.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication and work during these challenging times and I will continue to advocate for the membership and keep you updated.

Karen Jackson,
UPSE President

FAQ's after consultation with Employer representative (November 29, 2022)

- 1) Will this program be expanded to include other classification groups other than LPN/RCW/PCW/HSW?
 - a. No
- 2) Is the program going to include our private LTC members as Medavie, a private company, was included and the focus was intended to stabilize LTC?
 - a. No
- 3) Can I apply for another position if I sign up for the retention program?
 - a. Yes, you have the right to under the current collective agreement
- 4) If I am successful in obtaining a new position, do I need to pay back the retention incentive?
 - a. If the new position you were successful in obtaining is one of the classification groups (LPN/RCW/PCW/HSW) identified in the program, you will not be required to pay back the incentive program. However, if the new position is not one of the classification groups identified in the program, you will be required to pay back the incentive program. So, you are restricted in what positions you can apply for if you did not want to pay back the retention incentive program
- 5) Do I have to pay back the retention incentive money if I get sick and go out on extended sick leave or LTD?
 - a. Possibly if they have no paid sick time available. Once they move to LTD or unpaid sick, the employee will be required to pay back the prorated amounts
- 6) Does it make a difference if it is sick unpaid vs sick paid?
 - a. Yes, if paid sick, the employee will not be required to pay it back. If the employee is unpaid, they will be required to pay it back on a pro-rated basis
- 7) Do I have to pay back the money if I go out on WCB?
 - a. Yes. It would be prorated based on hours worked
- 8) Are the hours required to work for the Return In Service agreement for this program based on Worked Hours or Paid Hours?
 - a. It is based on paid hours
- 9) If I have to pay the money back, is it prorated?
 - a. If an employee leaves voluntarily or is disciplined for just cause, the employee will be required to pay back the full amount. If the employee obtains an approved leave of absence, paid sick or WCB, then the employee pay back will be pro-rated

10) If an employee were to pass away, would the estate be responsible for paying back the incentive?

a. No

11) Do overtime hours count toward the RIS hours (total of 1950)?

a. Yes

12) When is the application deadline?

a. December 31, 2022

13) When will I receive the retention monies?

a. The monies will be issued on January 19, 2023

14) What is the link for the application to the Nursing Retention Incentive Program?

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/upse-nurse-retention-incentive-program>