

In 1988, the ratio was one registered nurse for every 104 Canadians and one registered nursing assistant for every 315 Canadians.¹³⁶ These changes stem from an increase in the demand for nursing resources, which can be traced to demographic and epidemiologic factors such as the growing complexity and gravity of illnesses, the evolving nature of illnesses and treatment methods, and the aging of the population.¹³⁷

While the supply of nursing resources has increased, several witnesses pointed to a shortage of nurses in the rural and remote regions or in certain specialized fields in urban areas. It was pointed out that in certain regions of the country, it has always been difficult to recruit and retain nurses. Some provinces have resorted to incentives to attract nurses to remote and rural areas and to large urban centres such as Toronto. The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) maintains that the regional shortages can be attributed to factors specific to the region; for example, the high cost of living, the nursing model used, the salary and benefits package and opportunities for ongoing training.¹³⁸ The shortage of specialized nurses has also been a long-standing concern. Some urban centres are already experiencing a shortage of nurses with specialized training, such as intensive care nurses.

The CNA further noted that, strictly speaking, there is no shortage of nursing resources. The fact that nurses are unwilling to work under the present conditions, they say, has given the impression that a shortage exists. In describing these unsatisfactory conditions, the CNA includes lack of adequate staffing in hospitals, lack of involvement in decision-making, lack of educational opportunities, too many non-nursing duties, inflexible work schedules and concerns such as salaries and benefits.

C. MENTAL HEALTH CARE HUMAN RESOURCES

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, mental health care expenditures account for only a small percentage of total national health care expenditures. Moreover, the number of mental health specialists is relatively low. For example, there were 2,972 psychiatrists in Canada in 1988, or one psychiatrist for every 8,780 Canadians. That same year, there was one active accredited or registered psychologist for every 3,127 Canadians.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Health and Welfare Canada, *op. cit.*, pp. 123 and 139.

¹³⁷ Canadian Nurses Association, Brief, pp. 14-15.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

¹³⁹ Health and Welfare Canada, *op. cit.*, pp. 196 and 235.