

<b>Title</b>	<b>Quebec specialists demand wage parity, better working conditions</b>
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<b>Brief Introduction</b>	<p><b>Quebec specialists demand wage parity, better working conditions</b></p> <p>Quebec's 7000 specialists, who have been without a contract since March 2002, are pulling out all the stops in their battle with Health Minister François Legault. "Our main goal is to close the remuneration gap [with doctors in the other provinces]," says Dr. Yves Dugré, president of the Fédération des médecins spécialistes du Québec (FMSQ). It says specialists earn 40% less than colleagues in the rest of Canada. The FMSQ wants \$800 million in raises over 3 years; Quebec proposed another year of the old contract, and then offered a \$140-million lump-sum payment. The FMSQ has turned it down.</p> <p>The federation says Legault tried to pin the province's health care woes on MDs. It protested the introduction of Bill 114, which guarantees emergency services, and Bill 142, which dictates the terms of practice for all Quebec doctors. Despite calls to negotiate, Quebec passed a watered-down version of Bill 142. It no longer requires doctors to sign a binding contract of service, but it has the power to dictate where and how specialists practise. "It was as hard to accept as Bill 114," says Dugré.</p> <p>In January, Université de Montréal researchers reported that for every FP who leaves Quebec, 3 specialists leave. Between 1996 and 2000, more than 800 left. "French Canadian doctors are leaving Quebec, not only doctors from the cardiac catheterization laboratory and doing rounds at Pierre Boucher Hospital in Longueuil from 7 am to 8 pm, without lunch or dinner. "Life has never been so good," he reports. "We're not rushing patients through the system or straining ourselves to the limit." — Heather Pengelley, Montreal</p>

**PULSE**

**RNs: demand up, supply down**

The Canadian Institute for Health Information says the number of registered nurses working in Canada declined slightly between 2000 and 2001, from 232 566 to 231 512. Five provinces experienced gains, with increases ranging from 15 nurses (1.2%) in Prince Edward Island to 753 (3.4%) in Alberta. Decreases in the remaining provinces and territories ranged from 145 nurses (1.7%) in Nova Scotia to 345 (4%) in Saskatchewan.

The proportion of nurses working in casual positions has decreased since 1997, from 18.3% to 12.8%, while the proportion working in full-time positions has increased from 49.8% to 53.2%. In both 1997 and 2001, about one-third of RNs worked in part-time positions. Newfoundland RNs are most likely to be employed full time (74.3%), followed by those in New Brunswick (58%) and Nova Scotia (57.1%). Alberta and Manitoba count the lowest proportion of full-time RNs (46%). Fifteen percent of nurses reported having 2 or more employers in 2001.

In 2001, 63.4% of employed RNs worked in hospital settings, a proportion that has remained relatively stable since 1997. The majority (84.1%) work in direct patient care, with 7% in administration and 3.8% in education.

Since 1997, the proportion of employed RNs with a diploma as their highest level of education has decreased from 79% to 74%, while the proportion with undergraduate degrees has increased from 20% to 24%. In 2001, 2% of RNs held master's or doctoral degrees. Fifty-seven percent of management positions were filled by RNs with diplomas in 2001, while 38% and 6%, respectively, were filled by those with undergraduate and graduate degrees. — *Sbelley Martin*, Senior Analyst, CMA Research, Policy and Planning Directorate