

While Many Return to Routine, Halifax Nurse Boards a New Life on Hospital-Ship in Madagascar

Halifax, NS, September 10 2026 – While most families spent early September packing lunches and buying new backpacks, Halifax-based nurse practitioner Andrea McQueen packed her bags for an entirely different kind of new beginning. On September 13, 2026, Andrea will begin a two-year volunteer commitment with Mercy Ships, the international charity that operates hospital ships providing free, life-changing surgical and medical care to people in countries with limited access to healthcare. This two-year service will bring her firstly to Madagascar and then Togo.

Andrea McQueen is a Registered Nurse and Nurse Practitioner from Halifax, Nova Scotia, with more than 12 years of clinical experience in pediatric oncology, hematology, nephrology, palliative care, primary care, and cancer care. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Honours) from St. Francis Xavier University and a Master of Nursing, Nurse Practitioner Stream, from Dalhousie University, and has previously volunteered internationally at the Hospital of Butare in Rwanda.

While most Canadians were settling into a familiar September rhythm, Andrea is preparing for a completely unique kind of first day, stepping foot on one of the largest civilian hospital ships in the world, trading the predictability of an established nursing career in Canada for the front lines of global healthcare.

"At Mercy Ships Canada, we are inspired by Andrea's decision to use her palliative care expertise to serve patients who need compassionate support when surgery is no longer an option. Her commitment to providing dignity and care in the home reflects the very best of Mercy Ships' volunteers."

— Catherine Tremblay, Development & Volunteer Engagement Lead, Mercy Ships Canada

A Canadian nurse choosing service over routine, and uncertainty over the comfort of the familiar, is exactly the kind of commitment that keeps Mercy Ships' mission alive. Like the surgeons, educators, and couples who have crossed the gangway before her, Andrea is stepping into a global network of volunteers who bring their expertise to communities with little or no access to safe surgical and medical care. Mercy Ships depends on professionals like her, people willing to give not just a skill set but two years of their life, to deliver free surgeries and life-changing care to patients who would otherwise have nowhere to turn. In return, volunteers describe a journey that reshapes them just as much as it does the patients they serve: a rare front-row seat to resilience, gratitude, and the quiet dignity of people given a second chance.

About Mercy Ships

Mercy Ships is an international humanitarian organization that deploys the two largest civilian hospital ships in the world, the Africa Mercy and the Global Mercy™, to provide free, high-quality healthcare to the most disadvantaged. The international NGO also supports the development of host countries' healthcare systems by training healthcare professionals and renovating infrastructure. Founded in Switzerland in 1978 by Don and Deyon Stephens, Mercy Ships has operated in 55 countries. On board its ships, an average of 2,500 volunteers per year, from 60 countries, contribute to Mercy Ships' mission. Professionals such as surgeons, dentists, nurses, healthcare trainers, cooks, sailors, engineers, and teachers dedicate their time and skills to this cause. With offices in 16 countries and an operational center for Africa based in Dakar, Senegal, Mercy Ships serves nations by restoring health and dignity.

Source :

Mercy Ships Canada

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