



Open Letter from Ontario's Registered Nurses to Federal Minister of Health Tony Clement: Save the Canadian Health Network

The Honourable Tony Clement
Minister of Health
Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

November 29, 2007

Dear Minister Clement:

Ontario's registered nurses are dismayed that the Canadian Health Network (CHN) will close by the end of March 2008.

As a national, bilingual, non-commercial, and quality-assessed web portal for health information, CHN has been providing a significant service for Canadians since 1999. This unique collaboration between the Public Health Agency of Canada and respected health organizations, universities, libraries, and hospitals provides links to materials that help people stay healthy and provides resources for patients and their loved ones as they are experiencing health challenges. CHN is a trusted service that Ontarians use daily to help navigate an overwhelming amount of conflicting opinion and marketing on the web to get to evidence to inform health and health-care decisions.

As the professional organization for registered nurses in Ontario, we have been contacted by our members who are deeply concerned about the loss of CHN for their clients and their communities. CHN is used by approximately 381,000 people per month, which is up 70 per cent over 2006.¹ While the largest number of visitors to the CHN website is "at home Canadians," health professionals make up 39 per cent of visitors, with nurses comprising the largest segment of health professional users at 14 per cent.² The closure of CHN will mean the loss of a health education tool that nurses find invaluable for our nursing practice.

At a more systemic level, we find it unfathomable that the federal government would decimate a trusted resource that has taken eight years to build up in order to save \$7 million³ just as the final surplus for the 2006-2007 fiscal year was \$13.8 billion.⁴ A strong Canada requires healthy people and healthy communities. We urge your government to invest wisely in our future by saving the Canadian Health Network.

Kind regards,



Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD(c), O.Ont.
Executive Director, RNAO



Ruth Schofield, RN, MScT
President, CHNIG

cc Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
Dr. David Butler-Jones, Chief Public Health Officer, Public Health
Agency of Canada

¹ Greenaway, N. (2007). Government to Shut Down Popular, Independent Health Advice Website. *Ottawa Citizen*. November 18, 2007.

² Canadian Health Network, (2006). Executive Director's Report.

³ Greenaway, N.

⁴ CBC (2007). Federal Budget Surplus Balloons to \$14 B. CBC News. September 27, 2007.