



**RNAO**

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario  
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers  
autorisés de l'Ontario

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty  
Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

November 1, 2010

Dear Premier:

Registered nurses know the unacceptably high costs of tobacco use for our community, our health care and our young people. Each year over 13,000 people die from tobacco-related illnesses. Tobacco use costs our health care system \$1.6 billion, totals at least 500,000 hospital days and results in \$4.4 billion in lost productivity. Yet more than two million people in Ontario still smoke and, tragically, thousands of our young people start smoking every year.

Government deserves much credit for Ontario having among the toughest anti-smoking laws in North America. That's why the RNAO was deeply disappointed by your recent comments that the government is shelving the new report entitled *Building On Our Gains, Taking Action Now: Ontario's Tobacco Control Strategy for 2011-2016*.

First, the report was authored by a panel – the Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group (TSAG) – that the government itself appointed just one year ago. TSAG was established to advise the government on a five-year plan to follow its Smoke-Free Ontario (SFO) strategy. We proudly represented Ontario's nurses on this important panel, and quite frankly never even imagined that our report would not be seriously considered, and our recommendations not enacted within the realistic timeframe we provided.

Second, and more important, Ontario has made considerable progress in cutting smoking but the job is far from done. Being good does not mean we are the best we can be. And good is not good enough when you consider that use of tobacco continues to be the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. With the escalating costs of tobacco use, both in terms of human health and economics, this is not the time to put tobacco control on the back burner.

In our report, the Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group calls for a comprehensive tobacco strategy that reduces both demand for tobacco products, including preventing young people from getting addicted, and the supply of legal and unregulated tobacco products. We suggest practical and

achievable outcomes to be attained by April 1, 2016 and an overall vision of a tobacco-free Ontario by 2030. Specific recommendations include licensing tobacco retailers, new guidelines for cigarette packaging, expanding areas where smoking is prohibited to include restaurants and entrances of public buildings and playgrounds, and allowing landlords to include non-smoking language within leases.

In short, the report sets out a doable, realistic and inspiring roadmap that will build on recent gains in tobacco control and save lives. It is one that has the potential to win strong support from all Ontarians from across the political spectrum. *Building on Our Gains, Taking Action Now: Ontario's Tobacco Control Strategy* is simply good health policy that will save lives. It must not be allowed to become a political football.

Premier, this is not the time to lose momentum, we need once again your bold and courageous leadership, you always say that we must do what's best for the public. Ontarians look to you to lead the next chapter in the fight to end tobacco use. Take action now and the RNAO and all nurses in Ontario will be by your side. We must build on our gains as together we achieve a tobacco-free Ontario.

With warm regards,



Doris Grinspun RN, MSN, PhD, O.ONT.

Executive Director  
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