

POLICY AT WORK

RNAO task force recommends expanded powers for nurses in primary care

Nurses who work in community health centres, on family health teams, in NP-led clinics, physicians' offices, and any other primary care setting, got a big boost from RNAO with the unveiling of a report that calls for expanded powers and concerted efforts to ensure RNs and RPNs are working to their maximum scope of practice, and that their scope be further expanded. Ontario has 4,285 nurses working in primary care (2,873 RNs and 1,412 RPNs).

The *Provincial Primary Care Nursing Task Force* concluded these nurses are grossly under-utilized. Its interprofessional report, released June 28, contains 20 recommendations to increase access to primary care. Among them:

- immediately appoint a committee, led by RNAO and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, to roll out the task force recommendations
- issue directives to employers to utilize RNs and RPNs to their full scope of practice
- ensure RNs are empowered to conduct a broad range of clinical assessments and interventions, health education and chronic disease prevention and management
- authorize RNs to prescribe and dispense medications
- authorize RNs to identify and



Judie Surridge, President of RNAO's Ontario Family Practice Nurses interest group (right) and RNAO CEO Doris Grinspun (second from right), co-chairs of the provincial expert task force that set out to maximize and expand the scope of practice of RNs and RPNs in primary care, lead a Queen's Park media conference on June 28. They are joined by RNAO President Rhonda Seidman-Carlson (second from left) and Nursing Policy Analyst Tim Lenartowych.

- communicate a diagnosis
 - authorize RNs to order diagnostic and lab tests
 - ensure RPNs are empowered to take leadership roles in evidence-based health programs
- Adopting the recommendations, the expert task force says, will enable people to access same-day care.

Long live Ontario's cosmetic pesticide ban

RNAO was among 12 health and environmental groups that signed a letter distributed to all Ontario MPPs on May 30. The letter urged provincial politicians to vote against an amendment to Bill 88, *An Act to Amend the Pesticides Act*, introduced by the Progressive Conservative Party. Had it passed, the amendment would have watered down the province's cosmetic pesticide law by permitting the use of lawn and garden chemicals. The

groups pointed out that since the ban came into effect in 2009, concentrations of chemicals found in urban streams have dropped 97 per cent. In addition to RNAO, signatories included the Ontario Medical Association, Ontario College of Family Physicians, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Canadian Cancer Society, the David Suzuki Foundation, and Environmental Defense. The groups say the ban is successful because it protects human health and the environment at the same time. At the end of May, Bill 88 was voted down 51 to 34.

Nurses unite on issue of gender identity and expression

The province's Human Rights Code has extended protection to transgendered people, a move advocated and applauded by RNAO and members of

its Rainbow Nursing Interest Group (RNIG). Politicians from all three provincial parties agreed to amend the code June 13 by adding the words 'gender identity' and 'gender expression.' RNAO CEO Doris Grinspun appeared before the government's *Standing Committee on Social Policy* on June 11 to voice nurses' unwavering support for the legislation. She pointed to several tragic responses to discrimination endured by transgendered persons, including suicide. She also noted a large number of transgendered people live below the poverty line. These are reasons to warrant better protection from discrimination, she said. RNAO and RNIG suggest the added protections will go a long way toward preventing discrimination against transgendered people looking for work, a place to live and health care. **RN**

To download the full report, read the media release, or watch the media conference on YouTube, visit www.RNAO.ca/PCTaskforce