

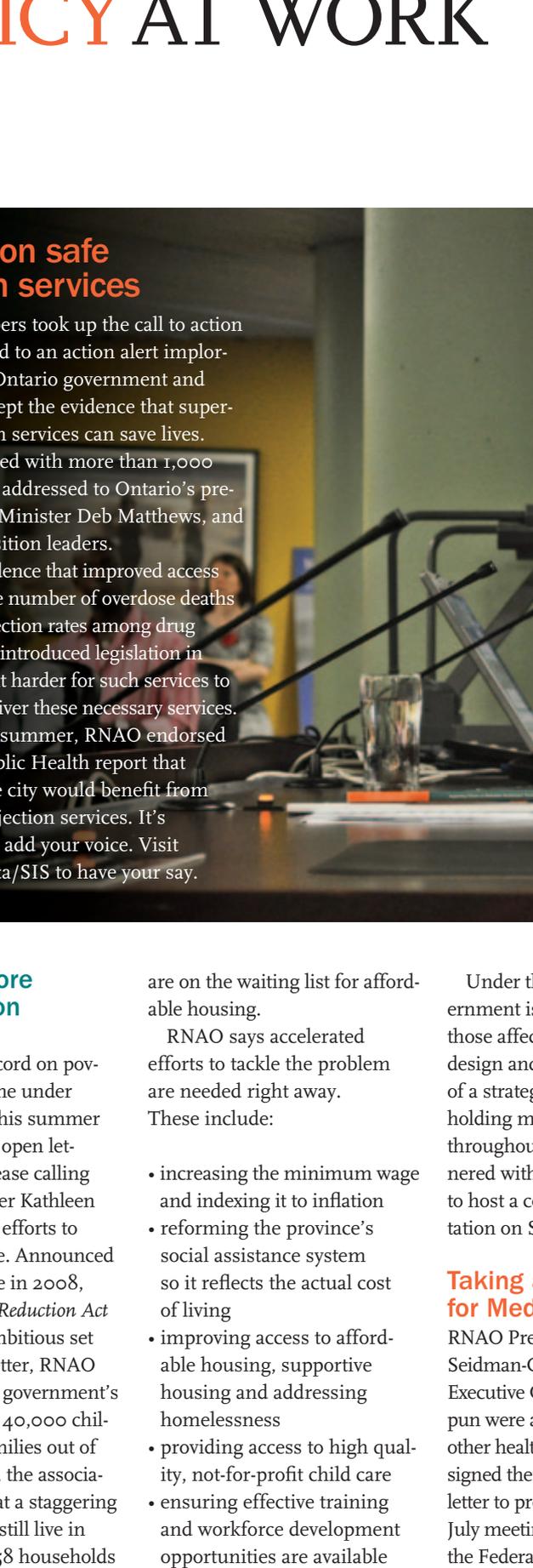
POLICY AT WORK

Update on safe injection services

RNAO members took up the call to action and responded to an action alert imploring both the Ontario government and Ottawa to accept the evidence that supervised injection services can save lives. They responded with more than 1,000 signed letters addressed to Ontario's premier, Health Minister Deb Matthews, and the two opposition leaders.

Despite evidence that improved access can reduce the number of overdose deaths and lower infection rates among drug users, Ottawa introduced legislation in June making it harder for such services to set up and deliver these necessary services.

Earlier this summer, RNAO endorsed a Toronto Public Health report that concluded the city would benefit from supervised injection services. It's not too late to add your voice. Visit www.RNAO.ca/SIS to have your say.



RNAO CEO Doris Grinspun speaks to the Toronto Board of Health about the value of safe injection services (July 10).

A plea for more focused action on poverty

The province's record on poverty reduction came under fire from RNAO this summer when it issued an open letter and media release calling on Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne to step up efforts to deal with the issue. Announced with much fanfare in 2008, Ontario's *Poverty Reduction Act* put into law an ambitious set of targets. In its letter, RNAO acknowledges the government's claim that it lifted 40,000 children and their families out of poverty. However, the association points out that a staggering 383,000 children still live in poverty and 156,358 households

are on the waiting list for affordable housing.

RNAO says accelerated efforts to tackle the problem are needed right away. These include:

- increasing the minimum wage and indexing it to inflation
- reforming the province's social assistance system so it reflects the actual cost of living
- improving access to affordable housing, supportive housing and addressing homelessness
- providing access to high quality, not-for-profit child care
- ensuring effective training and workforce development opportunities are available

Under the legislation, the government is obligated to include those affected by poverty in the design and implementation of a strategy. The province is holding meetings on the issue throughout the fall. RNAO partnered with Working for Change to host a community led consultation on Sept. 24.

Taking a stand for Medicare

RNAO President Rhonda Seidman-Carlson and Chief Executive Officer Doris Grinspun were among 50 RNs and other health professionals who signed their names to an open letter to premiers attending a July meeting of the Council of the Federation (CoF). The letter,

co-ordinated by the Canadian Health Coalition, was aimed at Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and urged the premiers to press Ottawa to secure a new 10-year *Health Accord* when the current one expires in 2014. CoF meets regularly to discuss everything from inter-provincial trade, to energy, to health. Its July meeting took place in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Although the premiers didn't comment publicly on the call for a renewed *Health Accord*, the leaders did pledge to work together on lowering the price of prescription drugs, beefing up access to home care, and implementing six additional clinical best practices (including three of RNAO's BPGs) across the country. **RN**