



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

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty  
Premier of Ontario  
Main Legislative Building  
Queen's Park, Room 281  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

May 28, 2012

Dear Prime Minister Harper and Premier McGuinty,

This letter is to urge the federal government to rescind the Federal Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism's announced cuts of health-care coverage for refugees and refugee claimants and reinstate the current Interim Federal Health Program. Ontario's nurses, like health-care professionals from across the country, are gravely concerned that these dangerous changes will threaten the lives and well-being of people who have already experienced trauma and hardship before they arrived in Canada.

Toronto Public Health has compiled evidence of the negative health impacts of reduced federal health services for individuals and the broader community. Not only are these cuts egregious from a health and human rights perspective, health professionals and their organizations from across the country reject the federal government's claim that the proposed cuts will save money. Citizenship and Immigration Canada might show a short-term, bookkeeping savings of \$20 million per year but ultimately, the provinces, territories, and tax payers will need to pay the bill for complications of health conditions and emergency care – all more expensive than primary care. Some asylum-seekers will die, while others may experience complications if they hesitate to seek treatment. It is simply unconscionable that these cuts to the Interim Federal Health Program are being even considered. Not only are they unfair, they will harm people who are already vulnerable and cost the public purse more.

Prime Minister Harper, nurses demand that your government maintain health-care coverage for asylum-seekers and protected persons through the Interim Federal Health Program.

Premier McGuinty, we urge you to mobilize your provincial and territorial counterparts to stop cuts to the Interim Federal Health Programs.

Ontario's nurses implore all federal and provincial leaders, from every party, to work together to correct this inhumane, egregious, and short-sighted policy decision. This is not the Canada we want.

We look forward to your response.

Kind regards,



Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), O.ONT.  
Chief Executive Officer, RNAO



Rhonda Seidman-Carlson, RN, MN  
President, RNAO

Copy:

Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the Official Opposition, NDP  
Bob Rae, Interim Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada  
Daniel Paillé, Chef du Bloc Québécois  
Elizabeth May, Leader, Green Party of Canada  
Jason Kenney, Federal Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism  
Tim Hudak, Leader of the Official Opposition, Ontario PC Party  
Andrea Horwath, Leader, Ontario NDP  
Mike Schreiner, Leader, Ontario Green Party