



IMPROVING HEALTH FOR ALL

RNAO's CHALLENGE
TO ONTARIO'S
POLITICAL
PARTIES



2018
Provincial
Election



improving
access to nursing care

improving
Ontario's health system

improving
our living standards

improving
our environment

improving
our fiscal capacity

When voters elect a new government on June 7, 2018, they will be making an important decision about Ontario's future.

Nurses represent the largest group of health professionals in Ontario and they play a central role in the health of individuals and communities. They live and work in big cities, small towns and rural and remote areas of our province.

Nurses use their knowledge and expertise in every sector from public health and primary care to hospitals, rehabilitation, home care, and long-term care. They look after people of all ages, all social classes, all ethnicities, all religions, all sexual orientations and all gender identities.

Nurses know what factors influence and shape people's health.

That's why the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) urges all political parties to adopt the policy priorities contained in this brochure in the lead up to the provincial election.

RNAO's policy priorities include access to nursing care and health services, improved standards of living, a cleaner environment and more fiscal capacity to pay for the policies, we believe, are key to building a more inclusive society and making Ontario a better place for all.

improving access to nursing care

HEALTH

Our population is aging. That means more and more people have complex health conditions.

Evidence shows employing RNs improves patients' health as well as financial outcomes for the health system. And yet, the number of RNs per population is at an all-time low. In fact, Ontario has the worst ratio in the country. Why? Because RNs are being replaced by less qualified health workers.

Nurse practitioners (NP) have been delivering advanced care for decades in Ontario. Despite their expertise, they still face barriers in their practice.

We recommend Ontario employ more RNs and NPs, and give them the authority to work to their full and expanded scope of practice so they can deliver more of the effective and expert care Ontarians depend on.



Improving access to nursing care is possible.

Nurses urge all parties to:

- **Locate care co-ordination and RN care co-ordinators in primary care settings**
- **Require that all new nursing hires in tertiary, quaternary and cancer care hospitals be RNs**
- **Require that all first home health care visits be provided by an RN**
- **Legislate health human resource standards in long-term care so that there is at least one NP for every 120 residents, and a staffing mix that consists of 20 per cent RNs, 25 per cent RPNs, and no more than 55 per cent personal support workers**
- **Ensure nurse practitioners work to their full scope by authorizing them to perform point-of-care testing, order all diagnostic imaging and ECGs, complete all medical forms for mental health services, and by expanding their authority to certify a death**
- **Ensure RNs can order lab tests, communicate a diagnosis and prescribe medications for common ailments**
- **Integrate RN prescribing into the baccalaureate nursing curriculum by 2021**
- **Allow RNs to continue initiating the controlled act of psychotherapy**

improving **Ontario's health system**

HEALTH

Our health system now provides essential medications for those under the age of 25. We can make it even better by expanding access to prescription drugs to everyone, and providing free dental care for vulnerable members of our society.

The next government must take steps to improve care for residents in long-term care homes. Residents should be safe from harm and benefit from clinical best practices that address their health needs and provide them with a higher quality of life. And, nursing homes should not be penalized for delivering better health outcomes, as is now the case.

In today's world, information is more accessible than ever. This should also be true in health care. We must give everyone in Ontario access to their own personal health record so they can make informed decisions and better manage their health needs.

Taking care of everyone's health needs includes members of Ontario's Indigenous communities. Let's face it, successive governments have paid them lip service but failed to address health inequities. Families are forced to live without adequate housing. They lack clean, running water, and have few economic opportunities. Indigenous children and youth have the highest suicide rates in the province. This is shameful and unacceptable.

Improving Ontario's health system is possible.

Nurses urge all parties to:

- **Implement a universal, single-payer pharmacare program that covers all medically necessary prescriptions without deductibles, co-payments, user fees, and means testing**
- **Invest \$10 million to support oral care for low income adults and seniors**
- **Continue to support the use of evidence-based practices in long-term care homes to promote and sustain improvements in resident health and review funding models in long-term care so that funding is not cut when homes deliver better outcomes**
- **Provide every Ontarian with their personal health record**
- **Work with Indigenous communities and their leaders to tackle basic social determinants of health, and prevent child and youth suicide**



improving our living standards

HEALTH

We all need a place to live. We also need an income we can live on. But for many in Ontario today, these basic needs are not being met. For an estimated 1.9 million people in the province, poverty is real and is having a profound effect on their health. Shockingly, on any given night, 12,000 Ontarians are homeless and shelters across Ontario are over capacity.

More also needs to be done to help people with mental health and addiction challenges who live on the street. As health professionals, nurses know that access to supportive housing can make a world of difference.



Improving our living standards is possible.

Nurses urge all parties to:

- **Maintain the commitment to increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by Jan. 1, 2019, with no exemptions for age or sector**
- **Invest one per cent of Ontario's budget (\$1.5 billion) to build new affordable, accessible housing and fix existing units in need of repair**
- **Create 30,000 supportive housing units for people with mental health and addiction challenges over 10 years**
- **Work with other levels of government to address homelessness and ensure adequate shelter space in communities across the province**

improving our environment

HEALTH

We are all responsible for the changes in our climate. Human activity has increased levels of greenhouse gases. We see the results in extreme weather events, rising water levels, poor air quality and the spread of diseases.

Nurses know that cleaner air and water, and more livable cities result in better health.

If we want to secure a healthier environment for ourselves and for future generations, urgent action must be taken to reduce the effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gases. Ontario has taken steps to lower these emissions. But we fall short of where we need to be.

Automobiles continue to be a major source of pollution, clogging our roads and highways and lengthening commuting times.

We need more transit options that make travelling to work and school easier. And we need to encourage healthier forms of active transportation such as cycling and walking by building accessible networks of bike lanes, sidewalks, and trails.

Improving our environment is possible.

Nurses urge all parties to:

- **Ensure that the provincial carbon pricing system allows Ontario to meet its greenhouse gas emission targets**
- **Make polluters pay for the full cost of the pollution they create**
- **Work with federal and municipal governments to ensure dedicated and sustainable revenue sources to pay for the expansion of transit and active transportation**



improving our fiscal capacity

HEALTH

Improving health for all means striking a balance between investing in the health of Ontarians while still being mindful about budgets.

Our province's economy is doing well. Unemployment is down and interest rates are low. Yet, spending on government programs is low compared to other provinces.

The next government could have more revenue at its disposal if it adopted a more progressive tax system, one where people who earn more pay more taxes.

We should also make polluters pay.

No one should be able to profit from the sale of important public assets.

Improving our fiscal capacity is possible.

Nurses urge all parties to:

- **Build a more progressive tax system**
- **Increase sources of revenue that encourage environmental and social responsibility**
- **Reject the sale of any publicly owned crown corporations and government assets**
- **Ensure transparency and accountability in all fiscal measures and transactions**



Ontario's nurses care about
improving health for all.

We urge politicians to adopt
our recommendations.

We invite the media and voters
to visit our website at
[RNAO.ca/improvinghealthforall](https://rnao.ca/improvinghealthforall)



**RNAO is
the professional association
representing registered nurses, nurse
practitioners, and nursing students in
Ontario. Since 1925, RNAO has advocated
for healthy public policy, promoted excellence
in nursing practice, increased nurses'
contribution to shaping the health-care
system, and influenced decisions that
affect nurses and the public
they serve.**

For more information about RNAO, visit RNAO.ca
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