**RNAO’s
Queen’s Park on the Road (QPOR)**

**Member Toolkit - 2022**

Dear RNAO member,

Thank you for your interest and participation in RNAO’s 2022 Queen’s Park on the Road (QPOR)! The work of RNAO’s Nursing and Health Policy department is not done until we’ve taken political action. QPOR is an exciting annual event that enables you to meet with your MPP at their local constituency offices to discuss issues key to nursing, health and delivery of health services.

QPOR – a signature RNAO event – is a fantastic opportunity to engage **your** elected representatives where you live on the issues that matter to **you** as an RNAO member. This is your chance to bring your experiences and expertise to life to guide our elected officials in delivering the best health care possible to Ontarians. This toolkit offers tools and tips to help you set up, plan and facilitate a QPOR MPP meeting.

This year, once again, RNAO is providing region and chapter members the opportunity to reach out and connect with your local MPP or MPPs by sending the initial meeting request. This is an important step to building a rapport with your MPP. They need to know – and we want them to know – that you, their constituent, have things that you want to talk to them about.

And, this year we will again be pushing hard for change on **two current issues**: the **RN understaffing crisis** and **the opioid overdose crisis**. Focusing on a limited number of issues will allow for a deeper, more concentrated and informed discussion. It will also permit a greater opportunity to introduce you, your work, RNAO and our activities to your MPP.

Thank you for participating in this year’s QPOR. We hope you find this political action opportunity productive and rewarding. RNAO’s foundation is our membership –our strength lies in your passion for nursing and health advocacy. And, remember, our staff in the policy department are here to support you if you have questions or need help.

Warmest regards,

Doris Grinspun, RN,MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), Dr(hc), FAAN, FCAN, O.ONT

Chief Executive Officer

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO)

**How to set up and conduct your own QPOR MPP meeting**

***Connecting with your MPP***

1. Notify your chapter policy and political action executive network (PPAN) officer of your interest in participating in QPOR. To find your PPAN officer please contact Ann-Marie Morris at: amorris@RNAO.ca.
2. Get full contact information for your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP):
	1. Visit the [Elections Ontario Voter Information Service webpage](https://voterinformationservice.elections.on.ca/en/election/search?mode=postalCode) and search for your MPP by entering your home postal code.
	2. Find and click on the MPP’s name under the heading “Member of Provincial Parliament”. This will redirect you to your MPP’s webpage on the Ontario Legislative Assembly website
	3. Find and record the contact information for the MPP.
3. Use the MPP meeting invitation script or email text we’ve provided in Appendix C to connect with the MPP by phone or email.
4. Follow up with the MPP’s office if you don’t hear back from them promptly.

**TIP:** If your MPP’s office hasn’t responded to email, consider phoning them to follow up. PPANs have shared with us that they have had more success with booking meetings after following up with a telephone call.

***Preparing for your QPOR MPP meeting***

* **For in-person meetings:** If both parties agree to meet in-person, secure a location within the MPP’s riding. Perhaps they have a favorite meeting spot, or you have one that would ensure good group conversation.
* **For online meetings:** If you agree to meet online, please notify RNAO home office (email Ann-Marie Morris at amorris@RNAO.ca) to book your meeting on Zoom and receive your Zoom account information.

**ENSURE SUCCESS OF YOUR ONLINE MEETING:** Make sure you’re familiar with Zoom’s meeting functions before conducting the meeting. For example, you will need to know how to share your screen, how the raise hand feature works, or how to mute or unmute participants. **Please also record the Zoom meeting, which will also give you a print transcript of the meeting.**

If you need help with this or would like to schedule a practice session, please contact Ann-Marie Morris by email at amorris@RNAO.ca.

* Read and familiarize yourself with RNAO’s [priority issues fact sheets and political action bulletins](https://rnao.ca/events/queens-park-on-the-road) so that you are confident presenting the information to your [MPP](https://rnao.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/RNAO%20Fact%20Sheet%20QPOR_2022.pdf).

**TIP:** If this is the first time your MPP is meeting with RNAO, consider starting the conversation with [RNAO’s introductory fact sheet](https://rnao.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/RNAO%20Fact%20Sheet%20QPOR_2022.pdf). It explains the basics about nursing, nursing classifications and RNAO’s work.

* Connect with other members of your region or chapter to identify additional participants. If applicable, determine roles (for example: who will chair the meeting? Who will take notes?)
	+ Also, reach out to your RNAO chapter member networks to see if there is anyone willing to share their professional experiences with the two primary topics – RN understaffing crisis and the opioid overdose crisis.
* Contact Ann-Marie Morris at amorris@rnao.ca if you would like to have an email sent to your chapter to invite members to the meeting.
* Make sure you have a telephone number for the MPPs and other member participants in the event of an emergency

**TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A PHOTO OP WITH YOUR MPP!** Before you conclude your meeting, ask to have a photo taken for social media as well as *RNJ* and our e-newsletter In The Loop. If the meeting is online, ask permission to take and share screen capture shots on Zoom.

Post your photos with the MPP to social media (remember to tag @RNAO) and send them to Ann-Marie Morris (amorris@RNAO.ca).

***Gathering reflections from the QPOR meeting***

Please arrange a debrief with other RNAO member participants after the meeting to discuss your overall impression of the event. You can use our “recorder sheet” in Appendix A to capture what was said during the meeting and any commitments the MPP made during the meeting (for example, if the MPP agreed to send our template letters to the premier and relevant ministers). Please submit the completed recorder sheet to RNAO home office by email to amorris@RNAO.ca.

**Roles and responsibilities at a QPOR MPP meeting**

Assuming that you will be attending the meeting with other members of your RNAO region or chapter, It is especially important to ask one person to chair the meeting. This will help you present the materials and issues for discussion in an organized fashion.

The role of the chair is to:

* Oversee and manage the meeting, making sure it starts on time.
* Introduce the group (name, role with RNAO if any—board, chapter or interest group member, student and/or constituent of the MPP).
* Keep the discussion on track.
* Present RNAO’s “Asks” and letter templates for submission to the appropriate individual – see Appendices D, E and F.
* Thank the MPP and request permission to take and post group photo.
* Invite the MPP to participate in RNAO’s annual Queen’s Park Day on March 2, 2023.

If your meeting will take place in person, please also ask someone to take notes at the meeting. If online, it’s also a good idea to have a note taker in addition to recording the Zoom meeting.

**Dos and don’ts for QPOR meetings**

***Things to do***

* **Conduct some research** on your MPP before the meeting to see if you can find ways to make a more personal connection. They live in your community, but what do you have in common? Did you go to the same high school? Do your kids play sports together? This will help set the tone for a focused but more relaxed conversation. Also find out whether or not they support the key priority issues: the RN understaffing crisis and the opioid overdose crisis.
* **Be punctual.**  Start and end the meeting at the appointed time.
* **Stay focused.** Don’t let the MPP find ways to avoid what they may find to be a difficult conversation.
* **Tell a story.** Nurses have compelling stories to tell – especially on these two issues. Use your stories. Use personal examples from your work or community to support the key messages RNAO is asking you to deliver. Remember – politicians value and appreciate your knowledge and experience as a nurse. Be confident in your ability to use personal and work narratives to make your point about nursing and health care.
* **Give your MPP time to express their views**. Listen, understand and respond to what they are saying. We already know what we think. We want to know what they think!
* **Ask the MPP directly whether they support your position.** And, if they do, be sure to turn that support into action.
* **Raise the “Asks” from this toolkit** and present the MPP with the template letters developed by home office. This will help make sure they take the appropriate follow-up action is taken.
* **Pay attention to and be polite to staff.** MPP office staff are valuable allies. They are gatekeepers to the MPP, and often understand the policy issues and nuances in greater detail than the MPP does.

***Things to avoid***

* Being late for the meeting—even if the MPP does not start on time.
* Speaking for so long that there is no time left for questions.
* Speaking negatively about the previous or current government.
* Contradicting RNAO’s positions.
* Saying “I don’t know” in response to a question. If you’re not sure about the answer to a specific question, tell the MPP, “I will get back to you with details as soon as possible.”
* Referring to your own political party membership (if you have one) or political preferences. RNAO is a non-partisan organization that works with MPPs from all political parties.

**Appendix A – Meeting Minutes Template**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of MPP: |  |
| Date:  |  |
| Name/title of any MPP staff in meeting:  |  |
| Name of recorder:  |  |
| Names of other RNAO members in meeting: |  |
| Response to issue #1: |  |
| Are they sending a letter and when? |  |
| Response to issue #2: |  |
| Are they sending a letter and when? |  |
| Are they sending a letter and when? |  |

Complete this form and send to amorris@RNAO.ca along with any photos taken. Thank you!

**Appendix B** - **Sample agenda for QPOR meeting with MPP**

(assuming a one-hour time slot)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1:00 p.m.  | **Introduce RNAO participants** Thank MPP for agreeing to meetThank MPP for past support of RNAO events (if applicable)Introduce the RNAO members attendingIntroduce RNAO to the MPP using “Intro Fact Sheet” | Chair  |
| 1:05 p.m. | **Set parameters and priorities for discussion**Highlight the priority issues that you will address:1. RN understaffing crisis
2. Opioid overdose crisis
 | Chair  |
| 1:10 p.m.  | **Discuss the priority issues**Reinforce information and recommendations found within political action bulletinsGive specific or personal examples drawn from your workplace or community | All  |
| 1:45 p.m.  | **Deliver the call to action**Ask for MPPs supportTranslate support to action: * Present “Ask” letter templates to MPP
* Get a commitment from the MPP to send a letter to the Minister
 | Chair |
| 1:55 p.m.  | **Wrap up the meeting** – thank MPP for meeting and:* Confirm follow-up details
* Ask permission and take a screen shot or photo of the group
 | Chair |
| 2:00 p.m. | **Debrief**: * Doublecheck that MPP or their staff have left the meeting if held virtually
* document observations of MPP responses
* record any commitments made by the MPP
 | Chair |

**Appendix C – MPP meeting invitation script/email**

[MPP name]

(MPP riding)

[Mailing address]

[Email address]

[insert date]

Dear (MPP),

I am a constituent and a/an {registered nurse (RN) / nurse practitioner (NP)/nursing student} concerned about Ontario’s health system. I am also the [identify your position with RNAO or indicate that you are a member] of the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (RNAO). RNAO is the professional association representing nearly 50,000 RNs, NPs and nursing students in Ontario.

For many years now, RNAO members have visited MPPs in their ridings – or virtually when in-person meetings were not possible – each November to discuss issues and opportunities to enhance nursing, health and delivery of health care and services, usually every November. We call this tradition “Queen’s Park on the Road” (QPOR). This year, I am hoping you will join me in person, or by Zoom for a virtual meeting, to discuss two of RNAO’s priority issues:

* the RN understaffing crisis
* the opioid overdose crisis

RNAO members are committed to political engagement and we value the positive working relationships we have with MPPs across the province. QPOR is an important initiative to foster these relationships.

Would you please set aside an hour of your time at your convenience to meet with me and a few of my colleagues who live in your riding? we can meet in person or virtually, whichever you prefer? We are aiming for the week of Nov. 7 – 11, however, I am happy to accommodate your schedule if that week doesn’t work.

Could you please let me know when you’re available to meet by contacting me via email at XXXX ? We are keen to share our experiences in the health system with you in the hopes of positively influencing public policy.

Thank you very much in advance.

Warm regards,

(name)

(email)

(optional telephone)

Copy to: Ann-Marie Morris, RNAO

amorris@rnao.ca

**Appendix D - Letter template for MPPs – Do Not Appeal Bill 124**

Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

Premier's Office
Room 281
Legislative Building, Queen's Park

Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

[insert date]

## Re: Don’t appeal the Bill 124 decision, Premier!

Dear Premier Ford,

In this present context of very high and persistent inflation, Bill 124 is causing nurses to fall farther and farther behind the cost of living. To continue to financially penalize nurses demonstrates a profound lack of respect. More than anything else, Bill 124 is responsible for our present nursing shortage. It is clear we cannot retain or recruit nurses with Bill 124 in place.

Throughout the past two and a half years of this pandemic, RNs have selflessly cared for citizens of Ontario while confronting fears for their own health and safety and that of their loved ones. They are exhausted and burnt out. RNs have left and are continuing to leave the profession. Bill 124 is largely to blame for this exodus.

The departure of RNs from the profession has led to emergency room closures across the province and to even longer wait times for already backlogged procedures and surgeries. The departure of RNs has compromised the effective functioning of Ontario’s health system and is putting the health of Ontarians at risk.

The health system depends on RNs. With Bill 124 in place, words of appreciation, thanks and praise ring hollow. Premier, the court’s decision must stand in order to address Ontario’s nursing shortage.

Yours truly,

[MPP]

[Name]

[Riding]

[Address]

Copy to :

Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, President of the Treasury Board minister.tbs@ontario.ca

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance, Minister.fin@ontario.ca

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health sylvia.jones@ontario.ca

Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Long-Term Care

ltcminister@ontario.ca

Ann-Marie Morris, RNAO, amorris@RNAO.ca

**Appendix E – Letter Template: Opioid overdoses**

Hon. Sylvia Jones

Minister of Health

College Park
777 Bay St., fifth floor

Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

[insert date]

**Re: Remove barriers to opening and accessing life-saving supervised consumption services in Ontario**

Dear Minister Jones,

The province of Ontario has seen a devastating increase in opioid-related overdose deaths and emergency department visits over the past few years. This crisis claimed 2,880 lives in 2021 – an average of eight people per day – resulting in an 85 per cent increase in opioid overdose deaths since 2019. The government needs to respond immediately to this crisis.

As the MPP representing [insert riding], I cannot ignore the pleas from my constituents, including service users, family members and health professionals, who are calling for access to increased supervised consumption services (SCS) in my riding and across the province.

SCS provide vital and evidence-based harm reduction responses that keeps people alive in the context of an increasingly poisoned illicit drug supply. These services allow people to use previously-obtained substances in safe, hygienic environments under the supervision of registered nurses (RN), nurse practitioners (NP) and other trained staff. SCS staff provide sterile supplies, prevent and manage overdoses and provide in-house care as well and referrals to a range of other health and social support services.

These services not only prevent fatal poisonings by quick administration of oxygen and/or Naloxone, but also enable health professionals and outreach workers to build relationships with people who use substances. The bridges built by SCS can reach marginalized people who have several unmet health and social needs but limited or inconsistent interaction with the health system. By meeting with people in non-judgmental and compassionate ways, these vital services support people who use substances to access primary health services, treatment and rehabilitation if and when they are ready to do so.

In addition to existing support and funding for SCS, I ask you to implement a fulsome harm reduction approach to the overdose crisis by also:

* supporting safer supply programs, including necessary amendments to the Ontario Drug Formulary
* asking the federal government to decriminalize simple drug possession across the province by way of a request for a province-wide exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

The deaths and consequent pain and suffering that my constituency has experienced from opioid-related overdoses must end. I urge you to implement these recommendations as soon as possible.

Thank you for considering this. I’d be happy to talk about this or any other matter impacting my constituency at your convenience.

[MPP Name]

[Riding]

[Address]

CC:

Hon. Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister for Mental Health and Addictions (Health), michael.tibollo@ontario.ca

Ann-Marie Morris, RNAO

amorris@RNAO.ca

**Appendix F – MPP Meeting Follow-up Script/Email**

[MPP]

[Riding]

[Address]

[Email]

[insert date]

Dear [MPP Name],

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to you [and your constituency office team] for meeting with [me/us] on [date] to discuss the **RN understaffing crisis** and the **opioid overdose crisis** in Ontario. We hope you found the meeting useful and that it will serve to inform you in your role as our Member of Provincial Parliament.

You will recall that we left you with two template letters drafted to send to the premier and the minister of health setting out RNAO’s recommendations on the issues we discussed. I received confirmation from you [or your office] that these letters would be submitted to their intended recipients. [OR, As of today, I have not received confirmation from your office that these letters were sent, so I am writing to request a status update.]

Thank you so much for taking action on these critical issues. Through submitting these letters, you demonstrate your support as an MPP for saving lives and creating a healthier Ontario. Please keep us advised of any response that you may receive and please know that we’d be happy to provide further support on these or any other issues related to health and health services in our riding or province. [OR, We were sorry to hear that you have decided not to take action on these issues that impact on all of us in your riding and across Ontario. In the hopes that you will keep your mind open to our recommendations, please know that we would be happy to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have.]

I am hoping that our meeting was just the start of a dialogue between us about issues related to health and health services in our riding and province. If at any time you have questions related to health or health care, please let us know. We stand ready to help.

Warm regards,

[name]

[email]

[optional telephone]

Copy to: Ann-Marie Morris, RNAO, amorris@RNAO.ca

**Timelines**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Timeline/deadline** |
| Notify your chapter or region’s PPAN officer that you are interested in participating in QPOR | October/November |
| Contact MPP constituency office and confirm virtual meeting date | October/November |
| Notify RNAO home office that meeting is confirmed by contacting Ann-Marie Morris by email at amorris@RNAO.ca | October/November |
| Visit <https://rnao.ca/events/queens-park-on-the-road> and continue to familiarize yourself with supporting materials:* priority issue fact sheets and political action bulletins
* MPP Ask letter templates
* QPOR 2022 “Connecting with your MPP toolkit”

***NOTE: Member participants should be familiar with all information and recommendations before the QPOR MPP meeting*** | November*.* |
| Confirm participation by other members within your chapter/region | November |
| Confirm virtual meeting with MPP’s constituency office | Two days before the meeting |
| Meet with your MPP***Note: be sure to ask permission to take a photo and share with RNAO for social or publication*** | November to mid-December |
| Connect with home office and submit recording of the meeting as well as any photos that were taken  | After the meeting |
| Send thank you email and ask MPP for follow-up (if necessary) | January 2023 onwards |