

RNAO President Claudette Holloway, speaking notes:

Thursday, March 30, 2023

Good afternoon,

My name is Dr. Claudette Holloway and I am the president of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO). We represent more than 50,000 RNs, NPs and nursing students and we speak for all nurses in Ontario. I am so pleased to be here today. I wish the circumstances of this press conference represented good news – but that is not the case.

RNAO's mandate is to speak out for nursing and to speak out for health. And that is why we are here. To raise our collective voices on behalf of those who cannot or who may be afraid.

In March of 2020, the Ontario government extended access to health care to everybody in the province. Those with or without an OHIP card. This was an example of equity ...of fairness...of the kind of province that takes care of people.

We are now one day away from that right to care being withdrawn. Effective tomorrow, March 31st, people without insurance coverage will no longer be able to rely on getting care at hospitals and at some community-based health settings.

It's a decision that affects the health and lives of many vulnerable and marginalized people such as those who experience homelessness, migrant workers and others who lack coverage.

No one, particularly those who already face barriers in society should have to worry about accessing health care. They should not have to worry about how sick they are, if they can get care or worse, how much will it cost because they are now considered "uninsured."

If the government proceeds as planned, people who are uninsured may not seek care when they need it. They may delay care, which has the potential to worsen their health. This will have devastating effects on people who are pregnant and

require pre or post natal care, those with diabetes, hypertension, or worse cancer. People will die under our watch.

When people delay care, complications arise and that is devastating for the patient, adds moral distress to families, communities, and health-care workers. It is also bad for the health system because it leads to higher system costs.

Nurses across this province who work in hospitals and in community care settings know people who will be affected by this decision. They have been providing care to them and are gravely concerned about what will happen after tomorrow.

On behalf of RNAO and all nurses in Ontario – we plead with Premier Ford to follow your heart and stop this devastating decision.

We must not deny health-care services to those who are most in need. And, we must not leave people to fend for themselves.

Universal access to care is a hallmark of our health system and part of our country's social fabric. Every day, nurses show a commitment to their patients, providing care for all, not just those with an OHIP card. We need to ensure the health system of this province – one that we all depend on – is there for everyone.

RNAO and all nurses in Ontario stand together in calling for a continuation of universal access to care for all, including the uninsured. We speak in unison and echo loud and clear that this decision – if not stopped – will have tragic consequences.

Thank you.