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

**Member Toolkit - 2023**

Dear RNAO member,

Thank you for your interest and participation in RNAO’s 2023 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 a fantastic opportunity to engage **your** elected representatives where you live on the issues that matter to **you** as an RNAO member.

This annual event enables you to meet with your MPPs at their local constituency offices to discuss issues key to nursing, health and delivery of health services. It’s 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 meeting with your local member of provincial parliament (MPP).

This year, once again, RNAO is providing region and chapter members the opportunity to reach out and connect with local 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 issues that need urgent action: **building nursing careers** and  **addressing the toxic drug supply.** Focusing on a limited number of issues will allow for a deeper, more focused 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 opportunity productive and rewarding. RNAO’s foundation is our membership – our strength lies in your passion for nursing and 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), DHC, 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***

Note: If you are a member who would like to participate in QPOR, let your chapter policy and political action executive network (PPAN) officer know. Work with your PPAN to set up a meeting with your MPP. To find your PPAN officer please contact Ann-Marie Morris at amorris@RNAO.ca.

1. Get full contact information for your MPP:
	1. Visit the [Elections Ontario Voter Information Service webpage](https://voterinformationservice.elections.on.ca/en/election/search?mode=postalCode) and enter your home postal code to search for your local MPP.
	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.
2. Use the MPP meeting invitation script or email text we’ve provided in Appendix C to connect with the MPP by phone or email.
3. 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.

1. Once the meeting has been arranged, confirm by email. Include in that email a link to our RNAO video and invite the MPP to watch it in advance of the meeting.

***Setting up your QPOR MPP meeting***

We recommend that you meet your MPP in person, if possible. But if geography or timing doesn’t allow, a virtual meeting via Zoom will also help you get your points across.

* **For in-person meetings:** MPPs have offices in the riding called “constituency” offices. This is a good place to meet.However, in large ridings, the location of the constituency office may not be close or convenient. If that’s the case, feel free to meet your MPP at a place of mutual convenience – for example, at a coffee shop, restaurant or community centre.

**For online meetings:** If you are unable to meet in person, you can schedule a Zoom meeting, If you need access to a Zoom account to set up a virtual meeting, RNAO can help with this –– contact Ann-Marie Morris at amorris@RNAO.ca.

**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.

*Need guidance on using Zoom features? Visit the* [*Zoom “getting started guide” and support page*](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360034967471-Getting-started-guide-for-new-users)*. Or, if you would like to schedule a Zoom practice session before your QPOR MPP meeting, contact Ann-Marie at* *amorris@RNAO.ca**.*

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

* Read and familiarize yourself with the RNAO fact sheets and political action bulletins related to the priority issues 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:** Get the conversation started with LINK TO THE RNAO Video. It explains the basics about nursing, nursing classifications and RNAO’s work.

* Connect with other members of your executive to identify additional participants. Also, feel free to reach out to your chapter membership to see if there is anyone willing to share their personal or professional experiences with the two priority issues – building nursing careers and addressing the toxic drug supply. Make sure, however, that whoever is attending the meeting on behalf of RNAO is prepared to speak in support of RNAO’s policy positions.
* 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 phone numbers for the MPP and other meeting 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***

In advance of the meeting, it’s a good idea to get someone to agree to take notes – even if the meeting is being recorded.

Please arrange a debrief with other RNAO member participants after the meeting to review the meeting notes and discuss your overall impression of the event.
 **Roles and responsibilities at a QPOR MPP meeting**

It is important that the meeting be “chaired” by an RNAO representative. 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 photos.
* Invite the MPP to participate in RNAO’s annual Queen’s Park Day on Feb. 29, 2024.

**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.
* **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.

Do you have any questions related to QPOR – how to prepare for a MPP meeting, where to find RNAO materials that can help, etc.? Email Ann-Marie Morris, RNAO health and policy coordinator, at amorris@RNAO.ca

**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 attendingAsk the MPP if they had a chance to view the RNAO video. If not, offer to take the time to view it with them during the meeting.  | Chair  |
| 1:05 p.m. | **Set parameters and priorities for discussion**Highlight the priority issues that you will address:1. Nursing Career Pathways
2. The toxic drug supply
 | 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 communityEnsure there is time to hear the MPPs views and answer their questions | 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
* Provide a summary of the meeting and outcomes to Ann-Marie Morris (amorris@RNAO.ca)
 | 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 over 50,000 RNs, NPs and nursing students across Ontario.

For many years now, RNAO members have visited MPPs in their ridings – or virtually when in-person meetings were not possible – in the Fall to discuss issues and opportunities to enhance nursing, health and delivery of health care and services.. 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 if necessary, to discuss two of RNAO’s priority issues:

* nursing career pathways
* the toxic drug supply

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 nursing colleagues who live in your riding? We are aiming for the week of Nov. 6 – 10, 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 - Nursing Career Pathways**

Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

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

Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

[insert date]

## Re: Nursing Career Pathways

Dear Premier Ford,
The impact of the nursing crisis has been felt right across the health system. Emergency rooms and

intensive care units have been forced to close due to nursing shortages. Surgeries, procedures and

treatments have been cancelled and patient safety put at risk. The crisis highlights the need to care

for the people and the profession that cares for people.

This can be done if the provincial government and health-system employers take the necessary

steps to build nursing careers in Ontario. This can be accomplished by:

1. improving nurses’ working conditions

2. improving supports across all levels of the nursing profession

3. eliminating racism in the profession by incorporating and acting on principles of diversity,

equity and inclusion (DEI) into all systemic and organizational policies

4. expanding Ontario’s nursing workforce

5. expanding Ontario’s nursing student population

To address Ontario’s nursing crisis, barriers that stand in the way of retaining and recruiting nurses,

and advancing their career pathways, must be removed. This includes action on compensation

and workloads. I have attached a copy of [RNAO’s Nursing Career Pathways report](https://rnao.ca/policy/library/reports/nursing-career-pathways), outlining RNAO’s recommendations that will bring about transformational change to Ontario’s nursing profession and health system.

Premier, we must leverage opportunities to pave the way for a brighter future for nursing in Ontario. This is the only way to emerge from this crisis with a stronger nursing profession and health system.

Yours truly,

[MPP]

[Name]

[Riding]

[Address]

Copy to :

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

Hon. Stan Cho, Minister of Long-Term Care

ltcminister@ontario.ca

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

**Appendix E – Letter Template: Opioid-related 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 over 2500 lives in 2022 – an average of seven people per day – resulting in an63 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, 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
* funding drug checking services across the province
* 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 **nursing career pathways** and the **toxic drug supply** 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** |
| Contact MPP constituency office and arrange meeting | 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 2023 “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 meeting with MPP’s constituency office and provide MPP with link to the RNAO video, if you haven’t done so already. | 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 2024 onwards |