



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

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Canadian Nurses Association  
50 Driveway  
Ottawa, ON K2P 1E2

October 16, 2015

**RE: Position Statement "Primary Health Care"**

Dear Anne,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to CNA's request for feedback regarding the revised draft position statement "*Primary Health Care*". The upcoming federal election provides a timely context to bring this issue to the forefront.

For many years, RNAO has been a staunch proponent of anchoring the health system in a robust primary health care framework including services to improve the overall health of Canadians and their access to health services. In past years RNAO provided CNA with feedback on the primary health care documents: *Demonstrating Leadership in Primary Health Care (2011)* and the *Proposed Key Statements for a Position Statement on Primary Health Care (2012)*. Enclosed to this letter is the feedback that was provided to CNA on the above documents.

To fulfill the realization of primary health care within Ontario, RNAO has been championing a strong policy program to advance both the social and environmental determinants of health.<sup>1,2</sup> Ensuring that people have clean air to breathe and a safe/consistent place to sleep at night are two of the many prerequisites for health. A universally-accessible, publicly funded and not-for-profit health system is also an essential ingredient for achieving primary health care.<sup>3,4</sup> Registered nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students have the ability to sustain the system and this is why we have advocated for increased NP-led clinics and funding for NP positions across health settings,<sup>5,6,7,8</sup> the removal of legislation and regulations that impede NPs from practising to their full scope,<sup>9,10</sup> earmarked funding for chronic disease prevention and management,<sup>11</sup> equitable compensation for NPs working in primary care,<sup>12,13</sup> an expanded RN role to include prescribing,<sup>14</sup> 70 per cent full-time employment for nurses,<sup>15,16</sup> improved retention/recruitment of nurses in rural/remote regions,<sup>17</sup> and government leadership to address falling RN-to-population ratios.<sup>18,19</sup> In addition, RNAO is looking forward to determining what enhancements need to be made to Canada's health-care system, such as the introduction of a first-dollar pharmacare program,<sup>20,21,22</sup> a national palliative care strategy,<sup>23,24,25,26</sup> as well as investments in home and community care.<sup>27,28</sup>

RNAO is pleased to see that CNA makes reference to social justice and health equity (p. 2), social determinants of health (p.2), Canada's publicly funded, not-for-profit health system (p. 2), health promotion (p.2) and interprofessional care (p. 3). However, there are key areas missing from the position statement:

- The environmental determinants of health;

- The inclusion of nurse practitioners; and
- Full and expanded scopes of practice.

RNAO urges CNA to address each of these areas within the position statement as they are essential to achieving primary health care.

From a logistical perspective, RNAO suggests that CNA define primary health care at the beginning of the statement instead of near the end to help readers clearly understand the term.

Lastly, RNAO urges CNA to translate the position statement into policy action that raises the national profile of nursing human resources, the value of the RN and NP roles, Medicare, first nations issues, climate change, social equity, access to housing, peace/security/well-being and diversity to name a few. RNAO would be pleased to partner with CNA to advance policy initiatives that align with our mutual interests.

Please feel free to direct any questions regarding this correspondence to Tim Lenartowych, Director of Nursing and Health Policy at: [tlenartowych@RNAO.ca](mailto:tlenartowych@RNAO.ca)

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doris Grinspun", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), O.ONT.  
Chief Executive Officer  
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

## References

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