



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

December 21, 2015

Hon. Dr. Jane Philpott  
Minister of Health  
70 Colombine Driveway, 16th floor  
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0K9  
Email: [hon.jane.philpott@canada.ca](mailto:hon.jane.philpott@canada.ca)

Dear Minister Philpott,

On behalf of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO), we want to reiterate our delight with your appointment as Minister of Health for the Government of Canada. We also want to wish you a magic holiday season and a healthy and fulfilling 2015 year!

As the professional association that represents registered nurses (RNs), nurse practitioners (NPs), and nursing students who live, work and study in communities across Ontario, we take our commitment to speak out for nursing and health very seriously.

We believe the federal government has a central role to play in ensuring the health and well-being of Canadians is advanced and strengthened. This role includes, but is not limited to providing adequate levels of federal transfers to the provinces, as well as enforcing the principles and spirit of the Canada Health Act. During the campaign, RNAO released a policy platform titled *Why Health Matters*, which laid out the crucial areas that affect an individual's ability to be healthy. It outlined policy recommendations to create healthier communities in five key areas: Medicare, access to care, social determinants of health, the environment, and fiscal capacity. Although the campaign is over, we believe this document will help inform our federal government as it progresses on its mandate.

We are encouraged that many of our recommendations touch on areas that the Liberal Party outlined during the campaign as policy priorities, and some that are already advancing. These include: the need for a new *Health Accord*; increasing health system funding; improving home-care services, including palliative care; restoration of the *Interim Federal Health Program*; consultations on assisted dying in light of the Supreme Court of Canada's February decision; investments in affordable housing; steps to address poverty; adoption of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report; action on the environment; and fairer taxation. We are thrilled that some of these recommendations are already moving forward, such as the reinstatement of the Long-Form Census and the Interim Federal Health Program, and adoption of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. We were also pleased to see healthcare outlined in the government's throne speech.

Minister, we also want to urge you to move ahead with a national pharmacare program. As you no doubt are aware, Canada has some of the highest drug prices in the world. Our existing system of private and public plans is both costly and inefficient. A number of studies have found

that a national drug coverage plan could save over \$7 billion annually. Adopting such a plan would allow us to negotiate better pricing and ensure that Canadians have access to the prescriptions they need.

In addition, we believe increased access to primary care through interprofessional teams is a hallmark of a high performing healthcare system, and key to ensuring the overall health and well-being of Canadians. Tremendous progress was reached in this area through the funding allocated specifically to interprofessional primary care in the 2004 *Health Accord* and we ask for a renewed commitment to interprofessional primary care in the upcoming accord. Within the new Health Accord, we also strongly encourage you and your counterparts to bring back the *Health Council of Canada*, as an independent agency charged with public reporting of health system performance and innovative practices in healthcare.

Minister, in addition to robust expertise and solid outreach capacity to advance healthy public policy, RNAO is a world renowned expert in the area of evidence-based practice guidelines. With funding from the Government of Ontario, RNAO launched the *Nursing Best Practice Guidelines Program* in 1999, to support nurses as knowledge professionals by providing them with evidence-based clinical and healthy work environment Best Practice Guidelines (BPGs). To date, RNAO has produced 52 clinical and healthy work environment BPGs that have been disseminated locally, nationally and internationally, translated into six languages, and used by interprofessional teams in all sectors including public health, primary care, hospitals, home care, long term care and palliative care. In addition, we have extensive networks and formalized processes to actively support uptake of best practices within healthcare organizations. For example, we have extensive reach and impact through our Long-Term Care Best Practices Program, which involves 15 Long-Term Care (LTC) Best Practice Co-ordinators who support the 600+ LTC homes in Ontario. In addition, our Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) Designation builds capacity, supports knowledge transfer, and the integration of best practices in almost 500 healthcare organizations and educational institutions world-wide, with many across Canada.

We wish you tremendous success and are eager to meet to discuss how we can best support your important work. We very much look forward to working together in the pursuit of health for all in Canada and around the world.

With warmest regards,



Vanessa Burkoski, RN, BScN, MScN, DHA  
President, RNAO



Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), O.ONT.  
Chief Executive Officer, RNAO

cc: Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins, Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care