



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

October 13, 2016

Tom Gergely
Chair, Board of Directors
London Health Sciences Centre
Tom.gergely@aonhewitt.com

Murray Glendining
President and CEO
London Health Sciences Centre
murray.glendining@lhsc.on.ca

Dear Mr. Tom Gergely and Mr. Murray Glendining,

I am writing in response to your lawyer's letter dated October 11, 2016 (attached), addressed to Carol Timmings, President of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO).

The letter is a blatant attempt to intimidate RNAO into staying silent on matters of interest to our members and the public. We recognize it as a bullying tactic and we will not be influenced by it in any way, shape or form.

As a starting point, the letter is highly speculative. Ms. Timmings has never spoken publicly about any issues related to London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC). The media advisory about RNAO's fall tour (attached) makes no reference to LHSC, but rather states that Ms. Timmings will be speaking about RNAO's *Mind the Safety Gap* report, which addresses critical issues facing Ontario's health-care system. There is no mention in the media advisory of LHSC.

But whether Ms. Timmings speaks about LHSC is not the point. Any and all comments made by representatives of RNAO about LHSC, including the comments that are the subject of the two libel notices dated July 22, 2016, the third libel notice dated July 29, 2016 and the fourth libel notice dated September 12, 2016, are not defamatory and were completely lawful. They were true statements made about matters of public interest – the administration of a hospital, a publicly accountable institution funded by taxpayers. LHSC's prior allegations of defamation are devoid of merit, and your pre-emptive threat of legal proceedings against Ms. Timmings in your lawyer's letter of October 11, is baseless, abusive, and oppressive.

RNAO is an established leader in health policy, and for many years has been at the forefront of health-care reform. We will continue to speak openly and freely about matters of concern to our members, the public, and the health-care system, including, if

warranted, LHSC and its operations. We will not be stifled, silenced nor suppressed, by LHSC or anybody else.

There is no doubt that the actions taken by LHSC in respect of RNAO are extremely troubling. In addition to the libel notices and this threatening letter, we recently learned from a review of the London court file that LHSC has commenced lawsuits against RNAO, Dr. Vanessa Burkoski, and myself. It is shocking that LHSC is using public funds to pay a private law firm to engage in an aggressive campaign to silence public discussion on important health-care issues. Indeed, this is the first time in my 20 years as CEO of RNAO that a publicly accountable institution has launched legal proceedings against RNAO or its officers. Hospitals and nurses are partners in the health-care system. Hospitals should be working with nurses to improve health services for Ontarians, not using taxpayer dollars to finance litigation against nurses.

Your lawyer's letter is a baseless pre-emptive strike that will have no effect on how we conduct ourselves, and your libel claims are clearly SLAPP suits that are prohibited by law. We will take every step available to us to hold LHSC accountable for its improper conduct, including seeking to have its claims dismissed immediately by the courts, as well as by making both your lawyer's letter and our response available to our members, the media, and the public at large. Our counsel (copied) will be in touch with your lawyer shortly and I ask that any further correspondence on these matters be directed to our legal counsel.

Yours very truly,

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

CC: Carol Timmings, President, RNAO
Rahool Agarwal, Norton Rose Fulbright Canada LLP
Hon. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care