



RNAO

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

July 3, 2014

Premier Kathleen Wynne
Office of the Premier
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

OPEN LETTER: Strengthen Ontario's Health System by Immediately Banning Medical Tourism and Rejecting For-Profit Plasma Collection

Dear Premier Wynne,

On behalf of Ontario's registered nurses (RNs), nurse practitioners (NPs) and nursing students (BScN), the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) extends its warmest congratulations on your election as Ontario's premier. As you know, RNAO is the professional body representing RNs, NPs and BScN students across the province.

Premier, we would also like to take this opportunity to call for two urgent actions to strengthen Ontario's health system:

1) immediately banning medical tourism, and 2) rejecting for-profit plasma collection.

Nurses in all roles and sectors value access to health care as a human right and a public good rather than as a revenue-generating opportunity. Thus, for the sake of Ontarians, their health and their health system, we urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to protect our treasured publicly-funded, not-for-profit system by banning medical tourism experiments currently in progress in Toronto hospitals. Generating revenue by soliciting patients from abroad will erode the quality and accessibility of health services in Ontario and will compromise the public's support for Medicare.

For similar ethical and evidence-based public policy reasons, RNAO urges you to quickly prohibit for-profit plasma collection as your government started to do with Bill 178, the *Voluntary Blood Donations Act*, which died on the order paper. RNAO is concerned that permitting donors to be paid for blood or blood products risks the safety of our blood supply and the sustainability of our voluntary system. Given the World Health Organization's unequivocal position that "the safest blood donors are voluntary, non-remunerated blood donors from low-risk populations" and the strong recommendations of the Krever Commission, we urge Ontario's legislature to reintroduce and pass Bill 178 as soon as possible.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) is so committed to both of these issues that we submitted resolutions to the 2014 Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Nurses Association. Both resolutions passed with nearly unanimous support on June 16, 2014 at the gathering in Winnipeg.

As background material, we are enclosing the following resources on these issues:

Immediately Banning Medical Tourism:

- [RNAO 2014 Resolution to the Canadian Nurses Association: *Reject Medical Tourism to Safeguard Medicare*](#)
- [Grinspun, D. \(2014\). Medical tourism: the beginning of the end. *Registered Nurse Journal*. May/June 2014, 6.](#)
- [Association of Ontario Health Centres, Association of Ontario Midwives, Canadian Doctors for Medicare, Medical Reform Group, RNAO \(2014\). Joint letter to Premier Wynne on Medical Tourism.](#)
- [Grinspun, D. \(2013\). Ontario's health-care system should serve need, not greed. *Toronto Star*.](#)

Rejecting For-Profit Plasma Collection:

- [RNAO 2014 Resolution to the Canadian Nurses Association: *Protect Canada's Blood Supply by Rejecting for-Profit Plasma Collection*](#)
- [RNAO 2013 submission to Health Canada on for-profit plasma collection](#)

Premier, we urge you to act swiftly on both of these issues. Failing to do so will threaten our cherished Medicare system in Ontario. We are ready to meet and/or provide you and Minister Hoskins with any additional information required.

Warm regards and congratulations,



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



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

Copy: Hon. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Jim Wilson, Interim Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario
Andrea Horwath, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Ontario