

WHY YOUR HEALTH MATTERS



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NEXT PROVINCIAL ELECTION

The next provincial election should be about your health and your community. Make your voice heard. Together, we can build an even stronger Ontario.

People consistently rank health care as a top priority. Nurses know this, and that's why the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) is issuing a challenge to all political parties. RNAO believes we need to take a hard look at what we do right, and the issues we need to fix in our health-care system.

Our health system is cherished by people in Ontario, other parts of Canada, and abroad. But it remains focused on an illness model. Nurses believe there must be a greater emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention. We also want people to be active participants in their care.

What do we need to do?

Nurses say the next government must focus on these critical areas:

- Reducing poverty so people have a greater chance of staying healthy and preventing chronic conditions
- Cleaning up our environment
- Ensuring every Ontarian has faster access to primary care in community health centres, nurse practitioner-led clinics, and family health teams
- Ensuring every Ontarian has access to home care when they need it
- Ensuring an adequate supply of RNs, and fully utilizing their knowledge and skills so we can increase access to quality care that is centred around the patient

poverty

Nurses know that health isn't only about a person becoming sick and getting better. It's about staying healthy, preventing disease, and delaying chronic conditions and their complications. That's why RNAO advocates for policies that enable people to be healthy in the first place - such as earning a livable wage, having affordable housing, being able to buy nutritious foods, and having access to quality education and child-care services. All of these basic necessities of life shape people's ability to be healthy.

Do you know that one in 10 people in Ontario live in poverty? That amounts to 1.3 million people who do not have what they need to stay healthy.

Nurses say the next provincial government should commit to reducing poverty by:

- **increasing the minimum wage**
- **improving access to affordable housing**
- **transforming the social assistance system to reflect the actual cost of living**

environment

Nurses know that environmental determinants of health play a huge role in the health and well-being of people. Access to clean air, an environment free of toxics, and reliable and sustainable forms of energy will help people remain healthy, and preserve our planet for future generations.

Nurses say the next provincial government should commit to a clean and green environment by:

- **closing immediately all remaining coal plants**
- **ensuring people have a right to know about the existence of toxics in their homes, workplaces and consumer products**

nursing care

Do you know that Ontario has the second worst RN-to-population ratio in the country? There are 70.8 RNs per 10,000 people. The national average is 83.4 RNs per 10,000 people. Our population is growing and many Ontarians are becoming older. People need access to an adequate supply of RNs, and every RN should be able to contribute their full knowledge and skills to their patients. This is how nurses can help ensure timely access to quality care that is centred around the health needs of all Ontarians.

The next provincial government should strengthen access to nursing care by:

- **hiring 9,000 additional RNs by 2015**
- **ensuring 70 per cent of all nurses work full-time so patients have continuity in their care and care provider**
- **securing fair wages for nurses working in all sectors of health care**
- **maximizing and expanding the role of RNs to deliver a broader range of care, such as ordering lab tests and prescribing medications**

- ensuring all existing nurse practitioner-led clinics are funded to operate to full capacity
- opening new nurse practitioner-led clinics in areas where patient need exists
- improving navigation across our complex health system by partnering with patients to co-ordinate their care through primary care in community health centres, nurse practitioner-led clinics, and family health teams



medicare

The decisions we make today about our health-care system will ensure it's there for future generations. In recent years, Ottawa has taken a hands-off approach to the principles and the spirit of the *Canada Health Act*. More provinces are experimenting with for-profit delivery, but the research overwhelmingly shows that publicly funded, not-for-profit health care delivers better health outcomes at lower cost.



The next provincial government should commit to our publicly funded health system by:

- **committing to and expanding our publicly funded, not-for-profit health-care system in areas such as home care**
- **rejecting efforts to commercialize or privatize health-care delivery**
- **focusing on well-researched and demonstrated policies and evidence-based clinical practices to optimize the health of people, families, communities, and our health system**

How do we pay for this?

Nurses know Ontario's economy is still recovering, and that it's affected by global events. The province also needs to restore its fiscal capacity.

The next provincial government should:

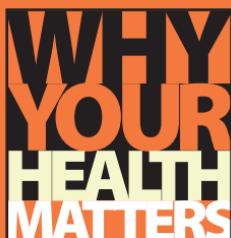
- **make sure people pay their fair share of taxes, because tax cuts for the wealthy and cutting spending for social programs hurt our economy**
- **impose green taxes to help pay for the damage polluters cause**

These are the issues nurses believe are worth talking about and taking action on. Make sure your voice is heard.

Ask your local candidate where they stand on the health and health-care issues that matter most to you.

Vote for the changes you believe will make Ontario a healthier place to live and work, and will ensure quality patient care with a system committed to publicly funded, not-for-profit delivery.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) is the professional association representing registered nurses wherever they practise in Ontario. Since 1925, RNAO has advocated for healthy public policy, promoted excellence in nursing practice, increased nurses' contribution to shaping the health-care system, and influenced decisions that affect nurses and the public they serve.



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