



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

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Main Legislative Building
Queen's Park, Room 281
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

November 23, 2011

Dear Prime Minister Harper and Premier McGuinty,

This letter is to implore your governments to work together to immediately address the critical housing crisis currently taking place in Attawapiskat, Ontario. It is unconscionable that living conditions in this northern Ontario community are so deplorable that local leaders declared a state of emergency on October 28, 2011.

As Canadians, we are shocked by the life-threatening conditions in which residents of this community must live. Families are living in tents, in sheds without running water, in overcrowded conditions, in substandard homes that are unsafe due to mold, lack of indoor plumbing, and wood-fire heating. We are deeply ashamed that federal and provincial officials are pointing fingers at each other and refuse to take responsibility, particularly as children and elders of Attawapiskat face life-threatening conditions as winter approaches. As nurses, we are profoundly concerned about the dangers of fire, freezing, infectious diseases, skin conditions, and mental health challenges that arise when people are forced to live in inhumane conditions.

People need warm, safe shelter, reliable plumbing, nutritious food, and safe drinking water to be healthy. We need our leaders to put aside jurisdictional squabbles in the interests of preventing a humanitarian disaster in Attawapiskat. Canada remains the only major industrialized country without a national housing program. The people of Ontario need you to work together to build a comprehensive, national housing program so that everyone's right to housing is met.

Prime Minister Harper and Premier McGuinty, we urge you to act immediately.

Kind regards,



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



David McNeil, RN, BScN, MHA, CHE
President, RNAO

Copy:

Nycole Turmel, Leader of the Official Opposition (Federal)
Hon. Bob Rae, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
Louis Plamondon, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
Tim Hudak, Leader of the Official Opposition (Provincial)
Andrea Horwath, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Ontario