



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

Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister
Health and Long-Term Care
Hepburn Block, 10th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2C4

December 2, 2016

RE: Improving health outcomes and health care within the provincial correctional system

Dear Minister Hoskins,

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) recently had the privilege of meeting with the Hon. David Oraziotti, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, about ways to improve health outcomes and improve human rights within correctional facilities. Minister Oraziotti suggested we speak to you about these ideas to address the severe health inequities affecting some of Ontario's most marginalized people.

Minister Hoskins, as you know from your clinical and public health expertise, the health status of Ontarians who are incarcerated is significantly worse than the general population.^{1 2 3} Controlling for age, people who were detained within the provincial system between 2000 and 2012 were four times more likely to die than the general population.⁴ In 2000, the life expectancy for those in provincial custody was shown to be 4.2 years less than in the general population for men, and 10.6 years less for women.⁵

Findings from multiple inquests, law suits, human rights challenges, media reports, ombudsman reports, people with lived experience of being in custody, and those who work within correctional services (including registered nurses and nurse practitioners) all point to a provincial correctional system that is not meeting its fundamental responsibilities for safety, health, and equitable access to health care equivalent to the community standard.^{6 7 8} The status quo is eroding population health outcomes and increasing health inequities

To help the province address the goals of *Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care*⁹ and the *Excellent Care for All Act*,¹⁰ RNAO urges you to explore how health outcomes can be improved within the provincial correctional system. Other international and Canadian jurisdictions are addressing these challenges by transferring governance of health-care services from correctional to health ministries. The attached one-pager from the Ontario Correctional Nurses' Interest Group newsletter provides additional context and benefits

of a health governance model for corrections which are consistent with recommendations from the World Health Organization¹¹ and the John Howard Society of Ontario.¹²

Minister Hoskins, thank you for your ongoing commitment to improve health for all Ontarians. We look forward to your support on this critical work within the provincial correctional context.

Warm regards,



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

CC: Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario
Hon. David Oraziotti, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services

References

- ¹Kouyoumdjian, F., Schuler, A., Matheson, F., & Hwang, S. W. (2016). Health status of prisoners in Canada: Narrative review. *Canadian Family Physician*. 62 (3): 215-222.
- ²Wobeser, W., Datema, J., Bechar, B., & Ford, P. (2002). Causes of death among people in custody in Ontario, 1990-1999. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. 167 (10): 1109-1113.
- ³Kouyoumdjian, F., Kiefer, L., Wobeser, W., Gonzalez, A., & Hwang, S. W. (2016). Mortality over 12 years of follow-up in people admitted to provincial custody in Ontario: a retrospective cohort study. *CMAJ Open*, 4(2), E153–E161. <http://doi.org/10.9778/cmajo.20150098>
- ⁴Ibid, E 157.
- ⁵Ibid, E 157.
- ⁶Ontario Human Rights Commission (2012). *Minds that Matter: Report on the consultation on human rights, mental health and addictions*. Toronto: Author. http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Minds%20that%20matter_Report%20on%20the%20consultation%20on%20human%20rights,%20mental%20health%20and%20addictions.pdf
- ⁷Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2011).RNAO Submission to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Safeguarding Human Rights, Strengthening Mental Health and Well-Being. Toronto: Author.http://rnao.ca/sites/rnao-ca/files/Safeguarding_Human_Rights_Strengthening_Mental_Health_and_Well_Being.pdf
- ⁸Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2016).Transforming Ontario's Correctional Services: Starting, but Not Stopping, with Segregation. Submission to the Segregation Review. Toronto: Author. http://rnao.ca/sites/rnao-ca/files/RNAO_submission_segregation_Feb_22_2016.pdf

⁹The goal is "to make Ontario the healthiest place in North American to grow up and grow old."Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (2010). *Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care: Better patient care through better value from our health care dollars*. Toronto: Author, 3.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ms/ecfa/healthy_change/docs/rep_healthychange.pdf

¹⁰*The Excellent Care for All Act, 2010*.<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/10e14>

¹¹World Health Organization (2013). *Good governance for prison health in the 21st century: A policy brief on the organization of prison health*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe.

https://www.unodc.org/documents/hiv-aids/publications/Prisons_and_other_closed_settings/Good-governance-for-prison-health-in-the-21st-century.pdf

¹²John Howard Society of Ontario (2016). *Fractured Care: Public health opportunities in Ontario's correctional institutions*. Toronto: Author.

<http://johnhoward.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Fractured-Care-Final.pdf>