

September 20, 2008

Elizabeth May
Leader
Green Party of Canada
204-396 Cooper Street,
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 2H7

Dear Ms. May,

We are pleased to send you a copy of *Putting Health First*, the 2008 federal election platform of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO). The RNAO is the professional association for registered nurses who practise in all roles and sectors across Ontario.

Putting Health First sets out programs and actions that would build healthier communities, a clean environment, a stronger public health-care system and better access to health-care professionals for all Canadians. It is our mandate to work for a healthier society, recognizing the profound impact that poverty, pollution, lack of decent housing and lack of access to a good education have on long-term health and well-being.

We hope *Putting Health First* will provoke thoughtful debate on the crucial issue of improving health, an issue on which too little has been heard during the election to date.

On behalf of our 28,000 members we would ask you to take a few moments to answer the brief questionnaire below that is based on the RNAO positions outlined in our report. For your convenience, we have framed the questions so they can be answered Yes or No. However, we encourage you to use the space provided to give greater detail as you see appropriate

We would ask you to send your completed RNAO election 2008 questionnaire by October 3, 2008 at the latest. For the consideration of our members and the public, we will post all responses on the RNAO website (www.RNAO.org) as soon as each is received, but in any event by October 3, 2008.

Please direct your responses to this questionnaire and any questions you may have to Rob Milling, RNAO Health & Nursing Policy Director at rmilling@rnao.org or Kayla Scott at kscott@rnao.org.

RNAO Putting Health First Election Questionnaire Federal Election 2008

1. Will you and your Party commit to develop and implement a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy with the target of a 25 per cent reduction in the national child poverty rate over the next five years and a 50 per cent reduction over 10 years?

Yes

In Canada, much work remains to reduce and eliminate poverty. We believe that reducing child poverty starts with a stronger commitment to guaranteeing that every family has the ability to provide for their children. We must work to implement measures in Aboriginal communities and off-reserve Aboriginals that will address their needs. Failure to eliminate poverty will cost our society far more than a civilized programme to make poverty history in Canada.

The Green Party vision includes plans to remove taxes from lowest tax brackets so that no income taxes are paid for anyone earning less than \$20,000 per year, allow income assistance recipients to keep all of the wages they earn up to the Low Income Cut-Off level to encourage people to get back into the job market, increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors by 25%, and top up the income support for single parents on welfare during the time they are attending school or in job training programmes. We will also cancel half of all student debt, which will benefit many people on low incomes.

2. Will you and your Party commit to achieve deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 25 per cent from 1990 levels by 2020 and get Canada back on track to meeting its international obligations under the Kyoto Protocol?

Yes

The commitment of the Green Party to Kyoto targets is not nullified even if full compliance is impossible. It is based on respect for international commitments and to the overwhelming scientific evidence that far deeper cuts will be required soon. The original Kyoto framework, though an effective starting point, must be followed up with long term planning to drastically reduce our carbon emissions in the decades to come.

The Green Party will reaffirm Canada's commitment to the Kyoto framework and further medium and long term targets:

- 6% below 1990 by 2012 = 570 MT = 29% below today's 800 MT
- 30% below 1990 by 2020 = 425 MT = 47% below today's 800 MT
- 50% below 1990 by 2030 = 304 MT = 62% below today's 800 MT
- 80% below 1990 by 2040 = 121 MT = 85% below today's 800 MT
- 5-yearly interim targets

Under a Green Government, Canada will work with other nations to achieve the development of a new global Kyoto Treaty (Kyoto 2) with the targets outlined throughout our Vision Green policy document. We would also support the development of Kyoto's clean development mechanisms focused on verifiable greenhouse gas reductions in developing nations. We would work to include China, India, the United States and all other nations in Kyoto 2.

3. Will you and your Party commit to safeguarding Canadians' food supply by hiring 1,000 additional inspectors and veterinarians to improve compliance and by placing an immediate moratorium on industry self-regulation?

Yes

The Green Party believes that recent health concerns highlight the need for a strong government led inspection process that prioritizes the health of Canadians. Unfortunately, consistent with its privatization agenda, the Conservative government has announced that as of October 2008, it will no longer inspect federally inspected slaughterhouses but will require these companies report on themselves. The Green Party of Canada strongly opposes this move and would commit to a review of the Canadian food system and safety regulations in their entirety.

4. Will you and your Party commit to enforcing the *Canada Health Act* and stopping the growth of two-tier health-care by using the federal government's power to withhold health transfers when violations occur?

Yes

The Green Party of Canada fully supports the Canada Health Act (CHA) and all of its principles. We oppose any level of privatized, for-profit health care. We believe the five criteria of the CHA guiding the provincial public health insurance plans are non-negotiable. We will use the full force of the Canada Health Act, federal spending power opposes any steps that open the way to two-tier health care in Canada.

5. Will you and your Party commit to introducing a national, publicly funded and publicly controlled pharmacare program covering essential drugs so Canadians can be protected from skyrocketing drug costs?

Yes

The best ways to do this is to set up a Universal PharmaCare program, a bulk drug purchasing agency, and make new drug patent protection times shorter. We used to have a successful generic drug market in Canada, but changes to the patent laws have almost wiped it out. The expiry of patents for a number of commonly prescribed drugs in the near future presents a great opportunity for government to step in and help provide far

less expensive generic drugs. The Green Party accepts the principle advocated by the Canadian Diabetes Association that no Canadian should spend more than 3% of their total after tax earnings on necessary prescribed medications and other treatments.

6. Will you and your Party commit to invest the \$135 million per year required to expand nursing education and \$250 million to create the 10,000 new full-time RN positions needed across Canada?

The Green Party of Canada will address the nursing shortage by providing more money to hire staff. We will also provide funds immediately to begin training more doctors and nurses.

Furthermore, we will work with the Canadian Medical Association to immediately establish qualification standards and on-the-job mentorship programs to fast-track certification of foreign trained health care professionals.

Finally, the Green Party will provide student loan forgiveness incentives for graduating doctors, nurses, paramedics and other health care professionals who agree to staff rural facilities and family practice clinics where recruitment is currently a problem.

7. Will you and your Party commit to ensure all international and inter-provincial trade and investment agreements include strong protections for health care, environment, human rights, social programs and labour standards and do not restrict governments' ability to regulate in the public interest?

Yes

The Green Party supports fair trade that puts sovereignty, human rights, and the environment first and not trade agreements that put the rights of multi-national corporations first.

We recognize that trade is an important component of a sustainable economy but that it cannot hamper or undermine sovereign efforts to protect and enhance local quality of life and build local economies.

The Green Party is about shifting - shifting mind sets, shifting taxes, shifting emphasis in trade to a proven fair trade model and shifting emphasis from global to local development because we recognize the limitations of fossil fuel for global trade and transportation and the need for local and community participation to achieve sustainable communities.

Thank you very much.

Regards,



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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wendy Fucile". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Wendy Fucile, RN, BScN, MPA, CHE
President
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doris Grinspun". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD(c), O.ONT
Executive Director
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario