



RNAO Deputation to the Toronto Board of Health Meeting

October 19, 2009



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Monday, October 19, 2009 1:00 pm**

Good afternoon. My name is Lynn Anne Mulrooney. I am a registered nurse and work as Senior Policy Analyst for the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. RNAO is the professional association for registered nurses who practice in all roles and sectors across the province.

My purpose in coming here today is to urge the Board of Health to implement the recommendations being presented today by the Toronto Homeless Pandemic Working Group. We believe this is the right thing to do from a human rights perspective so that our City can better live up to Article 25 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him[/her]self and of his[/her] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his[/her] control."

Not only is access to safe, affordable housing a fundamental human right but improving shelter services for our vulnerable homeless population is the right to thing to do from a public health perspective. We treasure the outstanding work that has been done historically by volunteers through the

Out of the Cold program but the onset of the H1N1 pandemic is a stark call to action. Instead of a nightly movement of vulnerable Torontonians from one overcrowded basement to the next, it is vital that the Out of the Cold program be replaced by the immediate opening of two new emergency shelters (one in East Toronto and one in West Toronto). Toronto needs to have an adequate number of emergency shelter beds with full staffing in order to quickly assess and treat those in need and help prevent the spread of H1N1 flu, seasonal flu, and other communicable diseases.

RNAO supports the recommendations of the Toronto Homeless Pandemic Working Group as we know that these dedicated health and human services professionals are intimately familiar with the challenges that homeless people are facing every day in accessing appropriate services.

These additional recommendations include:

- Creation of one or more convalescent centres for people recovering from H1N1;
- Ordering an immediate moratorium on city contract rules that prohibit city-funded agencies from providing survival supplies to those staying outdoors;

- Order a cease to the length of stay requirement for those shelters that require people to leave a shelter after two weeks in order to decrease unnecessary movement;
- Advocate for additional provincial funding to allow for the expansion of the Sherbourne Health Centre Infirmary to operate at full capacity. This has the potential to allow hospitals to initiate earlier discharges and minimize new hospital admissions for those more appropriately cared for at the Infirmary;
- Advocate to the province for an emergency rent supplement program for people who are homeless and immunocompromised.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this meeting. We urge your serious consideration of these recommendations to help support the health, well-being, and dignity of Toronto's most vulnerable community members.