



January 29, 2009

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

The focus of the 2009 federal budget is clearly economic stimulus. However, several announcements were made related to health care that the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) welcomes and would like to highlight.

As the national professional voice of registered nurses, CNA has been advocating for the past ten years for a transformation and revitalization of the health system through information and communications technology. Consequently, we were pleased to see the government's commitment both to rural broadband, which will connect underserved communities to vital health services through telehealth, and to Canada Health Infoway's implementation of electronic health records. The temporary capital cost allowance rate for computers will encourage the health-care community to invest more in ICT infrastructure.

CNA, an advocate for healthy public policy and reduced health disparities, applauds the investment in housing for some of Canada's most vulnerable populations, such as low-income seniors and people with disabilities. Government funding for access to proper health services, education, social housing and clean drinking water is critical to improving the health of those in need. CNA also welcomes the commitment to improving the health of aboriginal Canadians. Strengthening partnerships with First Nations and Inuit peoples is a positive step toward addressing the current unsatisfactory health outcomes within these communities.

Some areas of concern remain unaddressed. We urge more attention to health human resources, given the current nationwide nursing shortage. As well, a national, publicly funded pharmacare program covering essential drugs will become increasingly important as more Canadians find themselves unemployed. We are deeply concerned about the absolute silence on additional funding for health research. We will continue to explore these issues in future discussions with your government.

CNA looks forward to working with you to develop healthy public policy for all Canadians as these funding opportunities unfold, and to ensure that Canada's health system remains a prominent area of concern for your government. A healthy Canada is a wealthy Canada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kaaren Neufeld'.

Kaaren Neufeld, RN, MN
President
Canadian Nurses Association