



CANADIAN NURSES ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION DES INFIRMIÈRES ET INFIRMIERS DU CANADA

TO ADVANCE
THE QUALITY
OF NURSING IN
THE INTEREST
OF THE PUBLIC

FAIRE
PROGRESSER LA
QUALITÉ DES
SOINS
INFIRMIERS
DANS L'INTÉRÊT
DU PUBLIC

August 9, 2005

The Honourable Ralph Klein
Chair, Council of the Federation
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
10800 – 97th Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B7

Mr. Premier:

As the Council of the Federation embarks on an important series of meetings over the next few days, with a focus on strengthening Canada's social programs, we wish to remind the premiers of the need to preserve and sustain our publicly-funded, not-for-profit health system.

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), the national professional voice of Registered Nurses, believes that an effective health system is fundamental to maintaining national, provincial and territorial prosperity. An effective and sustainable health system requires a continued commitment and investment in health human resources – ensuring that we have enough health care providers to provide the appropriate care, when and where it is needed, on a 24/7 basis.

That is why we join the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) in calling for a pan-Canadian strategy that will strengthen Canadian nursing education. This strategy requires that there be increased infrastructure and building support for universities wishing to significantly expand their programs. At CNA, we believe that a workforce of appropriately-educated Registered Nurses will contribute to the collective efforts by the federal, provincial and territorial governments to improve access to quality care and reduce wait times.

The First Ministers' health plan, agreed to last September, made significant progress in securing action on wait time targets, health human resource planning and a commitment to expanding the continuum of care. However, the Chaoulli decision has generated considerable discussion favouring more private sector involvement in our publicly-funded, not-for-profit, publicly-administered health system. The nurses of Canada believe that the health care system should serve Canadians on the basis of need not on the ability to pay.

Evidence shows that the delivery of health care will be jeopardized if there is a parallel private health care system that siphons off health professionals from the public system. Furthermore there is ample evidence that the public system is the most fiscally efficient way to deliver care to all Canadians – and no evidence has emerged to show that the private system serves more people, more quickly or with better quality. And so we urge you and your colleagues to continue to focus on existing commitments to health reform, which include improved primary health care, expanded home care and the strategic investments to reduce wait times and increase the number of health care providers.

One of the reform initiatives made by all premiers was to complete a plan for human resources in the health sector by the end of this year. As each province and territory develops its respective plans, there is a need to ensure that these plans feed into an integrated approach to health human resources planning. An integrated approach is necessary if we are to improve access to services. We ask the premiers to address this issue during your meetings.

The CNA is currently working on a blueprint for action that will outline solutions to improving access to health services and the contribution nursing can make towards maintaining the sustainability of our health system. We would be pleased to share our preliminary observations with members of the Council. We wish you well in your deliberations.

Sincerely,



Deborah Tamlyn, RN, PhD
President
Canadian Nurses Association



Lucille Auffrey, RN, MN
Executive Director
Canadian Nurses Association

cc Honourable Bernard Lord, Premier of New Brunswick
 Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
 Honourable Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador
 Honourable Dennis Fentie, Premier of the Yukon
 Honourable Gary Doer, Premier of Manitoba
 Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia
 Honourable Jean Charest, Premier of Québec
 Honourable Joe Handley, Premier of the Northwest Territories
 Honourable John Hamm, Premier of Nova Scotia
 Honourable Lorne Calvert, Premier of Saskatchewan
 Honourable Pat Binns, Premier of Prince Edward Island
 Honourable Paul Okalik, Premier of Nunavut

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