

CANADIAN
NURSES
ASSOCIATION



ASSOCIATION DES
INFIRMIÈRES ET
INFIRMIERS DU CANADA

CNA National Expert Commission

Report from a national dialogue with nurses and Canadians

MASSLBP

On December 19, 2011 the federal government announced a ten year funding formula for health care in Canada. While that may have ended the conversation around the federal government's role in funding health care, the conversation about how our health dollars are spent, and how health services are administered for the benefit of Canadians is just beginning. The provinces are now tasked with curbing the escalating proportion of healthcare within their budgets, while meeting the needs of their populations.

As the national body representing registered nurses in Canada, the Canadian Nurses Association has created a National Expert Commission to review the state of health care and issue a major policy report and public statement. The work of the Commission will influence the evolution of Canada's publicly-funded health system, and help to reaffirm the CNA's role as an important health policy leader and a respected voice for the nursing profession and the health of all Canadians.

In order to ensure that the Commission's final report reflects the insights of CNA members and the public, the Commissioners embarked on a process developed by MASS LBP to meet with and talk to nurses, stakeholder groups and Canadians.

The engagement process had five objectives:

- Engage CNA members in a focussed dialogue that supports the work of the Commission.
- Reach a broad cross-section of Canadians in order to understand their perspective on the challenges facing the health system, and their expectations concerning nursing.
- Create a narrative that is compelling to the media, produce opportunities for publicity.
- Strengthen the quality of the Commission's recommendations, and their resonance with nurses and all Canadians.
- Be a manageable and constructive exercise.

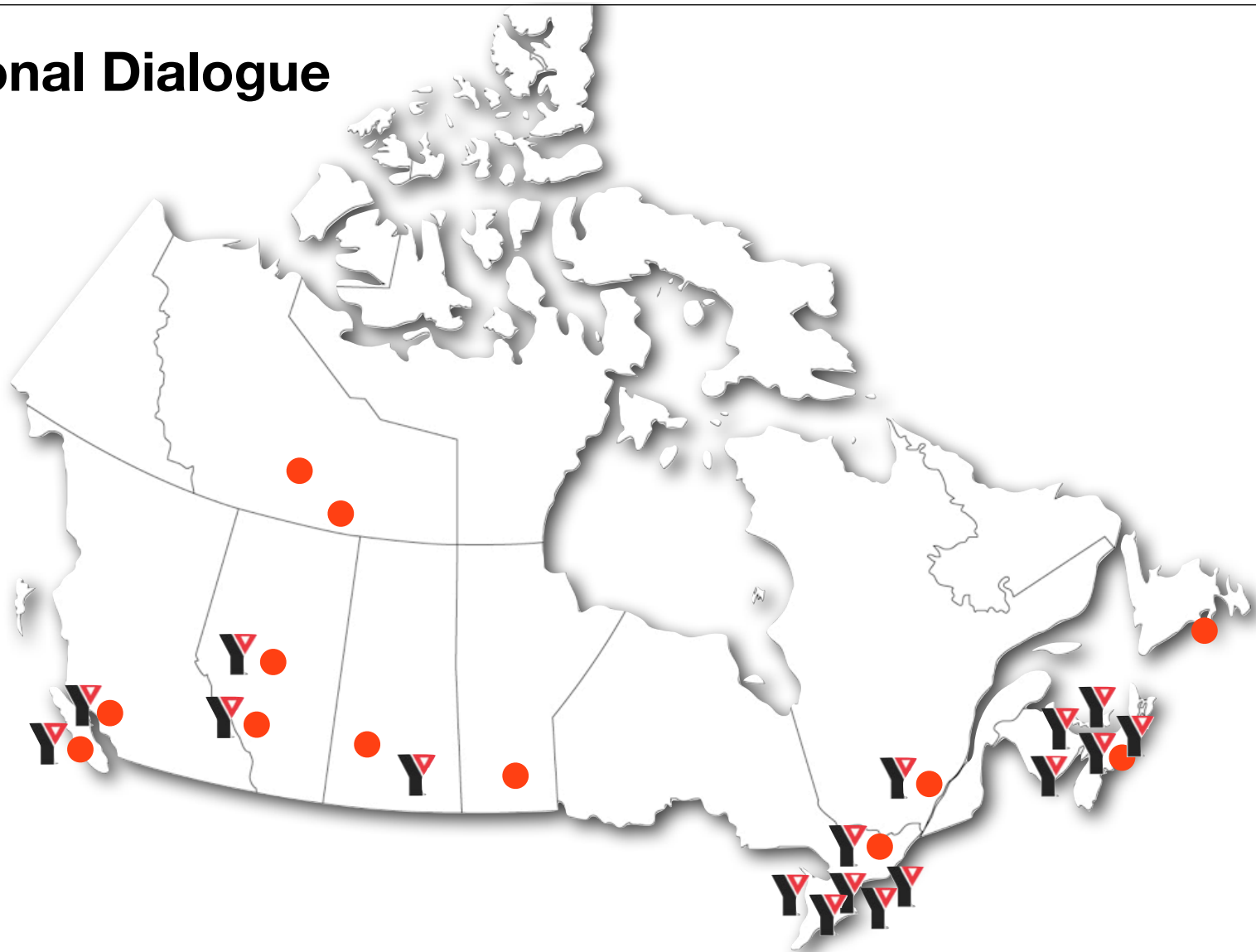
MASS LBP worked with the Commission to determine the questions the consultation would address.

The CNA arranged for the Commission to meet with nursing groups, students, frontline nurses as well as provincial associations across the country.

The CNA partnered with the YMCA of Canada to reach out through their athletics members, child care centres and other programs and extend the conversation to Canadians across the country.

From September through December 2011, the Commission hosted a series of meetings with nurses and the public. Held in communities across the country, these discussions reached beyond the CNA membership to include nurses at all levels of the profession and hundreds of Canadians from all walks of life.

A National Dialogue



● **Nursing Roundtables were held in:**
Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Montreal, Calgary,
Edmonton, Victoria, Vancouver, Yellowknife, Fort
Smith, St John's, Toronto, Halifax, Ottawa, Moncton

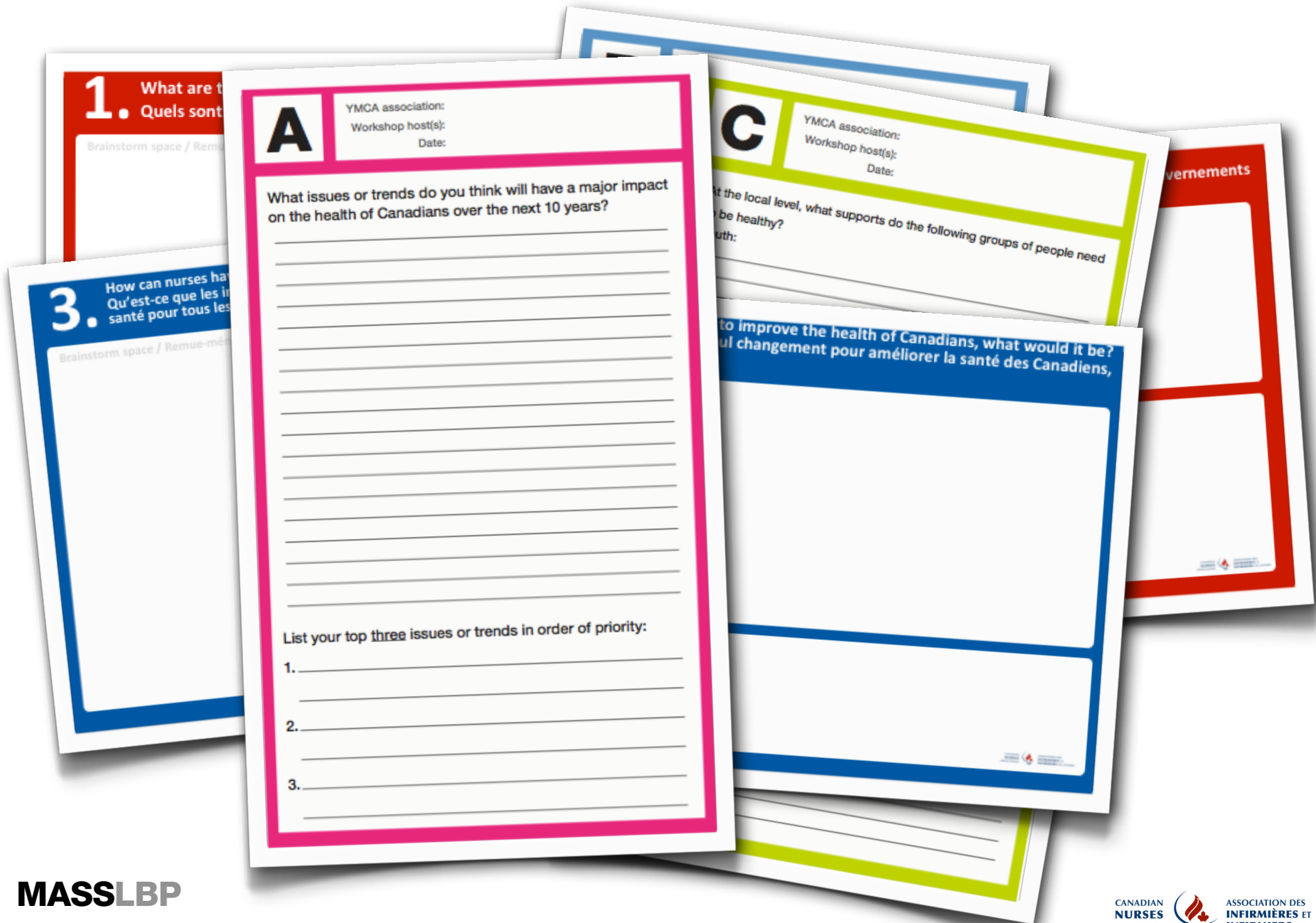
Y YMCA-CNA Roundtables were held in:
Sydney, Halifax, St John, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Hamilton/
Burlington, Brantford, Sarnia/Chatham, Edmonton, Niagara,
Regina, Ottawa, London, Victoria, Montreal, Charlottetown,
Moncton, Toronto, Calgary

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Participants in the workshops discussed three big questions:

1. What are the most pressing health challenges facing Canadians today?
2. What changes do we need to meet these challenges?
3. How can nurses have the greatest impact to improve health outcomes for all Canadians?

MASS LBP designed the templates that would be used to record participant responses. These templates allowed participants to record their responses in their own words.



Key messages for the Commission:

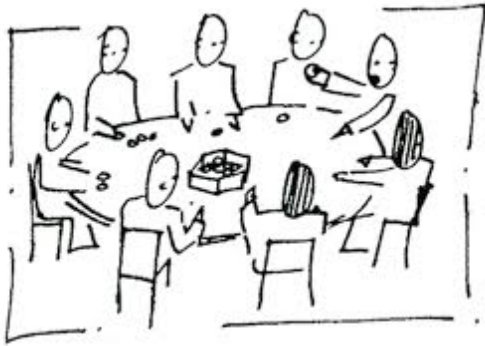
Lead System Transformation: Accelerate the transition from acute care to community-based care, and promote greater integration amongst health service providers.

Focus on the Social Determinants: Rising inequality and poverty are affecting the health of Canadians; we need to address these and other root causes.

Promote Healthy lifestyles: Canadians need clearer guidance when it comes to healthy living.

Develop a Strong Voice for Nurses: Nurses are seen to be champions for primary and preventative care; a trusted and prominent voice advocating on behalf of Canadians.

These messages emerged as priorities for both the nurses and the public. The following sections detail what we heard from nurses and the public respectively.



Nursing Roundtables

Between October and December, the National Expert Commission hosted roundtable discussions involving hundreds of nurses from coast to coast and at all levels of the profession, from students to senior leaders. Their feedback is organized into three themes: *health concerns*, *systemic concerns*, and *professional concerns*.

Nursing Roundtables: Key Findings

Nurses demonstrated a high degree of agreement about the challenges facing the health of Canadians, and what needs to be done to address these challenges. Overall, they had strong messages for the Commission:

Nurses agree that chronic disease, obesity, aging, as well as social and environmental determinants like poverty, stress, and pollution are the most pressing health challenges facing Canadians.

Nurses want to play a greater role in providing primary and preventative care, and are frustrated by what they regard as premature limits to their scope of practice.

Nurses are eager to develop their non-clinical role as public educators, system navigators and leaders in health promotion.

Nurses are asking for strong leadership. They want to invest in training a new generation of leaders who are better equipped to assert and represent the profession from the bedside to the boardroom.

Nursing Roundtables: Health Concerns

“It feels like health is all about CTs and MRIs. It’s not. We need to remember it’s about people.”

Prevalence of chronic disease: Complex chronic diseases are placing new pressures on health providers, facilities, families and nurses

Aging and end of life care: The “new old” contains many cohorts from active seniors, to those living with chronic disease, and increasingly, dementia. We need strategies that ensure access to quality and affordable long-term care, assisted living at home and a palliative care.

Obesity: The risks associated with obesity are well-known. Nevertheless, more Canadians are becoming overweight and obese, especially youth and the prevalence of diabetes is creating an entirely preventable health epidemic.

Mental health: Inadequate funding and limited services continues to frustrate efforts to provide adequate mental health and addiction care. Stigmas persist, as does a culture that favours pharmacological treatments.

Maternal and child health: The ‘earliest years’ matter. Excellence in maternal and early child health is a key pillar in a preventative health strategy.

Nursing Roundtables: Systemic Concerns

Access to primary care: Canadians still struggle to obtain adequate primary care services, turning instead to overtaxed emergency departments. This problem is especially acute in northern and rural communities.

Safety and Quality: Patients continue to believe that a hospital is the best source for care, and are reluctant to pursue other care options, especially among frail, elderly patients.

Fragmentation and navigation: The health system isn't a system in any joined-up sense. Myriad providers, protocols and access points confuse patients and creates duplication and waste.

Funding structure: Nurses would like to see new funding mechanisms that remove the incentives created by fee for service models.

Increase access to technology: Too much time is wasted on paper-based reporting. The introduction of electronic health records will free nurses to focus on their clinical practice

Nursing Roundtables: Systemic Concerns

New professionals: Nurse practitioners, public health nurses, and community nurses are still not employed to full potential in a wide range of clinical settings.

Increased communications and learning: Take advantage of opportunities to provide more information to patients, through a broader range of channels and take a more active approach to patient education.

Patient-Centred Care: Shift towards a more patient-centred approach to care and greater patient engagement, both of which require greater collaboration among health professionals

Rural and northern access: Nurses need to be strong advocates for improved care in rural and northern communities; they are the front line providers who can speak with authority

Nursing Roundtables: Professional Concerns

Self Care: Nursing is a physically and emotionally demanding profession, and nurses are often disinclined to take care of their own health needs. Emotionally, “compassion fatigue” can set in, diminishing the patient experience and quality of care.

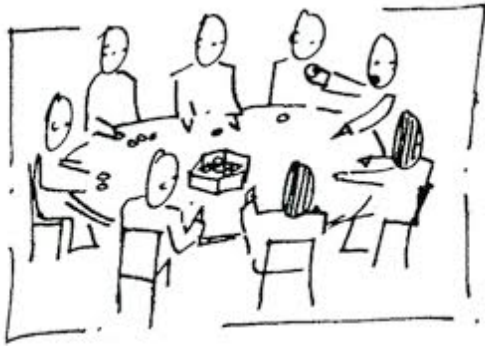
Nurses want to nurse: “We are handcuffed by our scope as we cannot go beyond it”. Nurses need to “let go” of tasks that can be done by other care givers and administrators.

Better data and knowledge management systems: The dissemination of new technologies to manage patient records, track medications and link care providers needs to be accelerated.

Evidence-based policy: Nurses worry that their profession isn’t keeping pace with new research. Advocacy is often based on experience when the currency within the medical profession is evidence.

Greater collaboration: Nurses want to be full members of clinical teams, and promote tighter links between practice, education and research.

Recruitment and retention: The nursing profession is aging. Does nursing remain an attractive profession that will inspire the dedication required and sustain the ‘bedside’ tradition especially at a time of increasing educational demands?



CNA-YMCA Roundtables

Throughout the month of November, the Commission held conversations with hundreds of Canadians, hosted in partnership with nineteen YMCA associations.

The CNA-YMCA Roundtables were hosted in nineteen cities across Canada. These ninety-minute meetings were advertised internally to the YMCA, although they were open to the broader public. MASS LBP coordinated with the YMCA associations to arrange the necessary logistics. MASS LBP trained personnel from each of the participating YMCA associations to prepare them to lead the discussions. Wherever possible, the roundtables were co-hosted by a YMCA lead and Commission representative.

These roundtable discussions proved to be highly popular and valued by participants and YMCA coordinators. Sessions were attended by athletics members, parents whose children attend YMCA daycare and early learning programs, clients of the language and newcomer settlement centres, residents from YMCA transitional housing, and youth groups.

Many young people chose to attend the roundtables, although two sessions - in Calgary and Toronto - were dedicated to a conversation among youth. These participants were drawn from youth advisory groups, the YMCA alternate high school program, as well as athletics and program membership.

CNA-YMCA Roundtables: Key Findings

“We need to be responsible and know our role in the healthcare system.”

Canadians recognize that stress, poor diet and lack of exercise are harming their health. They are concerned that chronic disease and obesity are threatening today’s youth.

Canadians understand the importance of primary care, and are frustrated that so many people go without a primary care provider. They are open to the expanded use of nurse practitioners. They value consistent, quality care from a health professional with whom they can build a relationship over time.

Canadians acknowledge they need more help to make healthier choices. They emphasized the importance of education for all age groups and in both formal and informal settings to ensure they get the information they need to make informed decisions.

The participants at the public roundtables demonstrated a high level of awareness about the health challenges facing Canadians. They also showed a keen interest in becoming better informed and working along health professionals to address these challenges.

CNA-YMCA Roundtables: Health Concerns

“We’ve adopted the ‘drive-thru fast food’ mentality to our health. We can’t keep relying on a quick and fast ‘drive-thru’ health care experience.”

Aging population: Families are concerned about the quality of care, both for themselves and their parents. They want more services at home, but are also anxious about their growing role as care givers.

Poor lifestyles: Canadians know they are making poor health choices, and advocate aggressive action on the part of health and education authorities. This includes mandatory fitness programs for youth, more aggressive labelling and nutrition standards, as well as growing support for taxes and incentives to influence healthier choices.

Youth obesity: Sedentary lifestyles, working parents, screen time and poor eating habits are leading to an avoidable epidemic of diabetes and other chronic disease associated with obesity.

Social networks: With smaller, two-income families, Canadians are struggling to find adequate support within their families and communities. Not only are Canadians “Bowling alone” they’re also, increasingly coping with “illness alone”, requiring more support for the health system to access care and sustain well-being.

Navigation and integration: A culture of consumer choice is shaping patient expectations. They want to see wrap-around services that join-up different professionals into an integrated care team.

CNA-YMCA Roundtables: System Solutions

Community care: Canadians support the shift in emphasis from hospital-based care to receiving care in the community and home, especially as the system facing an aging population. Canadians want to see more sophisticated models of community-based care that can keep people active and out of hospitals.

Something for everyone: Canadians emphasized the importance of recreation, social and educational programs to keep people happy and healthy throughout their lives. Affordable or subsidized youth programs, athletics memberships, nutrition and cooking programs for children and adults, and cognitive and physical exercise programs for the aged are among the programs Canadians need to be healthy at all stages of life.

Better integration of alternative and complementary therapies: A majority of Canadians access some form of alternate or complementary treatment for acute or chronic illness. They want to be able to discuss these treatments with their doctors, and access a fuller, integrated range of health services.

Mental illness: The medicalization of mental illness was a significant concern for many participants. They stressed the need for greater community and social supports, as well as non-medicinal therapies.

CNA-YMCA Roundtables: System Solutions

Nurses first: Canadians are open to an expanded use of nurse practitioners — what matters most is establishing a lasting relationship with a principal health system provider.

More education, a truism: Repeatedly, Canadians talk about a lack of information, education, and engagement as a remedy to their frustration with poor health or an unresponsive health system. Fragmentation across the system exacerbates the sense that there is no single authority and no single point of entry to the health system. Canadians are asking for leadership and instruction and that public bandwidth on health concerns be expanded.

Hands-on Healing: Tellingly, websites, social media and other online tools are absent from the suggestions to improve the health of Canadians. Rather, they focused on expanding access to providers, programs, advisors, and social supports.

Looking forward: Advocating for a more expansive view of health

The roundtables revealed that nurses and the public are closely aligned in their values for health care, and their assessment of the major challenges affecting the health of Canadians.

Social and environmental determinants were repeatedly raised as the most critical frontier for health advocacy, research and treatment. Addressing poverty, violence, affordability of housing, healthy food, sedentary lifestyles, as well as concerns about pollution and clean water, especially in the north: these are each critical to a 'next generation' health strategy for Canadians.

Nurses across the country are unanimous that nurses should be at the vanguard of bringing promotion and prevention to communities. There is tremendous support among the profession for nurses to expand their role outside of clinical settings, helping Canadians learn to make healthier choices, manage chronic disease, and maintain their independence as they age. Developing the role of nurses as public educators, system navigators and as the point of entry into the health system was stressed by nurses eager to focus “less on tasks, and more on people.”

The partnership with the YMCA revealed there is a support across the country for the Commission's work. The public roundtables show that Canadians across the country recognize the challenges affecting our health. They are eager to become better informed, to be full partners with health providers in addressing these challenges.

Nurses agreed that as a profession they can be doing more to organize and advocate on behalf of Canadians. Nurses want to see their leadership take a more prominent role in the policy process, and want to see their associations do more to foster and encourage stronger leadership. There is consensus among nurses on how we should address many of our health issues, and a determination to continue the professionalization of nurses to take a more aggressive approach to addressing the core health needs of Canadians.