A message from Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN
President

Dear Members,

Ontario nurses and our allied health members will be part of the nation-wide chorus of health professionals speaking up in advance of the coming federal election to ensure that the health and well-being of Canadians is at the forefront of priorities for our next federal government.

The Ontario Nurses’ Association (ONA) is part of that national movement of nurses and health professionals. Our goal is to ensure that health care is on the ballot in October by promoting those issues that matter to our patients, clients and residents, and to us, as health-care professionals, including:

- Funding our public health-care system adequately.
- A health human resources plan to hire more nurses and a moratorium on RN cuts.
- A national prescription drugs program so everyone gets the medications they need.
- A safe seniors strategy to deal with the critical understaffing of long term and community care.

As a member organization of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU), ONA is working alongside our CFNU counterparts – provincial nursing unions across Canada – on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of front-line nurses we represent to make those issues part of the public discussion, and to hold our elected representatives and government hopefuls accountable for what matters. Quite simply, health care matters!

Currently, nurses across the country are facing funding cuts, staffing cuts, unhealthy work environments and extreme demands for overtime hours. This inadequate approach threatens the ability of nurses to deliver quality care to our patients.

In Ontario, we continue to see cuts to RN positions and patient care hours.

For every extra patient added to an RN’s average workload, the patient’s risk of suffering from morbidity (complications) and mortality (death) increases by seven per cent.

Hospital funding has been less than the rate of inflation for several years, and hospitals have cut RN positions to balance their budgets. This is due to inadequate funding on the part of the province, but also insufficient funding in the form of health transfers from the federal government.
HEALTH CARE MATTERS: WHY THE UPCOMING FEDERAL ELECTION IS IMPORTANT FOR ONTARIO NURSES – AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP!

Ontario continues to have the second-worst ratio of RNs to population in Canada, with just seven RNs per 1,000 residents. Our province would have to hire 17,000 more RNs just to catch up to the average of the rest of the country.

This means patients are suffering from bedsores, sepsis, blood clots, pneumonia and cardiac arrest, and they are more vulnerable to medication errors. Readmission rates rise when RN care is cut, costing the system more.

For every RN cut, it means the loss of 2,000 hours per year of RN care.

In addition, overwork and the increased volume of patients requiring more complex care has meant soaring rates of injury, illness and burnout for our members, and an increase in violent incidents and assaults in their workplaces as the fragile health-care system struggles with understaffing of RNs and the resultant lengthier waits for care.

ONA is calling for an end to RN cuts in Ontario and for a multi-year action plan to maintain RN positions. And we need adequate federal health funding for Canada’s most populous province, as well as more planning in the area of health human resources on the federal level.

In 2012, public sector nurses in Canada worked over 21.5 million hours in overtime. This amount is the equivalent of 12,000 full-time jobs and costs Canadian taxpayers nearly $1 billion per year. Despite this, hospitals across the country continue to cut nursing positions. While these cuts are inherently tied to provincial budgets, decisions made at the federal level have created this problem. We also know there are not enough nurses in long-term care and the community – a symptom of federal funding cuts.

As evidence of its failure to uphold its duty, the federal government refused to meet with the provinces and renegotiate the 2004 Health Accord between the government and the provinces and territories, letting it expire on March 31, 2014.

The Accord was an agreement between the federal government and the provinces and territories to provide stable funding after deep funding cuts in the 1990s, and to set national standards for health care.

In signing the Accord, the First Ministers recommitted to the Canada Health Act and its requirements: public administration, universal access, comprehensive coverage, accessibility without extra charges or discrimination and portability across provinces.

As evidence of its failure to uphold its duty, the federal government refused to meet with the provinces and renegotiate the 2004 Health Accord between the government and the provinces and territories, letting it expire on March 31, 2014.

Take a Selfie for Health Care

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) has put together a comprehensive election campaign, and as a member organization, ONA is on board!

One of the components of this campaign is the “I’m voting for health care this election” sign for you to use for a “selfie” photo. Just download the sign from the CFNU election website at http://www.voteforcare.ca/welcome, take your picture holding the sign and post!

Don’t forget to post the sign on your social media sites like Facebook and Twitter (use the hashtag #voting4care or #vote4care).
ONa is working alongside our CFNU counterparts – provincial nursing unions across Canada – on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of front-line nurses we represent to make those issues part of the public discussion.

Accord also included a set of common goals around wait times, home care, prescription drugs and team-based primary care.

Instead, the federal government plans to make major cuts in federal health transfers. And according to a report by CFNU released in July, these reductions in federal health transfers may be far greater than first anticipated, leading to a further strain on provinces already struggling to sustain Canada’s public health-care system.

CFNU’s report, The Canada Health Transfer Disconnect: An Aging Population, Rising Health Care Costs and a Shrinking Federal Role in Funding, written by Hugh Mackenzie, argues that changes in the funding model agreed to in the Health Accord to a new formula based on the growth rate of Canada’s GDP means federal support for health care will drop from the current range of 22-23 per cent to 19 per cent. Compared to the Accord’s 6-per-cent escalator model which

In Ontario, we continue to see cuts to RN positions and patient care hours.

Continues on page 6
Four Key Issues Ontario Nurses Need to Know

Health Human Resources Strategy
The federal government needs to create a national nursing strategy to combat understaffing and secure the health and wellness of Canada’s Nurses. If current conditions continue, patients risk not receiving quality care.

In 2014, nurses worked over 19 million hours of overtime. That is the equivalent of 10,700 full-time nurses.

It was estimated that there would be 60,000 nurses leaving the field in the next seven years.

Health Human Resources Strategy
12,000 nursing students graduate each year, but most can’t find jobs.

Nursing turnover rates stand at about 20%. Each time an experienced nurse leaves, it costs an average of $25,000.

30% to 40% of nurses regularly experience PTSD symptoms.

Seniors
Canada needs a safe seniors strategy to ensure our aging population is receiving the care that they need. Seniors represent the group most reliant on our public health care system, and without a strategy the system may be unable to serve this growing demographic.

It is estimated that “warehousing” seniors in hospital beds costs over $2 billion per year.

About 15% of acute-care hospital beds are taken up by seniors waiting to be moved elsewhere.

The number of Canadians 85-and-over is set to nearly triple in that time frame.

15% of Canadians are over the age of 65 and that number is set to nearly double in the next two decades.

Overwork and the increased volume of patients requiring more complex care has meant soaring rates of injury, illness and burnout for our members.
All political parties must clearly communicate their plans for a sustainable and strong public health-care system.

**National Prescription Drug Program**
Without a universal pharmacare plan, prescription drugs will remain inaccessible for a whopping 10% of Canadians and will keep costs high at the register. Canada needs a national pharmacare strategy to ensure patients are receiving the treatment they need.

A national universal pharmacare plan could save Canada up to $11 billion annually.

Countries with universal drug coverage spend 15-60% less per capita on prescription drugs than Canada.

1 in 10 Canadians cannot afford the prescription medicines their doctors prescribe.

70% of Canadians who require high-cost prescription drugs need them year after year due to chronic illness.

2 million Canadians incur over $1,000 in household expenses due to prescription drugs.

**Privatization**
The federal government plans to reduce public spending on health care by an estimated $36 billion. This will further harm our system that already faces long wait times, high prescription drug costs, and limited access for seniors needing long-term care and home care.

The government plans to reduce spending for health care by at least $36 billion over 10 years.

Canadians already wait up to three times longer than citizens of other countries with universal health care systems.

Medicare spending is not becoming more expensive. It remained stable at 4-5% of Canada’s GDP from 1975 to 2011. We just need to plan better.
The report translates this funding shortfall into tangible impacts on services, and it suggests this could mean losses of 59 million home-care visits, 2.6-million fewer patients served by primary-care centres, 7,500 unfunded long-term care beds and 24,000 nurses not employed.

the federal government has scrapped, the report found that up to $43.5 billion of health care spending will be cut over the next eight years. Based on economic growth projections, this analysis predicts a loss of $10.7 billion annually by 2024-2025. This is a clear failure of the federal government in its obligations to Canadians.

The report translates this funding shortfall into tangible impacts on services, and it suggests this could mean losses of 59 million home-care visits, 2.6-million fewer patients served by primary-care centres, 7,500 unfunded long-term care beds and 24,000 nurses not employed.

From its inception, health care was intended to be a partnership and a shared responsibility between the federal and provincial and territorial governments. The figures in the report show that the Conservative government is not upholding its end of the partnership, putting our Canadian health-care system in jeopardy.

ONA Federal Election Video

ONA has produced a video explaining why the upcoming federal election is so important and why our members need to get out and vote for the health care we deserve. Have this conversation with your friends, family and patients, because health care matters!

Helpful Resources

Canadians will be voting in the federal election in October. You have an excellent opportunity to tell those running for federal office what you’re concerned about and the important issues that affect you every day.

Let your local federal candidates know what you – as health care professionals – think about Canada’s health-care system and how it could be improved.

The following are some websites that provide valuable information to help you get ready for the coming federal election.

- The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) – of which ONA is a member – has launched many valuable resources about the federal election. A dedicated website – www.vote4care.ca – provides facts, information and helpful messages about health care in Canada. Four priorities are:
  - A national health human resources plan.
  - A national drug prescription plan.
  - A safe seniors strategy.
  - Defending public funding and delivery of health care.


- ONA’s election campaign website is at: www.ona.org/political_action/federal_election_2015.html/

- Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) – The national voice of labour and representing more than three-million workers, the CLC stays on top of the issues that affect workers. www.canadianlabour.ca/

- Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) – The OHC has developed several pieces for the federal election that aims to tell politicians that public health care matters. Help spread the word by distributing election materials in your area. www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca/

- Elections Canada
  - Search by your postal code to find your electoral district, what you need to vote and to see who the candidates are in your riding. www.elections.ca/home.aspx/

In 2012, public sector nurses in Canada worked over 21.5 million hours in overtime. This amount is the equivalent of 12,000 full-time jobs and cost Canadian taxpayers nearly $1 billion per year.

These decisions show a complete disregard for Canada’s universal, publicly funded health-care system. The proposed changes will lead to fewer jobs and more dangerous workplaces, making it difficult for ONA members to do their jobs and putting patients at risk.

Tackling these issues and developing a plan for nurses and our allied members that creates safe staffing standards across the country will require national leadership. All political parties must clearly communicate their plans for a sustainable and strong public health-care system. We must demand that every candidate speak out on their commitment to our public health-care system.

As the front-line workers of the health-care system, nurses across Canada must stand up and speak out for health care this election. Demand support for a publicly financed health-care system from your local federal candidates and help secure the health of Canada’s future.

ONA members need to vote for the health care we deserve in this federal election. And we need you all to have this conversation with your friends, families and co-workers – for our patients, for our profession, for Canada. Health care matters!
Checklist for Election Action

This election, Canada’s nurses are standing up for health care.

These are some of the things that every ONA member can do to help make positive change.

☐ Exercise your franchise. Register to vote (see Elections.ca or call 1-800-463-6868).
☐ Vote! The earlier the better. Vote in an advance poll so you can help out on election day.
☐ Get plugged in. Follow the news and ONA.org to learn about the choices.
☐ Spread the word. Tell three people why you plan to vote and what’s at stake for our health care.
☐ Get together. Organize a voting party with your colleagues to talk and make plans to vote.
☐ Ask a question. Raise an issue you care about at an all-candidates forum or debate.
☐ Talk to your neighbours. Go door-to-door and take the CFNU leaflet (in your Front Lines mailing) with you to hand out.

☐ Volunteer. Volunteer for a candidate who will take action on our four key issues:
  ▪ Funding our public health care system adequately.
  ▪ A health human resources plan to hire more nurses.
  ▪ A national prescription drugs program so everyone gets the medications they need.
  ▪ A safe seniors’ strategy to the critical understaffing of long term and home care.

☐ Use social media. Share @OntarioNurses and @CFNU messages on Facebook, Twitter, etc.
  #voting4care #vote4care #cdnpoli