The Ontario Nurses’ Association believes that primary health care reform is urgently needed to address the problems Ontarians have in accessing health services.

Primary health care is the first point of access for clients of the health system. It is essential care that includes promotion, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and supportive care to attain and maintain optimal functioning of clients.

The Ontario Nurses’ Association advocates that primary health care be delivered through publicly funded, community-governed, not-for-profit organizations. Primary health care should be universally accessible to individuals and families 24 hours per day, every day of the week, within their community.

Primary health care is the first step towards ONA’s vision for an integrated health system that ensures that services are provided to meet the health needs of the community. An important feature in the move to primary health care is that increased emphasis be put on health promotion, illness prevention, advocacy and community development initiatives to help people stay well.

It is ONA’s view that the point-of-entry to primary health care should be expanded to include the most appropriate health care provider within a multidisciplinary team setting. Multidisciplinary primary health care teams would consist of a variety of providers such as family doctors, nurse practitioners, registered nurses and other providers as necessary to meet the needs of the community being served. Clients would have better access to services. Pressures on emergency and in-patient facilities would be reduced. Nurses would be utilized within their full scope of practice.

ONA supports that people would get to choose their primary health care provider. They would gain access to the combined expertise of a group of professionals. Working collaboratively, this group would share responsibility and accountability for client care. These organizational groupings would be community governed by local community boards. People in each community would have a say in decision-making regarding their health and the health of their communities.

It is ONA’s view that funding would be based on the number of clients enrolled within the multidisciplinary group and the needs of the clients and the community. Individual providers within the group will be paid by salary.

Nurses have the skills, knowledge and experience to perform important functions in the reformed delivery of primary health care services within their scope of practice. This includes health promotion and illness prevention, and the assessment, care and treatment of clients.

Nurses will play many valuable roles in a reformed primary health care system, including: providing primary health care services to clients who walk-in, providing triage and health care information services, providing primary health care team nursing, and providing an approach with a focus on community empowerment and the health promotion of populations.