

February 22, 2018

The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 2C4

Dear Minister Hoskins,

Registered practical nurses (RPNs) have been an integral part of creating our healthcare system for more than six decades. Ontario employs thousands of RPNs within the hospital sector who are trusted and respected professionals that provide the best quality of care for their patients. As pressures of a growing and aging society increase demands on our system, the RPN role has undergone significant and continual change; RPNs constantly evolve to meet the needs of our communities, stepping up to the challenge each and every time.

Collectively, CUPE, SEIU & UNIFOR, known as the Tri-partite Union Nursing Coalition, represent 80% of all RPNs in hospitals and we are uniting to stand up for our membership and push back against attacks on their skills and service. Our coalition was formed to represent the interests of all nurses and work towards initiatives that foster unity in the nursing profession.

In recent years, some organizations that represent registered nurses (RNs) have chosen to pit RNs against RPNs, which causes division, not unity, within the nursing profession.

In fact, this division in the workplace breeds a culture of distrust among nursing professionals, which is a proven contributor to a toxic working environment. This is not conducive to putting patients first.

Ontario is suffering from an underfunded and overburdened healthcare system with too few hospital nurses. Advocating for the elimination of RPNs will only exacerbate those problems.

In order to put patients first, all nurses must work together collaboratively. Reflected in best practices resources, our nursing coalition agrees that successful intra-professional collaboration between differing categories of nurses holds great potential as an enabler of improved patient care and can significantly help leaders meet health system demands. Studies demonstrate that team-based models of care decrease medication errors and adverse intravenous outcomes, lower pain scores, and also provide inexperienced staff with the opportunity to enhance their individual competencies and offer patient-centered care.





RPNs and RNs alike competently and safely care for and contribute to positive outcomes of patients that are appropriate for a practical nursing scope. Attempts to diminish the RPN profession should not rely on US-based literature, which is not reflective of present-day Ontario nurses and our healthcare system.

As the population of Ontario continues to grow and age, our patients will live longer and with more co-morbidities. We will need more access to high-quality nursing care to meet this demand, and that's why Ontario's healthcare system needs every nurse – Registered Practical Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Registered Nurses alike. We simply cannot afford to lose any of them.

To ensure the best possible patient care, hospitals need a full complement of healthcare professionals working together, including doctors, registered nurses, registered practical nurses, nurse practitioners, personal support workers and anyone else who can have a positive impact on patient outcomes.

Our coalition is calling on the Ontario government to reject all attempts to tear down any nursing professional at a time when all nursing professionals are stepping up. We are also requesting a prompt written response from you, outlining your position on these important issues and concerns.

On behalf of the nurses that are represented by our unions, we look forward to continuing to work and advocate for Ontario patients and healthcare providers by ensuring our healthcare system remains a service we can all be proud of.

Sincerely,

Katha Fortier
RPN and Assistant to the
National President, Unifor

Michael Hurley
President, Ontario
Council of Hospital
Unions

Jacqueline Walker
Nursing Division President,
SEIU Healthcare