



March 8, 2013

CNA celebrates International Women's Day

Dear colleagues,

Today the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) joins with you and with women around the world in celebrating International Women's Day!

Dating back to the early 1900s, International Women's Day was born when women became "a leading force for change" through their fierce determination to achieve equality in all aspects of society. Now established globally, International Women's Day has celebrated tremendous advancements in the journey to equality over the years, such as the right to vote, the freedom to work *and* have a family, and the conceptual recognition of equal pay for equal work.

The 2013 theme for International Women's Day is "The Gender Agenda: Gaining Momentum." I am excited to see this theme reflected today in Canada, where six¹ of our country's 13 provincial/territorial premiers are now women! Never has there been a more opportune time for registered nurses (RNs) to reach out to politicians and decision-makers to share our concerns and our solutions on key women's issues, which I urge you to take every opportunity to do.

In our policy and program work, CNA pays particular attention to gender as a social determinant of health. We also share nursing solutions on such issues as poverty, elder abuse, caregiver burden, homelessness and gender violence. Our association has published a social justice gauge, provided expert testimony at the senatorial and parliamentary inquiries into elder abuse, and participated in a national roundtable on caregiver burden and the need for support for unpaid family members and friends who are caregivers. Earlier this week, CNA collaborated with housing and anti-poverty groups, through the Dignity for All Campaign, rallying nurses to support a private member's bill on the crises of homelessness and inadequate housing. Additionally, CNA continues to stand against gender violence and is proud to be endorsing *Ghosts of Violence*, an Atlantic Ballet Theatre of Canada production that tells the stories of women who have lost their lives at the hands of an intimate partner.

In nursing — which remains a predominantly female profession — we see many examples of RNs serving as politicians, leading primary care clinics, using their street-health roles to advocate for the social determinants of health and contributing solutions on key issues. RN Carolyn Acker comes to mind as one of many nurse leaders we proudly celebrate today. Her tireless efforts to break the cycle of poverty in inner-city Toronto and throughout Canada, and to help the disadvantaged and homeless, are remarkable. Recently named to the Order of Canada, Carolyn's Pathways to Education program for youth living in poverty has decreased drop-out rates, increased post-secondary studies and offered many opportunities for young women and men.

International Women's Day is a tangible way for us to publicly recognize and thank women for all they contribute to our nation and to Canadians. It is a chance both to celebrate where we are gaining ground in achieving a fully equitable society and to be mindful of what we must still do to inspire continued

momentum on “The Gender Agenda.” Today, please join me in recognizing all that is being accomplished, while we continue our efforts, individually and collectively, to assure that the future for women and girls is bright, equal, safe and rewarding.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Mildon". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Barbara" and last name "Mildon" clearly distinguishable.

Barb Mildon, RN, PhD, CHE, CCHN(C)
President

¹ The six female premiers currently in office are Eva Aariak, Nunavut; Christy Clark, British Columbia; Kathy Dunderdale, Newfoundland and Labrador; Pauline Marois, Quebec; Alison Redford, Alberta; and Kathleen Wynne, Ontario.