



February 28, 2011

Via e-mail: pm@pm.gc.ca

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington St.
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

I wish to commend you on your government's recent announcement of \$40 million toward the creation of new family medicine residency positions for rural and remote areas. While Canada's registered nurses applaud such an investment in primary care, physicians are only one part of the answer to the health challenges experienced by Canadians in under-served areas. The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) strongly believes that federal investments in the development and support of interprofessional education and collaboration stand to contribute to a future health system with greater efficiencies and broader access. Team-based care, which sees registered nurses, nurse practitioners, mental health professionals and others working in collaboration with physicians, has been proven to enhance the reach, scope and effectiveness of primary care.

As you know, nurse practitioners and registered nurses who are already delivering primary care in Canada's remote and rural areas are playing a significant role in keeping people healthy and out of hospital. Their engagement in health promotion and disease prevention is crucial to the success of a comprehensive health strategy, particularly among First Nations, Inuit, Métis and other populations affected by conditions that create vulnerabilities. Targeted federal initiatives such as the recently announced Nutrition North Canada program are a step in the right direction. We would like to see additional investment in wellness strategies and chronic disease prevention and management – areas in which registered nurses and nurse practitioners are particularly effective.

The Canadian Nurses Association would also like to see the federal government take the lead in implementing a pan-Canadian health human resources strategy that would coordinate the recruitment, development and retention of health professionals in a more strategic way – by optimizing roles, deploying resources where the need is greatest and proactively addressing emerging issues. Such an approach is vital to improving the efficiency of our health system and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

Once again, congratulations on the new initiative. Canada's nurses are very much looking forward to seeing

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more such targeted investments that will enhance access to our health system, while contributing to the health and wellness of our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Judith Shamian". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Judith Shamian, RN, PhD, LLD (hon), D.Sci. (hon), FAAN
President, Canadian Nurses Association

Cc: Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health