

November 28, 2025

The Honourable Marjorie Michel, Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0A6
hcminister.ministresc@hc-sc.gc.ca
marjorie.michel@parl.gc.ca

RE: Protecting the Professional Status of Nursing in Canada considering U.S. Federal Loan Policy Changes

Dear Minister Michel,

On behalf of the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), we are writing to express our concern regarding the recent proposal by the United States Department of Education to exclude nursing from the definition of “professional degree” programs under forthcoming federal loan eligibility rules. The American Nurses Association (ANA) has publicly warned that this change would severely restrict access to funding for graduate nursing education and threaten efforts to strengthen and expand the U.S. nursing workforce. Both CNA and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) support ANA in their warning about limiting graduate nursing education funds.

Although this policy change is specific to the United States, it has broader implications for how nursing is viewed and supported as a profession across North America and globally. It also raises important questions about the value placed on graduate nursing education and expertise at a time when health systems are experiencing increased demand, complexity, and persistent challenges related to recruitment and retention.

In Canada, nursing is a regulated profession grounded in scientific knowledge, critical thinking, and ethical practice. The entry-to-practice requirement for registered nurses is a baccalaureate degree in nursing, reflecting the knowledge, skills and competence needed to provide safe, high-quality care across diverse and increasingly complex settings. The entry-to-practice

requirement for nurse practitioners is a graduate degree and graduate education in nursing is essential to developing not only advanced practice nurses but educators, leaders, and researchers. Graduate degree preparation by nurses is critical to expanding access to care; particularly in rural, remote, and underserved communities, and driving innovative models of care, quality improvement, and achieving health system transformation while bending the cost curve.

Any movement, in any jurisdiction, toward the de-professionalization of nursing, whether symbolic or practical, risks undermining public trust, decreasing quality of care and reducing safety, weakening health system resilience, and making it more difficult to build and sustain the nursing workforce Canadians rely on. When access to financing for graduate nursing education is constrained, the pipeline of future nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, nurse leaders, nurse educators, and nurse scientists is directly affected.

We therefore respectfully request your support in the following ways:

- 1. Affirming Nursing as a Profession in Canadian Policy and Discourse**

We express appreciation for the Government of Canada's continued investment in nursing education, student loan forgiveness for nurses, and leadership development in collaboration with the Chief Nursing Officer of Canada. We also urge the Government of Canada to continue to clearly and consistently recognize nursing as a highly educated and qualified profession in all federal policies, programs, and public communications, including those related to student financial assistance and health workforce planning.

- 2. Safeguarding Access to Nursing Education in Canada**

Federal programs continue to recognize nursing education, by supporting post-secondary and graduate education at both entry-to-practice and advanced levels, as a professional field of study essential to the sustainability of Canada's health system. For graduate nursing education programs, there were 1,013 admissions and 897 graduates from Master's Programs and 126 admissions and 79 graduates from doctoral programs in 2023. Also, there were 927 admissions to nurse practitioner (NP) programs and 892 graduates from NP programs (2022/23). In the same period, 19,631 students were admitted to entry-to-practice programs for registered nurses, and 11,923 graduated, according to the [Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing](#), underscoring the critical importance of sustained federal support for nursing education, ensuring we have graduate prepared nursing faculty for the next generation of regulated nurses.



3. **Championing Professional Nursing in International and Bilateral Forums**

That, in discussions with international partners, including the United States, your office underscores the importance of recognizing and supporting nursing as a profession, and encourage policies that strengthen, rather than erode, graduate nursing education and workforce capacity. This work further highlights CNA's commitment to fostering both national and international nursing leadership through CNA programs such as the Inspire nursing leadership development program and substantive contributions by the Fellows of the Canadian Academy of Nursing (CAN).

The CNA stands in solidarity with the ANA, ICN, [Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing \(CASN\)](#), CAN, and other nursing organizations around the world in affirming nursing as a vital, evidence-informed profession central to the health and well-being of our populations. We would also be pleased to facilitate a meeting bringing together CNA, ICN, and CASN to discuss strategies for strengthening nursing leadership and enhancing support for all nursing students in Canada, including mentorship, resources, and pathways to success.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued leadership in advancing the health of people in Canada.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Kimberly LeBlanc
President, Canadian Nurses Association



Dr. Valerie Grdisa
CEO, Canadian Nurses Association

CC. Dr. Leigh Chapman, Chief Nursing Officer of Canada, Health Canada
Dr. Jennifer Mensik Kennedy, President of the American Nurses Association
Dr. Sylvain Brousseau, ICN representative for North America and the Caribbean
Dr. Jean Daniel Jacob, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing
Dr. Sally Thorne, Advisory Committee Chair, Canadian Academy of Nursing

