

Premier Doug Ford
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

September 29, 2021

Dear Premier Ford,

Ontario is facing a nursing shortage crisis.

According to the Ontario Nurses' Association, Ontario hospitals currently face an 18 to 20 per cent vacancy rate for nursing positions. And the Canadian Federation of Nurses Union estimates there are more than 16,000 nursing vacancies in the province.

This is an issue that predates COVID-19, but the pandemic has made it even more severe. Ontario's nursing shortage is at a crisis point. As we continue to navigate the current public health crisis, we need to ensure there is enough staff to care for patients without risk of burnout.

The nursing shortage crisis is driven by harsh working conditions and low pay. And it's driving nurses from the profession. Many are burnt out, stressed and overworked from the past 18 months. According to the RNAO, 17% of nurses said they are very likely or likely to leave the profession post-pandemic.

Let's not forget that nurses were oftentimes the ones holding the hands of patients dying from COVID while family members were forced to watch via zoom. Nurses have been on the frontline since day one of the pandemic and they need help. They need a government that has their back.

We cannot stand by and watch nurses suffer. Ontario needs to step up and do the right thing.

That is why I am calling on you to:

- **Repeal Bill 124** to give all nurses the raise they deserve
- Implement a program to pay all nurses an **additional \$5 an hour if they are working on a short-staffed unit or department** (10 or fewer scheduled nurses)
- Provide **N95 respirators** for all nurses to protect them from airborne transmission
- Make **pandemic pay permanent** for all nurses
- Provide guaranteed access to **mental health services** for all nurses

- Bolster admissions to **nursing baccalaureate programs by 10 per cent** in each of the next four years and **increase the supply of Nurse Practitioners by over 50 per cent by 2030**, as per RNAO's recommendations
- Streamline and expedite the lengthy process of granting nursing license to **qualified internationally educated nurses** through the **College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO)**

Nurses are the heart and soul of our health care system and the backbone of Ontario's COVID-19 response. They deserve so much better.

By investing in better working conditions and fair wages for nurses, Ontario can help address the current public health crisis as well as prepare the province's health care system for the future.

I look forward to returning to Queen's Park next week so we can get to work on addressing urgent issues like this.

Sincerely,



Mike Schreiner
Leader, Green Party of Ontario

Cc Hon. Christine Elliott