



CANADIAN NURSES FOR HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

OPEN LETTER TO THE FUTURE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

APRIL 23, 2025

We are at a critical point in our history facing threats to Canadians - one from south of our border, but another that is more global and no less important. This other threat stems from the devastating health effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution on all Canadians. Our health and that of the planet are profoundly linked, and it is and it is our leaders' moral responsibility to do everything they can to promote and preserve the wellbeing of our planet that makes life possible. In doing so, you would be joining nurses across Canada who have already understood that there is no time to waste.

Nurses across Canada call on our future prime minister to demonstrate bold and courageous leadership, to prioritize urgent climate action in the coming years, uphold this country's national and international commitments to protect and preserve nature, and enhance protections for Canadians against harmful exposures to pollution.

As nurses, we are deeply concerned about the accelerating impacts of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss on health. Extreme heat, floods, wildfires, coastal erosion, melting permafrost, loss of sea ice, and species loss are already significantly affecting Canadians' physical and mental health, livelihoods, and well-being, and these impacts will only increase as Canada continues to warm. Pregnant women are giving birth to premature, smaller babies who face potential lifelong health issues due to extreme heat. Children are experiencing increased asthma attacks, allergies, and trauma from flooding and wildfires. Elderly people are struggling with diabetes and heart conditions worsened by extreme heat. Hospitals and clinics face emergency evacuations or service interruptions due to extreme weather or wildfires. Climate change and biodiversity loss are exacerbating health and social disparities among Indigenous Peoples, who are already besieged by epidemics of chronic disease, lack of access to clean water, and affordable food.



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Nurses are witness to these impacts on individuals, families, and communities in their daily practice and in their response during times of crisis, providing direct care both during and after climate events. As you well know, the science is crystal clear: Canada must move away from relying on fossil fuels and invest in alternative energies to create a future where all Canadians can thrive. You know, as we do, that our health depends on a healthy environment and that the continued loss of biodiversity impoverishes us all. It deprives us of the essence of what makes life possible, disrupts our profound relationship with nature, and threatens the health, well-being, and survival of generations to come.

We invite you to join with us as nurses who have a well-recognized expertise in planetary health, leading and collaborating in research, policy and education to deepen knowledge and awareness of the risks to Canadians in face of planetary health decline. We seek your strong support in working with the premiers of the provinces and territories to support the crucial role of nurses in protecting the health of Canadians in the face of these threats, in ensuring nurses have a place at the table in health policy decision making at all levels, in funding education to provide nurses with the full capacity in promoting and protecting health at the full scope of their practice, in funding resilient healthcare systems.

As Prime Minister, you will be a leader in legislation, policy, and communication both at home and abroad, but you will also lead by example. We ask you to step up and support our efforts towards a healthy and sustainable future for everybody's sake.

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF NURSES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (CANE)
