



June 2, 2009

The Honourable Jim Prentice, P.C., M.P.
Minister of the Environment
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
10 Wellington Street, 28th Floor
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0H3

Dear Minister Prentice:

As you prepare for Clean Air Day, June 3, 2009, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) would like to draw your attention to the involvement of the nursing profession in developing strategies to deal with the health impacts of air quality and climate change. Nurses have the scientific background to address environmental health issues, and the communication skills to convey messages clearly. Their expertise in health promotion and behaviour change also equips nurses to foster lifestyle choices that will improve the air we breathe and decrease greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

In *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report*, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that emissions from the transportation, heating and consumer and commercial products sectors could be reduced by the choices consumers make. Epidemiological research demonstrates that poor outdoor air quality results in increased cardiovascular problems and deaths. Air pollution stresses the health-care system by leading to increased hospital admissions. Nurses have the skills to support the kinds of changes needed to reduce air pollution and GHG emissions by explaining the health risks and promoting behaviour change.

CNA is very pleased to see the government's commitment to environmental health, demonstrated by the recent budget commitments to the ecoENERGY Retrofit program, and the government's support for reducing GHG emissions and increasing clean energy sources through its funding of research under the Clean Energy Fund.

CNA is interested in working with the federal government to improve air quality and mitigate climate change. I call on you as Minister of the Environment to continue supporting the Air Quality Health Index and to expand its coverage to include more communities. I also ask you to work with your colleagues: the Minister of Health, to undertake a public campaign to decrease reliance on private vehicles by encouraging the use of public transportation and promoting the health and environmental benefits of active transportation; and the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, to invest in the expansion of rapid transit and other opportunities for public transportation, including bike paths.

I look forward to exploring opportunities to collaborate on these efforts. Happy Clean Air Day.

Sincerely,

Kaaren Neufeld, RN, MN
President

cc: The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health

The Honourable John Baird, P.C., M.P., Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities