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September 2, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
By email: Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

Subject: CFNU Priorities for 2020 Throne Speech

In light of the government's decision to prorogue parliament, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) writes to you with recommendations for the Throne Speech to take place on September 23.

Our organization represents close to 200,000 nurses and nursing students across our country. As you know, our members have been on the front lines of the pandemic from the very beginning and have witnessed the human tragedy that unfolded in long-term care homes.

As our thoughts turn toward fostering recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the CFNU proposes a series of recommendations designed to strengthen the essential building blocks of a safe, healthy and resilient society.

With millions of Canadian jobs lost, and families and communities stretched to the breaking point by an unparalleled global health crisis, we must put into practice the lessons the pandemic has taught us about the importance of investing in crisis-proof systems that will help us weather the uncertainties of a rapidly changing world.

We must immediately take meaningful steps to remedy our collective failure to build a safe, healthy and prosperous Canada for all. This means deliberately addressing the glaring social and economic inequality exposed by the pandemic and providing long-overdue supports to the most vulnerable people in our society – the seniors, women, racialized communities and young people, who were hit hardest by COVID-19.

The CFNU's recommendations for targeted investments will help us to support frontline health care workers and improve the health of all Canadians in the future:

- Universal Single-Payer Pharmacare – We call on your government to immediately implement the recommendations of the 2019 Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare. Statistics Canada reported that in March and April, three million Canadian jobs were lost, leaving many across the country without coverage for prescription drugs. Even before the pandemic, a quarter of

Canadian families couldn't afford life-saving medications. In a nation as wealthy as ours, that's simply unacceptable. The real possibility of future pandemics poses a particularly grave risk to the many Canadians without drug coverage, as well as to our economy. A universal single-payer pharmacare system is an investment in Canada's future and an effective bulwark against future disease outbreaks.

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – With one of the highest infection rates of health care workers in the world, Canada must immediately step up to protect those who care for the sick and vulnerable among us. Shortages of PPE should not be the driving factor in decisions directly affecting the health and safety of health care workers. Your government must make one of its highest priorities the development of robust domestic production of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers. We look forward to the day when we as a country approach the health and safety of frontline health care workers in the same way we do other groups of people who perform high-risk jobs. Just as it is inconceivable that construction workers would be forced to work on a construction site without the appropriate protective equipment, it must also be inconceivable that health care workers would be called to the front lines of a global disease outbreak without the PPE they require to do their jobs in a safe and effective manner. Health care workers put their health and lives on the line to fight a disease most of us had never heard of a few short months ago, and they deserve the same protections that other workers receive.
- **Long-Term Care** – Years of underinvestment created the conditions for the catastrophic situation we witnessed in long-term care facilities. Any solution to these significant problems must begin with immediately eliminating private, for-profit business from the long-term care sector. We urge your government to act quickly to develop and enact national legislation to bring long-term care into the public health care system and regulate it under the *Canada Health Act* – including national standards for staffing and hours of care, as well as supplementary funding to the provinces and territories to ensure full-time work at higher pay rates for long-term care workers.
- **Chief Nursing Officer** – We take this opportunity to renew our call for the federal government to reinstate the role of federal Chief Nursing Officer (CNO). The CNO can play a pivotal role in centering the social determinants of health in our national policies and improving health outcomes for all Canadians, as well as addressing the nursing shortages reported in many parts of the country. This is especially important in the context of the pandemic.

With the devastating effects of the pandemic cutting across social, demographic and economic lines, families and communities are still reeling, and we are all collectively looking toward our government for a guiding hand as we rebuild.

The loss of every life to COVID-19 is tragic. As a nation, we can prevent further tragedy and build a more resilient Canada in the future by strategically investing in a healthy and green society and facilitating the important work of health care professionals in our communities.

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions hopes that our recommendations for the Throne Speech will assist the government in its efforts to get Canadians back on their feet, and give our communities and economy the support they so desperately need in these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Linda Silas', written over a horizontal line.

Linda Silas, CFNU President