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January 22, 2021

The Hon. Christine Elliott
Ontario Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
By email: christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

Dear Minister Elliott,

I am writing to urge you to ensure that all essential workers in Ontario who are required to self-isolate due to an exposure to COVID-19 receive pay during their self-isolation period.

The Ontario government provided full pay for nurses who were required to self-isolate during the first wave of the virus. However, members in the Ontario Nurses' Association are telling us that if they are exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace and test negative for the virus, they are required to stay home and self-isolate without receiving pay. Our failure to offer this support brings great shame to the province.

We believe that it is unjust for nurses – who have sacrificed their safety and well-being over the course of the pandemic to provide care – to face financial penalties as a result of the risks they bravely take on through their work. These essential workers are wondering how they will make their mortgage payments or pay rent – and they feel betrayed, given how much they have sacrificed.

The lack of a safety net for health care workers sent home due to exposure to COVID-19 on the job is counter-productive to the efforts at containing the spread of the virus within health care facilities.

I would like to bring to your attention the agreement between the United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) and the Alberta Health Services (AHS) that recently came into effect. It includes full pay for employees who have been required to self-isolate, and it is retroactive to July 2.

I call on you to offer the same level of support that was recently negotiated between the UNA and the AHS for Ontario's nurses and all essential workers in the province. Members of the CFNU in Ontario work tirelessly to ensure the most vulnerable among us are cared for in these extraordinarily challenging times. They deserve nothing less than the support of their government when they are forced to stay home.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Linda Silas, CFNU President

Cc: Vicki McKenna, President, Ontario Nurses' Association
Patty Coates, President, Ontario Federation of Labour