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July 20, 2021

Benoît Robert  
President  
Ontario Long Term Care Clinicians  
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1288 Ritson Road North, Suite 333  
Oshawa, ON L1G 8B2

Dear Benoît,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about Bill 124 – also known as the *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019*.

Our government recognizes the enormous sacrifices Ontario's health care workers have made to keep Ontarians safe and healthy since the outset of the pandemic. Health care workers have been an invaluable part of our fight against COVID-19. We have made significant investments to help support these courageous health care workers. This support includes:

- Temporary pandemic pay, which supported the critical work of nearly 430,000 frontline employees. We are proud that Ontario's temporary pandemic pay was the most generous in Canada – for an average employee working a standard 40-hour work week, this represented an additional \$3,560 on top of existing wages over the 16-week eligibility period.
- \$841 million to temporarily enhance wages for over 158,000 personal support workers and direct support workers in the publicly funded home and community care, long-term care, public hospitals, and social services sectors.
- Our government is investing over \$200 million to help train up to 16,500 new PSWs at Ontario's publicly assisted colleges, private career colleges, and district school boards.
- Ontario is investing \$4.9 billion over four years to increase the average direct care to four hours a day for our loved ones in long-term care. To make this a reality, tens of thousands of new staff need to be hired to provide this care and that can't happen overnight. Our government is committed to hiring more than 27,000 staff, including registered nurses, registered practical nurses, personal support workers, allied health professionals, and support staff.
- \$35 million to increase enrollment in nursing education programs in publicly assisted colleges and universities across the province, which will introduce

approximately 1,130 new practical nurses and 870 registered nurses into the health care system.

With that, our government is working on next steps for a permanent wage enhancement to ensure that this important investment will bring the greatest stability to the diverse workforce of PSWs and DSWs.

As we consider these significant investments in supporting our nurses and health care workers, it is important to keep in mind that the Act is designed precisely to protect public sector jobs and vital frontline services, which are essential in our fight against COVID-19. It applies to over one million people working in Ontario's public sector across the Ontario Public Service (OPS) and the Broader Public Sector (BPS), including employees in schools, colleges, universities, the provincial government, hospitals, correctional facilities, and provincial police.

In addition to its wide-ranging application, the Act allows for reasonable wage increases, while respecting taxpayers and the services they rely upon. It does not impose unfair wage freezes, rollbacks, or job cuts but rather maintains existing opportunities for all of Ontario's public sector employees to receive salary increases for seniority, performance, or increased qualifications, as they do currently. It also does not impede collective bargaining or interfere with the right to strike and would not impact existing agreements. We believe this is a fair, consistent, and time-limited approach enabling us to protect frontline jobs and workers.

I'll cite the hypothetical example of a registered nurse named Lidia to illustrate the application of the Act. Lidia's compensation is covered under the collective agreement between the Ontario Nurses Association and Hospitals. Having seven years of experience under her belt as of April 2020, Lidia would be earning an hourly wage of \$44.08. This wage band increases by 1% between April 2020 and April 2021, meaning that all nurses with seven years of experience would earn \$44.52 starting April 2021. However, because Lidia will have gained a year of experience, starting April 2021 her hourly wage would be \$47.69, which amounts to an increase of around 8.2% in wages from one year to the next.

This example illustrates that while the growth of the salary band is capped at 1%, frontline nurses like Lidia will see year-over-year wage increases of above 1% on account of their increased experience. Furthermore, the requirements on new compensation increases are time-limited in that the moderation period lasts for three years. The legislation sets out criteria to determine when the moderation period for a particular group begins. This means that the moderation periods for different groups across the public sector could begin at different times.

The health and safety of all Ontarians is our government's top priority. Our government remains committed to protecting Ontarians, the public sector jobs they hold, and the fiscal health of the province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke that curves upwards at the end.

Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria  
President of the Treasury Board

c: Hon. Doug Ford, Premier and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Long-Term Care