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March 18, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Langevin Block  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

**Subject: Emergency Measures to Support Health Care Workers in the Fight  
against COVID-19**

Dear Prime Minister:

As COVID-19 continues to pose unprecedented challenges for health care systems on a global scale, frontline health care workers – as represented by the Canadian Federation of Nurses' Unions (CFNU) and other unions – must be confident that they have the support of their government in carrying out their duties to protect the public. We call on your government to enact emergency measures to protect health care workers who are on the front lines of Canada's fight against coronavirus disease.

For the 200,000 nurses and nursing students across the country, who make up the membership of the CFNU, this means being equipped with the right tools with which to perform their duties, particularly during this critical time.

For weeks, the CFNU has been pressing the federal government and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to apply the precautionary principle to their infection prevention and control guidelines for coronavirus, thereby ensuring that nurses and workers in health care settings are provided with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to perform their jobs safely and effectively. In our view, these are necessary and significant steps in reducing the potentially critical risk to Canadians and our economy that COVID-19 represents.

We are simply asking that health care workers be allowed to assess the risks based on their professional real-time experience of a situation on an individual basis, rather than adhere to the blanket government rules currently in place that treat the safety of health care workers as little more than an afterthought.

Our approach is based on the latest science and in keeping with the best available recommendations from experts around the world, and substantially aligned with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the European

Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) in calling for airborne precautions, whenever possible, when caring for presumed and confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the light of current scientific uncertainty around how the virus is transmitted.

In your press conference of March 17, you thanked health care professionals for their tireless work in these incredibly challenging circumstances. Now, we urge your government to show its gratitude by giving them the emergency support they need to stay safe and healthy for what could be a lengthy and arduous fight against COVID-19.

Government and public officials must understand that protecting nurses is protecting the Canadian public. Going forward, we ask that you work with the CFNU and its members to address these vital issues to ensure that both nurses and the public have confidence in our governments' response to this extraordinary public health crisis.

In this uncertain hour, we simply can't afford to lose the very workers who represent our first line of defense against COVID-19, and our government must make every effort to work with nurses and other health care professionals in good faith so they can focus on curbing the spread of this global pandemic.

Sincerely,

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

Linda Silas, CFNU President

Cc.: The Hon. Patricia Hajdu, Minister of Health  
Debbie Forward, President, Registered Nurses' Union Newfoundland & Labrador  
Janet Hazelton, President, Nova Scotia Nurses' Union  
Paula Doucet, President, New Brunswick Nurses Union  
Mona O'Shea, President, Prince Edward Island Nurses' Union  
Vicki McKenna, President, Ontario Nurses' Association  
Darlene Jackson, President, Manitoba Nurses Union  
Tracy Zambory, President, Saskatchewan Union of Nurses  
Heather Smith, President, United Nurses of Alberta