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The Honourable Nolan Quinn
Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security
5th Floor
438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Minister Quinn,

Re: OSAP Modifications and Access to Education for Registered Practical Nurses

On behalf of WeRPN (Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario) and the more than 65,000 Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) students across Ontario, I am writing in regard to the recent modifications to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). We commend your government's commitment to preparing students for rewarding, in-demand careers and preserving their ability to access high-quality postsecondary education. This focus on building a resilient and skilled workforce is essential for our province's long-term prosperity.

WeRPN appreciates the government's investments in supporting nursing education, specifically through initiatives like the Bridging Educational Grant in Nursing (BEGIN) and Nursing Education Initiative (NEI) programs, which directly contribute to government's goals of growing the nursing workforce. However, we are concerned that the recent modifications to OSAP risk undermining these efforts.

As we look to continue supporting the building of a robust healthcare workforce in Ontario, we want to emphasize the value of accessible financial assistance for students pursuing careers as RPNs. While we recognize the need to manage Ontario's finances responsibly and ensure the sustainability of OSAP, the announced changes—specifically the shift to a maximum of 25 per cent of funding as grants and a minimum of 75 per cent as loans—are raising concerns among our members and prospective RPN students about their ability to complete their education and contribute fully to Ontario's healthcare system.

These changes have the potential to impact the educational journeys of future RPNs and the province's healthcare workforce development in critical ways:

- **Limiting access to RPN education and hindering a future-ready workforce**
Increased reliance on loans introduces a higher financial burden, creating financial uncertainty for many aspiring RPNs in a cost-of-living crisis. Members have expressed concerns this will disproportionately affect individuals from diverse backgrounds—including those from low-income families, racialized communities and rural areas—who are vital to creating a representative and culturally competent RPN workforce. RPN programs, with their demanding practical components, often limit students' ability to work extensively, making higher debt a significant deterrent. This limits access to vital education and hinders our ability to build a highly skilled, resilient, and future-ready healthcare workforce for Ontario.

- **Impeding long-term healthcare workforce sustainability**

By creating greater financial barriers to entry and completion for aspiring RPNs, the province risks reducing the supply of skilled nursing graduates at a time when demand is exceptionally high. This outcome could inadvertently make it more difficult to fully achieve the government's stated objective of 'training a strong, highly skilled workforce for Ontario for decades to come' and ensuring our institutions continue producing one of the most competitive workforces in the G7.

WeRPN is eager to collaborate with your Ministry to ensure OSAP remains a robust and equitable program, effectively supporting RPN students' education and career success within Ontario's healthcare sector. We remain committed to workforce planning and the tailored education and onboarding opportunities for RPNs.

By recognizing and mitigating financial pressures on students, we can ensure a stronger, more accessible educational future for all Ontarians, strengthening our province's skilled RPN workforce and securing a healthier future.

With my regards,



Dianne Martin
Chief Executive Officer