

ON.17.03 Inclusion of Registered Nurses in Provincial Bill 163, Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act 2016

- 1 **Whereas,** registered nurses were not named in the list of first responders in Provincial
2 Bill 163, *Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act 2016*, that presumes
3 posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is work-related, and
- 4 **Whereas,** a study out of the University of British Columbia found that emergency
5 personnel such as doctors, nurses, paramedics and firefighters experience
6 posttraumatic stress at twice the rate of the average population, therefore,
7 be it
- 8 **Resolved,** that Ontario Provincial Council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in
9 70th annual convention assembled, urge the Ontario provincial government to
10 amend Bill 163, Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act 2016 to include
11 registered nurses.

Brief

Gifted by Ontario Provincial Council

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1 In April 2016, the Ontario government passed Bill 163: *Supporting Ontario's First Responders*
2 *Act* which was an amendment to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry
3 of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This act presumes PTSD
4 diagnosed in first responders is work-related (Bill 163, 2016). Bill 163 gives Ontario's first
5 responders, such as firefighters, paramedics and police officers easier access to treatment and
6 resources for the condition, as well as benefits through Workplace Safety and Insurance Board
7 (WSIB) (Workplace Safety Insurance Board, 2016). This bill is a major step toward eliminating
8 barriers for Ontarians suffering from this illness. Unfortunately the bill has omitted the
9 province's registered nurses.

10 The Canadian Mental Health Association defines PTSD as a type of anxiety disorder that can
11 appear after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event, a death or perceived threat of death
12 or serious injury. Symptoms of PTSD usually appear about three months after the event but
13 can show up even years later. It may be another significant or traumatic event that can trigger
14 the onset of PTSD. Those suffering from this illness may experience a whole spectrum of
15 symptoms, including flashbacks and nightmares of the event, anger, anxiety, depression,
16 irritability, impaired concentration, difficulty sleeping, panic attacks, hyper vigilance and an
17 exaggerated startled response. People in certain occupations are at higher risk. A study out of
18 the University of British Columbia found that emergency personnel such as doctors, nurses,
19 paramedics and firefighters experience posttraumatic stress at twice the rate of the average
20 population. Women are also twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with PTSD. The reasons
21 for this are still unclear (CMHA, 2013).

22 The American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine determined 25% of the ICU
23 nurses tested positive for symptoms of PTSD related to their work environment, compared with
24 14% of the general nurses (Mealer, et al, 2017). According to the Journal of Emergency Nurses,
25 33% of nurses working in the emergency department experience symptoms of PTSD
26 (Dominguez-Gomez and Rutledge, 2009). Contributing factors may be the repeated exposure to
27 mortality and morbidity. Other groups of nurses considered vulnerable to PTSD are military
28 nurses, nurses in labour and delivery units, and those who are first responders to disasters.
29 Nurses in long term care homes and psychiatric settings may also experience physical violence
30 from patients who are cognitively or mentally impaired.

31 Recognizing that registered nurses are at the forefront of health care, and are regularly exposed
32 to traumatic situations which have been proven to lead to PTSD, Bill 163 should be further
33 amended to include registered nurses.

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ON.17.03 Inclusion of Registered Nurses in Provincial Bill 163, Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act 2016

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ACTION PLAN

1. Provide spiritual, emotional, and psychological support for nurses in our communities.
Gifted by Ontario Provincial Council

ON.17.03 Inclusion of Registered Nurses in Provincial Bill 163, Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act 2016

2. Write letters to our Premier and our MPPs asking them to include nurses with first responders in Bill 163: Support and WSIB benefits.