



July 12, 2013

Stephen Meurice
Editor-in-Chief
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Re: Put Canadians First

To Ms. Cohen, the Canadian Nurses Association would say: Don't put the weight of Canada's broken health-care system on the backs of refugees. The Interim Federal Health Program is not to blame for our country's overcrowded emergency departments or long wait times, nor is it the reason that more than four million Canadians have no primary care provider. The fifty-nine cents this program costs each Canadian taxpayer is not an "unaffordable luxury." I have a hard time believing that anyone wouldn't pay fifty-nine cents if it means helping a young boy get asthma medication, a pregnant woman get treatment for preeclampsia or a cancer patient get chemotherapy.

Beyond the social and moral arguments against this decision — of which there is no shortage — is the simple fact that this program will not save money. These cuts merely download costs onto provinces and territories whose social support programs, community-based health programs and charities have had to step up to help people in need. And as the backlog of refugee claims are processed we're certain to see a rise in the number of new Canadians facing more complex or urgent health problems, precisely because this government ignored their health concerns early on and denied them important care.

Ms. Cohen claims that refugees coming to Canada are "gifted" with a chance at new life — but what kind of chance for life are we giving them if we can't support fundamental health needs?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Barbara Milton'.

Barbara Milton, RN, PhD, CHE, CCHN(C)
President