

POLICY AT WORK



RNAO Executive Director Doris Grinspun (left) met with new PC leader Tim Hudak and health critic Christine Elliott in November. It was the first time they heard RNAO's position on nursing issues.

Creating vibrant communities

Even though the next provincial election is a year-and-a-half away, RNAO is gearing up for the political campaign. On Jan. 28, it released its pre-election document, *Creating Vibrant Communities* at a media conference at Queen's Park.

The document and technical backgrounder outline key priorities RNAO wants political parties to adopt as policies when drafting their platforms ahead of the vote scheduled for Oct. 6, 2011.

The priorities are backed up by extensive research and evidence. Recommendations focus on nursing human resource policy priorities and ways to strengthen the health system, as well as areas the association and its members say have a huge impact on one's ability to be healthy. The platform offers specific recommendations on affordable housing, social assistance and minimum wage rates, early childhood development, protection from toxics, climate change, and access to clean water. The report acknowledges the province's current fiscal realities. However, it also points out the long-term implications and costs if access to nursing services is not improved, social inequities aren't addressed and opportunities to create greener, sustainable communities aren't acted upon.

According to RNAO President Wendy Fucile, the months leading up to the election represent a critical period as Ontario emerges from a recession.

"There is no doubt the province is at a crossroads. Its manufacturing sector is reeling and public and social infrastructures are in great need of investment at a time when the deficit is at an all-time high," she says. "We're confident the recommendations contained in this report offer a prescription that will move the province forward by committing to greater and enhanced health care, more prosperity and a cleaner environment." To read the full report, go to www.rnao.org

A visit with the leader of the opposition

Last November, RNAO's Executive Director Doris Grinspun met with the new leader of the Ontario PC party, Tim Hudak and his new health critic and deputy leader, MPP Christine Elliott. Although RNAO regularly meets with politicians at Queen's Park, this was the first formal meeting since Hudak took over from John Tory and marked the first time Hudak and Elliott heard about the association's priority areas.

Given the recent passage of Bill 179, Grinspun thanked Hudak for his party's

support for the role of NPs and changes to RNs' scope of practice. Grinspun also praised the government for recognizing the benefits NPs bring to the health-care system and its commitment to setting up NP-led clinics. She also asked Hudak to commit to opening more NP-led clinics in the PC party's upcoming election platform.

The effects of the recession were also discussed. Grinspun noted the association has serious concerns about how budget cuts announced last fall might affect new nurses coming into the system. She warned Hudak that any attempt to cut nursing positions would only send newly educated RNs to look for work elsewhere as many were forced to do after cuts by former Premier Mike Harris.

No action on climate change

AS world leaders gathered in Denmark last December for the Copenhagen Climate Change conference, RNAO members were busy writing letters to Prime Minister Stephen Harper telling him that nurses expected leadership and strong action on the issue. More than 1,000 members responded to an action alert calling on the Prime Minister to take a lead in tackling climate change by committing to clear targets and, in doing so, being a role model for bold leadership to combat the dangerous impact of global warming on the health of the planet and its inhabitants. Immediately following the conference, RNAO issued a media release describing the failed talks as an embarrassment. President Wendy Fucile cited the lack of targets for emission cuts and the fact the agreement wasn't binding as evidence of how little was accomplished.

While the final communiqué reached by world leaders offered nothing substantive, the association's work on this issue will continue. Executive Director Doris Grinspun said nurses will continue to press for action on this issue because they know the environment is an urgent priority that can't be ignored. **RN**

NEWS to You to Use

RNAO is leading a project to help nurses from all sectors use technology in their workplaces and better understand eHealth and its relationship to quality care and client outcomes. With funding from Canada Health Infoway, RNAO is leading the Ontario Nurse Peer Leader Strategy. Fourteen peer leaders, each representing a LHIN in Ontario, are facilitating education and knowledge sharing about eHealth in the nursing community and promoting RNAO's Nursing and eHealth online education course. The goal is to get 20 per cent of nurses in each LHIN to access the course. For more information, contact Jackie Boyce at jboyce@rnao.org or take the course at www.rnao.org/eHealth_course/.

The number of nurses working in Canada is on the rise. According to a Canadian Institute for Health Information report released in December, there are now 341,431 nurses in the country. The report also found the proportion of registered nurses employed in the community health sector rose from 13.8 per cent in 2004 to 14.2 per cent in 2008, and the number of nurse practitioners rose to 1,626 from just 800 in 2004.

On Jan. 1, RNAO Executive Director Doris Grinspun became the co-chair of the Joint Provincial Nursing Committee (JPNC) for a two-year term. She will share the role with Vanessa Burkoski, Ontario's Provincial Chief Nursing Officer. The JPNC advocates and advises government on nursing issues and other policies that promote health. The group is made up of representatives from the College of Nurses of Ontario, Ontario Nurses' Association, Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, Council of Ontario University Programs in Nursing, Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, Nursing Health Services Research Unit, Practical Nurses Federation of Ontario, as well as senior representatives from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

A team of nursing researchers from Queen's University has received \$1 million to study patient safety. RNAO member Margaret Harrison will lead the project, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, to examine how evidence-based nursing practices in clinical settings and the community can reduce errors in care. According to a 2007 study by Accreditation Canada, about 185,000 patients suffered an adverse event in hospitals that year. Harrison, far right, was joined at the study's launch by RNAO members and Queen's colleagues Jennifer Medves (left) and Christina Godfrey.



RNAO member Tanya Abrams added the title of author to her resume this winter when she published a new book called *So you want to be a musician? You can be!* The book was inspired by the nurse practitioner's own sons, who, along with a cousin, make up the Abrams Brothers, an Eastern Ontario-based country-bluegrass trio. Abrams hopes the book will inspire other kids to explore music and have fun with it.

In December, the Supreme Court of Canada denied an appeal by the Ontario Nurses' Association. The result means ONA cannot sue the Ontario government on behalf of 53 nurses who contracted SARS during the outbreak in 2003. Last May, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that while the government does have a responsibility to protect the public from communicable diseases, it can't be held financially responsible to those who become ill.



This year marks the International Year of the Nurse, timed to coincide with the centennial anniversary of Florence Nightingale's death. Throughout the year, nurses in Canada and abroad will be celebrated for their commitment to building healthy communities and global health promotion. On April 25, 2010, a commemorative service will be held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. to honour this event. Find out more at www.2010iynurse.net.

In the November/December 2009 issue of *Registered Nurse Journal*, an item in *News to You to Use* incorrectly stated that Roberta Heale received a Chair in Advanced Practice Nursing (APN). Heale did not receive the Chair, but will be working with Alba DiCenso in the Chair Program.

Registered Nurse Journal regrets the error.