

Anniversary celebrates years gone by, and looks toward accomplishments to come



Welcome to the start of a very special calendar year! This year finds us standing at the beginning of another new decade, and 2010 also brings with it RNAO's 85th anniversary – truly a landmark!

We are privileged to have a very few members who did themselves see the year 1925. For the rest of us, here are just a few other world and Canadian milestones of that year: the newest dance craze was the Charleston; women in Newfoundland won the right to vote; and Doris Anderson, long a champion of women's rights, was born in Calgary.

And in Ontario, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario took shape. Our founders saw, with great clarity and with real courage, the capacity of nurses to promote excellence in practice and to influence the political decisions that affect both nurses, and the public we serve, through concerted and sustained efforts to affect healthy public policy. They recognized that knowing government, understanding how government works, and actively engaging with government was the road to improving not only the well-being of nurses, but of every individual in our society.

As we move towards our anniversary celebration in April, you will see and hear much more about our past and our roots. It is very clear that one of the threads that has consistently run through our history, over all of these 85 years, is the recognition of the importance of political action as a means to achieve the ends of the association. While the greater ends we seek have not substantively shifted over time, the specific areas that we target for action have, reflecting both successes achieved as well as the needs and circumstances of the day. In the same way, the approach to action also shifts from time to time, reflecting the specific goals we seek and the circumstances of the time. Textbook authors call this 'situa-

tional leadership.' In real life, it is both the simple and complex act of recognizing the need to have a whole range of strategies, to thoughtfully selecting the strategy best suited for that moment in time, and to consistently demonstrating the courage to shift and shape strategy in an ongoing way. All of this work is built upon one fundamental and unchanging base – a rock solid commitment to the mission and values of the association.

One of the key roles of any Board of

**“As we approach
our celebration of the
past, we must also
use this moment to
determine what our
preferred future is. That
act of choosing, that
decision to shape what
lies ahead, will require a
sustained commitment
to action from each and
every one of us.”**

Directors is the ongoing and regular assessment of strategy, looking always to ensure that the mission and core values are observed. Your board members are fully engaged in this work and it is my pleasure, on your behalf, to participate with them in those discussions and decisions. It is also the role of the board, and of our leaders in the Assembly, to demonstrate through actions our own commitment to moving the organization forward.

In the field of political action, the most recent example of this is our very successful Queen's Park Day, held this year on Jan. 28. Without question, one of the highlights of that day was the release of our election platform. This thoughtful, evidence-based, visionary document is built on a deep understanding of the critical role social and environmental determinants play in health. The document provides politicians of every party with a road map for moving towards a truly healthy society.

For those of you who were able to come to Queen's Park, my profound thanks for your time, your energy and your support. Excellent ambassadors and representatives all! For those who were unable to be there, I would strongly encourage you to consider, at least once in your career, joining this exciting day. You will be left with a feeling of accomplishment, with a deeper understanding of the degree to which the views of RNAO are heard and respected within the halls of provincial politics, and with a renewed sense of confidence in the capacity of our association to achieve our shared mission ... speaking out for health, speaking out for nursing.

Jane Goodall, noted researcher and advocate in primatology, once said “the greatest danger to our future is apathy.” As we approach our celebration of the past, we must also use this moment to determine what our preferred future is. That act of choosing, that decision to shape what lies ahead, will require a sustained commitment to action from each and every one of us, and an acute and sensitive ability to tailor our actions to the needs of the time, the specifics of the situation. As an opportunity to demonstrate your own commitment to act, I invite you to join us in Toronto, from April 15 to 17, for our 85th Annual General Meeting and what will be a very special time in the history of this association. See you there! **RN**

**WENDY FUCILE, RN, BScN, MPA, CHE, IS
PRESIDENT OF RNAO.**