



Pursuing healthy public policy: The next four years

ON OCT. 6, ONTARIANS VOTED FOR a third term Liberal government, this time a minority government. Before I discuss what this means for RNAO, I want to thank, on behalf of RNAO's staff and board of directors, each member who played an active role in the political process. Whether you ran for office, hosted an all-candidates debate, volunteered for a candidate, or engaged in discussions with colleagues, family and friends about RNAO's election platform, you made a difference in raising awareness of the implications of policy decisions on the health of Ontarians and nursing.

Election time is an exciting time at RNAO because we have successfully worked with governments for over a decade, influencing positive directions for health and health care. We expect the next four years to continue to be productive as we already enjoy robust relationships with the Liberal government and opposition parties. Going forward, we will build on these relationships to advance full and timely access to quality primary care – informed by primary health-care principles.

We will continue to pursue an agenda that strengthens social and environmental determinants of health. We will insist on a substantive increase in the number of RNs added to the system and will secure our target of 70 per cent full-time employment. We know the

Liberals are on side with these goals, and we can also count on the support of opposition parties given the responses we received to our survey of party leaders in advance of the election. We also know the Nursing Graduate Guarantee (NGG) Program is sure to continue, as is the opening of all 26 NP-led

“RNAO AND ITS MEMBERS WILL PROVIDE A HEALTHY DOSE OF PRAGMATISM, WORKING WITH ALL PARTIES, AND DRIVEN BY OUR VALUES AND BY OUR EVIDENCE-BASED PURSUIT OF HEALTHY PUBLIC POLICY.”

clinics by the end of 2012. In addition to seeing the expansion of current NP-led clinics, we will advocate for new ones over the next four years.

RNAO's presence at Queen's Park, and in your ridings, will not wane now that the election is over and MPPs are getting down to business. We must ensure new and returning MPPs are fully aware of nurses' policy priorities as outlined in our election platform. These priorities guide us and keep us focused on healthy public policies that are important to RNs and the public we serve.

RNAO's platform reminds us 'what matters.' The list may be long, but it's achievable with a government and opposition parties that continuously seek

and respect RNAO's advice. Just look at what we've accomplished in the last decade. We've seen groundbreaking legislation that has advanced the role and scope of practice of nurse practitioners in Ontario beyond any jurisdiction in North America. We've seen the opening of NP-led

clinics, and legislation that allows NP in-patient admission and discharge, and open prescribing. We also achieved the role of chief nurse executive on hospital boards and chief nursing officer in public health units. RNAO's Best Practice Guidelines (BPG) program, established during Elizabeth Witmer's tenure as Minister of Health and further strengthened by Premier McGuinty and his team, is one of the most significant partnerships RNAO has developed with governments of all political stripes, and it continues to grow exponentially with each passing year. This influential program is a shining example of what governments and RNAO can achieve by working together.

The BPG program is a source of Ontario's expertise and pride provincially, nationally and internationally.

Yes, we have achieved tremendous progress toward improving health care for Ontarians, and yet we all know we have much more to do. The government of today—and all future governments—knows it can count on RNAO to continue to work closely with politicians, whether they represent the party in power or the opposition. An ongoing, strong relationship with Queen's Park will allow RNAO to influence principled policy development and implementation.

The next four years promise to be full of opportunity and challenge as the new government grapples with many important responsibilities. The Liberals now need to negotiate – as a minority – with two sometimes disparate ideologies; that of the PC party and NDP. RNAO and its members will provide a healthy dose of pragmatism, working with all parties, and driven by our values and by our evidence-based pursuit of healthy public policy. **RN**

DORIS GRINSPUN, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), O.ONT, IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT RNAO.

Visit www.RNAO.org/election2011 for more on each party's response to the association's pre-election survey.