



## Visionary Leadership: Charting a Course for the Future of Nursing

A YEAR AGO, RNAO'S BOARD OF directors (BOD) grappled with a troubling trend: Ontario's registered nurses were being replaced. In its wisdom, the board decided to take a stand not only on the replacement of RNs, but also on the role of all nurses in our health system. As trendsetters for nursing in Ontario and beyond, the BOD and senior staff began work on what would become our future vision for nursing and the health system in Ontario: a vision that involves foundational system transformation, and at the same time enriches the role and practice of nurses to better serve the public.

This initiative is now in full swing, and RNAO is calling on you – our members – to help reclaim and re-imagine the role of nurses as champions of health promotion, disease prevention and curative care; as knowledgeable and experienced partners in evidence-based and cost effective health-care delivery; and as leaders and strong advocates for social and health equity.

Let me take you to the beginning of our journey for a sense of how our vision emerged.

Mirroring the approach taken by the International Council of Nurses to build preferred futures for the profession, RNAO senior policy analyst Lynn Anne Mulrooney led in the creation of three scenarios (or alternative images) for the future of nursing: *business as usual*, *crisis and opportunity* and *visionary leadership*. These three alternative

futures are possible and credible snapshots of the year 2030. All three were brought forward to the BOD, and after robust discussions, *visionary leadership* was unanimously chosen as the most suitable scenario. Together we have since mapped a step-by-step path to our vision for the future of nursing in Ontario.

We now have a picture of

**“NURSES IN 2030 PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF HEALTH SERVICES, THANKS TO NPS' AND RNS' EXPANDED PRACTICE SCOPES.”**

where *visionary leadership* will take us. This picture of nursing in 2030 is very different from what we see today. Imagine a system where push-back from nurses and the public in defense of democratic and social rights, enabled by social media and ongoing economic instability, has left politicians in 2030 with no choice but to implement a 'health in all policies' approach that requires every government decision be assessed for its impact on population health. The decade-long action by RNAO that began in 2012 with the release of two seminal reports on community care (*Primary Solutions for Primary Care* and *Enhancing Community Care for Ontarians* (ECCO)) has resulted in a system that, in 2030, is anchored in comprehensive

primary health care as close to home as possible, through community governed inter-professional and intersectoral teams, tightly linked to public health. Hospitals have become more important than ever because, as part of their local health networks, they attend to only the very sick, as more and more care has been moved to

agreements – and our own governments' policies at the national and jurisdictional levels – have been refashioned, no longer representing a threat to our publicly funded, not-for-profit health system.

It's a promising future and one that is entirely feasible with the focused and purposeful action of RNAO and its members.

But enough about the future we all hope to see. Let's get back to what we need from you today to make this happen.

RNAO has begun hosting electronic town hall meetings, informal discussions, and focus groups to receive feedback on this vision from nurses across the province.

This consultation will complete the exercise our BOD began a year ago. Ultimately, we will have a clear vision of what is needed to ensure nurses can fully contribute their current and future competencies and expertise so the public gets the timely access and quality of care it needs and deserves. This consultation with members will enrich the vision, and is at the centre of our massive undertaking.

The BOD and RNAO staff cannot wait to hear your feedback, and we know that as we move forward, we will inspire one another to make this vision a reality. **RN**

the community thanks to universal access to home health care and pharmacare. Nurses in 2030 play a central role in the planning and delivery of health services, thanks to NPs' and RNs' expanded practice scopes.

The profession has come a long way since RNAO's first Nurse Executive Leadership Academy in 2012, and nurse executives are now leading system thinkers who run whole system change in health-care networks, and across the province-at-large. In 2020, healthy work environments are the norm, and academic programs are so responsive to health policy imperatives that nursing is modeled by other professions.

After several international fiascos driven by experimentation and greed, global trade

DORIS GRINSPUN, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(HON), O.ONT, IS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF RNAO.