



## Take time to exercise your new right to vote

IN MY SEPT/OCT 2012 PRESIDENT'S column, I focused on what it means to be a member of an organization. More specifically, I talked about what it means to be a member of RNAO. As a member-driven association, your voice, your perspective, and your input help drive our ENDS (strategic directions).

As you may have read in the last issue, and again in this issue (pg. 2), there is proposed provincial legislation governing not-for-profit organizations. At RNAO's last annual general meeting (AGM), our bylaws were changed, and as of this AGM, individual members have a say on issues of governance. This includes voting for RNAO's president and members of the board of directors.

For those of you who attended last April's meeting, you may remember hearing about "one member, one vote" and how, beginning in 2013, governance issues will be placed before all members rather than a representative sample of voting delegates. This change is in place to ensure governance issues reflect the voice and the will of the members as a whole. Each member now has the opportunity – and responsibility – to exercise this new process in relation to a very important financial matter: a proposed fee increase (see pg. 7 for full details).

In September, RNAO's board of directors unanimously agreed to propose a membership fee increase of eight per cent. This

translates to \$2 more per year for students, \$17 more per year for members in the ONA fee category, and \$23 more per year for members in the regular fee category.

As your president, I ask you to support this modest fee increase, and here is why.

RNAO's membership fee has not increased for the past 14 years. This is unheard

**“AS YOUR PRESIDENT, I ASK YOU TO SUPPORT THIS MODEST FEE INCREASE, AND HERE IS WHY.”**

of in most other organizations. Your board and CEO kept the membership fee constant for all these years through numerous means, including managing expenses responsibly. But there is much more to the story. In fact, during these last 14 years, RNAO has been transformed from a relatively quiet organization that risked closing its doors because it didn't have enough money to operate, into an influential, first-class professional organization in Ontario, and, I would say, in Canada and abroad.

Through the leadership of our CEO, Doris Grinspun, and her team, RNAO has been able to attract external funding sources to create new programs and provide services that nurses use to grow as professionals, to enrich their practice, and to assist their patients and workplaces

in optimizing health outcomes. Today, RNAO is an agenda setter, driving healthy public policy decisions that are in the best interests of nurses, the public, and our health system.

Nurses in Ontario have benefited enormously from RNAO's robust influence. From best practice guidelines, to the nursing education initiative, to advanced clinical fellowships, to

career development workshops and institutes, political action, and policy gains such as the new graduate guarantee, late-career initiative, and full-time employment. Without a strong RNAO, none of this would be possible.

However, even with strong fiscal management, visionary and strategic leadership, and entrepreneurship, expenses have continued to rise beyond what is considered reasonable. Quite simply, the cost of living over the past 14 years has gone up by 30 per cent. Our membership fees have remained the same.

It's also important to point out that while fees for membership in the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) and Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS) have dramatically increased, these have been absorbed for more than a decade by RNAO.

We have now reached a point at which, for the first time in 14 years, we face a deficit budget. This is why I, and RNAO's entire board of directors, ask you to vote in favour of the proposed fee increase. As you consider your vote, which will take place March 18-April 4, I encourage you to make sure you are informed. Contemplate what we are asking – eight per cent over 14 years – and decide if this is good value for your money. I say yes, and RNAO's board unanimously agrees.

Consider what would happen if the fee increase is not approved by members. Think about the RNAO you know today, and decide if we can risk having a weaker RNAO. You, as members, ultimately have the final say.

Please send me your questions at [rseidman@rnao.ca](mailto:rseidman@rnao.ca)

Make sure you are informed about the facts. And most importantly – exercise your right to vote. **RN**

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Refer to page 7 for more information about the proposed fee increase, and visit [www.RNAO.ca/AGM2013](http://www.RNAO.ca/AGM2013) for more on the proposed legislation.