



More RNs to become part of our “winning team”

FROM TIME TO TIME I THINK ABOUT how quickly RNAO is growing. Last year was a special year for us in terms of growth because we reached an important milestone by passing the 30,000 mark and ending the year with 30,765 members strong. As I think about this phenomenon, I think about the wise words of Nancy Campbell, RNAO's director of finance. Back in 1999 she said people want to be part of a winning team and that RNAO was becoming one. Indeed, over the past few years I have frequently heard from members that the successes we celebrate each year make them proud to be part of their professional association.

I would like to share some of our policy successes from 2010. But before I do, I'd like to note that our strong membership is going to get even stronger this year, in part, because of our ongoing retention and recruitment efforts, and also because of the personal liability protection required of all nurses practising in the province. As you know, the government introduced new legislation (*Bill 179*) that requires all practising, regulated health-care professionals, including nurses, to have personal coverage against professional liability. RNAO members are eligible for assistance from the Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS) as an automatic, free membership benefit. While some RNs may join reluc-

tantly and only due to this new requirement, I am confident that our proven success – year after year – will ease that reluctance and quickly replace it with a sense of empowerment and excitement.

So what do members – seasoned and new – have to be excited about?

In 2010, thanks to your

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passionate voices and our policy, advocacy and communications work, the government announced the sites for Ontario's 25 additional NP-led clinics, and several of these have already opened their doors to the public. In addition, we've seen increased awareness of NPs' scope of practice in acute care and the urgent need for NPs to admit, treat, transfer and discharge patients in in-patient settings. We continue to make this a priority because approval of this expanded scope will better patients' overall experience as they move through the system.

Two other important goals became a reality in 2010. The first was in May, when Health Minister Deb Matthews announced the permanent and full funding of registered

nurse first assistants (RNFA). This put an end to our annual fight to secure funding for this important role. The second came in December, when she informed us of the expansion and permanent funding of our long-term care best practice coordinators program from eight coordinators to 14. These specially trained nurses have

brought much needed gains to the sector.

RNAO also saw tremendous success on the legislative front last year. We played a central role as part of an advisory panel to operationalize *The Excellent Care for All Act (Bill 46)*, which will forever alter the role of nurses. On the first day of this year, regulations came into effect that ensure chief nursing executives are members of hospital boards and quality committees. As well, medical advisory committees no longer have power to make recommendations that relate to the quality of care provided by NPs who are hospital employees. These changes would not have happened without RNAO at the table. *Bill 46* also demands a focus on evidence-based practice and the nursing

community is ahead of the curve thanks to our leadership in clinical and healthy work environment best practice guideline development, implementation and evaluation.

Lastly, the seeds we planted in 2010 will no doubt lead to some fruitful partnerships and important initiatives in 2011. One such seed was the *First Invitational Summit for Public Health Nursing*, which was held in April. Hosted by RNAO and the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP), it was terrific and will lead to much-needed and important work and influence.

This is a snapshot of what RNAO was up to on the policy front in 2010, and it's all been achieved through the vision, hard work, unwavering commitment and strength of our 30,765 members. I know you join me in looking forward to many more RNs becoming part of the RNAO family. Our voices and collective actions will make our influence on health, health care and nursing simply unstoppable. **RN**

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