

Welcome home



On Jan. 26, RNAO opened its doors to formally welcome almost 300 of our members, friends, and supporters of nursing to our new home at 158 Pearl Street. The move is the culmination of years of dreaming and hard work from RNAO members, their elected representatives, and home office staff. Following your approval at last year's AGM to purchase the 120-year-old building, RNAO director of finance and administration Nancy Campbell tirelessly spearheaded an ambitious agenda to create an environment that each of our 24,000 members (and growing) and 60 staff can be proud of. Indeed, it's a testament to your awesome dedication and that of our staff that, exactly 10 years after we left our offices on Price Street, RNAO once again finds itself in a home to call its own. From Price to Pearl Street, what a fitting name for our collective success!

As I walk through the halls of our new home, I find myself in awe of the incredible progress RNAO has made – and of how quickly time has passed. On April 1, 2006, I celebrated 10 years as executive director of our association. It has been an exciting decade, filled with incredible achievements that have laid a strong foundation for nursing in Ontario. During my first interview in *Registered Nurse Journal* as executive director, I talked about how important it is for every member to get involved in RNAO, to move forward at a grassroots level to build an association, profession and health-care system we can all be proud of. I stated: Nursing cannot afford nurses who are divorced from involvement. The association needs to be owned much more by its members. I committed to build and strengthen RNAO's influence everywhere. Now, as I look around me and see so many members speaking out for health and nursing in their own communities, I am truly humbled.

From political action that gives nurses a voice in strengthening Medicare and nursing, to writing letters to your local newspaper about nurses' perspectives. We see the results all around us. Just five years ago, we created together the executive network structure to tap into the leadership and talents of members across our far-flung RNAO family. Thanks to the countless hours so many of you devote to RNAO, we have achieved magnificent outcomes. Politicians now call us asking to participate in *Take Your MPP to Work*. And just between September and December of 2005, RNAO executive and members were

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quoted in more than 350 health-care stories in newspapers and on radio and television stations across the province. Reporters are frequently accessing nurses' perspectives on social and health issues. And they are tapping into the extensive knowledge nurses generate by referencing RNAO programs such as the *Nursing Best Practice Guidelines Program* (BPG) in stories about important topics such as childhood obesity and the abuse of women. This is the power of nursing!

Another remarkable achievement is our membership growth. Our consistent and clear values – and our strong and courageous voice – have attracted thousands to join. Yes, RNAO's membership has increased by 12,000 RNs over the last 10 years. That's 12,000 more voices that are speaking out to support healthy public policy and nursing – pillars that we know

anchor a resilient and vibrant society.

Over the last 10 years, nursing's foundation has settled and solidified thanks to so many important advancements in the profession: the introduction of the baccalaureate entry to practice; the legislation and employment of the nurse practitioner role; the germination and growth of the BPG Program – first only clinical and now also healthy work environments; and our progress toward providing 70 per cent of RNs with full-time work. Each of these is a brick that all of our members have helped to craft and lay with care to build a stronger nursing profession, that, in turn, will strengthen and sustain Medicare – in its letter and in its spirit.

But as nurses, we know our profession can only be as strong as the foundation we build. That's why RNAO has brought its expert advice to the government as it moves ahead with its transformation agenda including forming Local Health Integration Networks, reducing surgical and other wait times, and creating family health teams. And it's why RNAO continues to speak out on the importance of a not-for-profit health-care system, and the need to narrow the growing gap between the rich and the poor so that all Canadians have access to basic human needs including income, shelter, education and, of course, health care. And, it's why we will continue to advocate for a clean environment and a peaceful world.

As we get settled into our new home together, I dream about the endless challenges and opportunities that will come our way over the next 10 years. I know that together we can continue with our dreams, because I know that we are fully capable of building the necessary bridges to transform these dreams into realities. Speaking out for health, speaking out for nursing is easier than ever.

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IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RNAO.