

# Many wonderful milestones define my time as president



**Looking back on my** two years as president of RNAO, one of the things for which I will be forever grateful is how much I have learned from you. Much of this education has come from listening. It was something that I vowed to do when I was first interviewed in this *Journal* in April of 2006 and something I am proud to say I have accomplished. For me, listening and leadership go hand in hand, so it was important that my mandate reflect the voice of you, the members.

One of the first examples of listening involved resolution #1, a call for members to engage in an open and transparent consultation about RNAO's relations with the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA). As a result of that consultation, we learned that our partnership with CNA was – and still is – important to our members. It was also clear that nurses wanted to see more concrete action from CNA in the areas of Medicare and the social determinants of health. Although the relationship between CNA and RNAO is a positive one, our national body has more work to do to become the advocacy voice we all desire. Your views in this regard guided the decision-making of the board throughout my term. And, as a result of your sage advice, I feel we have built a stronger relationship with CNA.

You told us that Canadians need to hear a strong voice in support of our publicly funded system. That's why, after presenting the concept at the CNA board, we will soon launch a national group called *Nurses for Medicare*. This movement, led by RNAO, will actively mobilize nurses and friends of nurses across Canada to defend our health-care system and advocate for public policies that strengthen it.

Here at home, our advocacy work has been focused on reducing poverty, improving the environment and calling for a greater focus on illness prevention and health pro-

motion. We've also pushed for a moratorium on private/public partnerships (P3s) as a way of funding our public hospitals, and for an end to competitive bidding in home care.

During my time in office, I've witnessed positive policy initiatives that support the nursing workforce. I remember back in May 2006, while attending one of my first press conferences as your new president, an announcement made by Minister Smitherman about the *Nursing Graduate Guarantee*. This was something RNAO had called for years earlier. The program began in 2007 and is now expanding due to its success. This is incredible news because we need

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tomorrow's nurses to know they can find full-time work in their home province. The *Nursing Graduate Guarantee* provides a head start for those beginning their careers, but we cannot ignore those in the workforce who do not have full-time work. We will not rest until the number of nurses working full time in Ontario reaches 70 per cent.

One of the most pleasing milestones during my tenure as president was news that the first nurse practitioner-led clinic was opening in Sudbury. What a quantum leap for primary care in Ontario, and in Canada. We will continue to help move the nursing profession forward by proposing 25 new nurse practitioner-led clinics and a commitment to increase the nursing workforce by 9,000

nurses. These are now part of the Liberal government platform and I am confident that once these promises are realized, they will enable us to more fully meet the care needs of all Ontarians.

I'm very proud of our leadership in building and disseminating clinical and healthy work environment best practice guidelines (BPG) that advance nursing practice far beyond Ontario. Recognition for this work and our sphere of influence is global. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the tremendous people behind the BPG team and the amazing work they are doing to build respect for nurses' clinical knowledge and improve patient care.

Through my time as a board member and as president of RNAO, I have learned that we are truly a grassroots democracy. This is our power and our strength. The association's approach to health-care issues, including the nursing workforce, is enabled by our solidarity. Thank you to members for your support, and thank you to my fellow board members, Executive Director Doris Grinspun, and the staff at home office for their incredible leadership and hard work.

Although I am stepping down as president, I will not be far away. I want to wish our next president, Wendy Fucile, well as we continue to work together to make RNAO even stronger by speaking out for health and speaking out for nursing. I would also like to leave you with the words of Rainer Maria Rilke, author of *Letters to a Young Poet*: “If we think of this existence of the individual as a larger or smaller room, it appears evident that most people learn to know only a corner of their room, a place by the window, a strip of floor on which they walk up and down.” This is not our path at RNAO. It is not for us to watch through the window. We have great capacity and reach in our future, and we will realize it not as observers but as active participants in the world. Be courageous my colleagues. Keep up the great work. **RN**

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IS PRESIDENT OF RNAO.