



It's been an honour to be your president

I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE I AM WRITING my last column as your president. The past two years have been a whirlwind of activity for the association, the profession and the health system.

When I took on this role in the spring of 2014, I was asked what I hoped RNAO would achieve. I said I would like to see [RNAO's Enhancing Community Care for Ontarians \(ECCO\)](#) report become Ontario's reality. Today, I can proudly say this report has been influential and has left an indelible mark. ECCO was referenced by Health Minister Eric Hoskins, and its ideas were captured in his blueprint for system transformation, released last December.

The ideas in ECCO were not always popular. Dissolving Community Care Access Centres (CCAC), aligning public health with Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN), and giving LHINs responsibility and accountability for whole health system planning and funding were bold and controversial. RNAO is values- and evidence-driven, and we remain firm in our conviction that the system isn't serving people as it should. There is duplication and needless waste of taxpayers' money, and yet we have gaps and fragmented care. We know the key to creating a better system is to insist primary care be its anchor. By transferring RNs who work for CCACs into primary care, and giving them responsibility for care

co-ordination and health system navigation, patients with complex needs will benefit. Augmenting structural reform with independent RN prescribing – one of three models being considered by the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC) – will further unlock timely access to health services.

I am also very proud that

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RNAO's tireless advocacy persuaded the government to create and fund the attending NP role, so that residents in long-term care benefit from NP expertise. After nine years without a pay increase, we were also thrilled to convince government to improve compensation for primary care NPs who have earned 20 per cent less than their colleagues in hospitals and CCACs. RNAO dedicated substantive time and resources to this advocacy because wage disparity causes recruitment and retention challenges that affect access.

During my tenure, we also made our voices heard on important national issues, such as end-of-life care. Thousands of you participated in RNAO webinars. You questioned,

probed, and made me reconsider my own assumptions. I am proud to say that policy makers at the provincial and federal level know the views of RNs, NPs and nursing students because of our detailed submissions on what needs to be taken into consideration when drafting legislation and protocols governing end-of-life care.

RNAO also put a stop to

medical tourism. And, we were front-and-centre in the fight for the rights of refugee claimants denied health care. We provided – and will continue to provide – support to bring refugees from Syria. Now, we are pursuing partnerships for a comprehensive national pharmacare plan.

During the past two years, RNAO has not shied away from its commitment to advocate for policies that lift people out of poverty and address climate change. The results speak for themselves. Politicians better understand the link between poverty and ill health, and Ontario took a great step forward by putting a price on carbon emissions in its recent budget.

The role of president has allowed me to travel across the province and meet many of you.

Whether we were exchanging views on health system transformation, end-of-life care, or the board of directors' decision to move towards voluntary CNA membership, I want you to know that your perspectives were heard and considered because every member counts.

RNAO is a voluntary professional association with elevated accountability. Our direction is focused on delivering value to our members and to our province. And, we deliver in spades.

Belonging to RNAO is how you demonstrate that you are engaged in your profession and you want a better life for all Ontarians. Together we have fought against RN replacement. Your responsiveness fuels us to keep moving forward. More than 18,000 of you signed our action alert, and we won't let up until this practice ends.

Your engagement is inspiring, and for that I thank you. I also want to thank my fellow board members and our CEO for their commitment and fantastic work. As I prepare to hand the president's gavel to Carol Timmings in May, I am inspired, proud and feeling positive about the changes we have been part of – and those yet to come. Our association and profession are strong, and poised to become even stronger. **RN**

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