

Year ahead promises excitement, difficulty



For those of you who were able to join in the celebrations at RNAO's 84th Annual General Meeting (AGM), my thanks – for your presence, your wisdom, your enthusiasm and most importantly your support for the ongoing work of RNAO. For those of you who were not able to join us, I want to assure you that while we partied, we also worked hard on your behalf.

Our AGM was truly a wonderful celebration, in all the meanings of that word. The concept of “celebration” contains within it the notion not only of festivity but also of commemoration. It is a time to observe, to remember. A time to gather together our energy and our resources to salute our past, reflect on our present, and prepare for our future.

The 765 individuals who were present experienced that whole range. We had moments to pause and reflect, remembering, for example, Sheela Basrur, now gone from us but very much present at last year's AGM.

We were also able to reflect on the outstanding achievements of those many agencies – hospital, nursing home, community – recognized for their success as Best Practice Spotlight Organizations (BPSO). And it was heartening as well to hear that applications to join that select group continue to grow. An entire LHIN and our first university school of nursing were accepted as BPSO candidates in our most recent call for applications. The impact of best practice guidelines continues to grow – from one year to the next, from one workplace to the next, and even to countries well beyond our borders.

We were also able to celebrate the individual success of award winners profiled in this *Journal* (pg. 19). These nurses have put their stamp so very clearly on our shared profession and very much to the benefit of all those we serve.

And then there were the politicians. To some extent, the impact of our voice at the provincial government is measured by the degree to which our AGM becomes a particular moment in time in the busy schedules of the political movers and shakers in Ontario. It was a pleasure to welcome and to hear from Premier Dalton McGuinty, David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Andrea Horwath, the new leader of the NDP, and Elizabeth Witmer, Deputy Leader for the PC party. It was also lovely to have the company of

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John Tory, former leader of the PC party, who wanted to celebrate RNAO's accomplishments with us. It is without a doubt a sign of your success as members – individually and collectively – that the voice of RNAO, that our discussions, our views, our concerns, inform the strategy and policy of each party elected to office in our provincial legislature.

The coming year promises to be both exciting and difficult. We look forward to the expected release of RFPs for an additional 22 nurse practitioner-led clinics; our

suggested amendments to the government's legislation regarding scope of practice for NPs; and our changes regarding legislation to reduce toxics in our environment.

But, as is always the case, there will be difficulties to overcome as well. And overcome them we will, for we must, if we are to meet our mandate. We look forward to working with you and hearing from you on all of the challenges ahead. Please watch your inboxes as our very successful action alert program will be in full gear.

Medicare, that fundamental Canadian commitment that values a publicly funded, publicly administered and not-for-profit health-care system, remains under siege by those who would exploit illness for profit, who would play on fears about access and service to benefit their own interests. As the economic challenges of our time play out around the world, there can be no question that the health of those affected by economics will be placed at greater risk. No question that this is the time when rapid, equitable access to care is more needed than ever. No question that the discussion should be on expansion, not contraction, of this most Canadian of public service programs. In conjunction with our national partners at CNA, RNAO will continue to push forward in the quest to see both a national pharmacare program and national home care added to the Medicare basket of universal services.

And then there are the issues of quality and public accountability. As attempts to introduce new unregulated roles (such as physician assistants) into our health-care system ramp up, so does our work in ensuring that the public is aware – fully aware – of the risks that come with abbreviated education models, a lack of regulatory oversight, and a high price tag for taxpayers.

Difficult? YES. Exciting? VERY. Achievable? YES, if we remain active, vocal and committed. **RN**

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PRESIDENT OF RNAO.