

Taking the long view towards meeting our goals



Over the last few months, several issues regarding RNAO's advocacy have resulted in success, and in challenges yet to be conquered. As I look back on our work, I am struck by how easy it is for our vision and perception of things to be distorted by the ever-growing need for immediate results, gratification and success. This is a risky approach, particularly as it relates to the efforts of our association's members and staff to affect critical changes that will improve the health of Ontarians and the quality of work-life for nurses. It is an approach we must reject out of hand if we want to realize the long-term success we seek. I suppose this could be seen as a 'glass half full, half empty' sort of thing, but that comparison does not fully represent my concern. That image is too static, and I refuse to accept that we would ever be satisfied with a half-full option as an end point.

As RNs and members of an influential professional association, we have accomplished critical things together in the last several months. We have made gains, for example, through changes that have been proposed in legislation to allow RNs to dispense drugs, and the introduction of language that paves the way for open prescribing for nurse practitioners. Is this our half-full glass? Should we accept this as 'sufficient'? No way! We can still fill the glass. We need strong regulations that will allow NPs to admit, treat and discharge patients in hospitals and other in-patient settings. And if the government wants to see more collaboration among health-care professionals, it needs to replace hospital medical advisory committees with inter-professional advisory committees that include nurses and other professionals. This is a situation that requires a sustained commitment to continue to walk down a road, with obstacles in the way, to reach a destination we can see, but which is obscured

for others by fear of change and loss of control. We should celebrate our successes in reaching this point on the road and strengthen our conviction as we continue to advocate and walk towards our full vision on this issue.

We have seen the same sort of thing in the area of environmental action. Remember the joy of celebration when the first community enacted anti-pesticide bylaws? What if we had stopped there? Would we have the legislation today that

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bans the cosmetic use of pesticides across the province? Almost certainly not. By taking the long view, we have achieved one stage in our journey to improve environmental health. Ahead on that road is toxics legislation, and the critical need to urge the province to enact a law that effectively removes them from our environment. This issue also requires a long view of the journey ahead. We are not yet at the end of this road.

Over the last several months, we have

also seen serious challenges and made real gains on an issue in which our journey is just getting started. Some health settings are implementing models of care in a way that does not reflect what the evidence tells us is best for patients and best for nurses. I'm referring to continuity of care and caregiver, and the need to ensure RNs deliver care for all patients who are unstable, complex and/or unpredictable and RPNs deliver care for stable patients with predictable outcomes, each working to their full scope of practice. This is a contentious issue, so the easy choice is to stop our journey where we have made early gains (see letter on page 23). Easy, but wrong. We must acknowledge that there will be times when the changes RNAO is pursuing won't be popular with everyone. In fact, that was the case when we first began calling for 70 per cent full-time employment. Conflict is a normal part of any change process, and avoiding it will serve neither us, nor the people of this province. We will continue to walk this long road, with a clear vision of a goal that is good for Ontarians' health, for nurses, and for the profession. It's never our intention to start a fight, create enmity, or foster discord. We will continue to walk respectfully, but firmly.

In some ways, the path RNAO is on is similar to another long journey currently underway. The Olympic torch is now travelling across our country to Vancouver for the Winter Games. That too is a long journey that is sometimes contentious. It is also a journey that occurs in 'legs,' one section of the road at a time. It involves the efforts of the runners who carry the flame, and the people who support the runner. It's also a journey moving towards a clear goal.

So we ask you to join in taking a long view, to growing steadily over time, to continuing to walk towards our goals as an association. We know we will get there with the commitment of members like you. **RN**

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