

RNAO'S PROUD PAST

Highlights and accomplishments of the association's history.

1901

- A number of Ontario nurses attend the International Council of Nurses meeting in Buffalo, N.Y. This experience stimulates interest in creating a provincial organization.

1904

- The Graduate Nurses' Association of Ontario (GNAO) is formed from the alumni groups of various Ontario nursing schools. The GNAO is the forerunner of RNAO. Its mandate is to encourage nurses' professional development.

1922

- Through the efforts of the GNAO, a *Nurses' Registration Act* is passed by the Ontario government.

1925

- The Ontario association's name is changed under the *Ontario Companies Act* to be known as the **Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO)**.

1930

- An RNAO committee is formed to create a loan fund (now known as the Permanent Education Fund) to assist members in financing post-basic nursing courses.

1935

- RNAO is instrumental in developing standards for nursing education and practice, and subsequently closes 37 small schools of nursing in Ontario that do not meet its requirements. The association protects the title "registered nurse" by making registration mandatory.

1951

- The *Nurses' Registration Act, 1951*, a culmination of years of effort and a milestone in the history of nursing in Ontario, is passed, giving the association responsibility for: creating regulations regarding standards of admission to schools of nursing; determining courses of study in these schools; setting examinations for registration; and issuing, renewing, and cancelling certificates of registration.

1956

- At the annual meeting, a decision is made to investigate the feasibility of collective bargaining for the nursing profession in Ontario. A program of voluntary negotiation with employers is adopted, with the ultimate purpose of seeking legislation providing for compulsory arbitration if necessary.

1957

- In response to membership requests, RNAO applies for exemption from the terms of the *Ontario Labour Relations Act*. Such exemption, if granted, means nurses can't be forced,

as a condition of employment, to join trade and labour unions. The report of the Select Committee of the Legislature recommends RNAO and other recognized professional associations be excluded from the terms of the act.

1960

- RNAO, at the request of Ontario's Ministry of Health (MOH), studies the feasibility and advisability of formation of a college of nurses in Ontario, a body to be authorized by the government to administer a statute or act respecting nurses and to implement its terms.

1963

- The *Nurses' Act, 1961-62*, is proclaimed in January, establishing the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO). With this change in legislation, registration becomes the responsibility of the college rather than RNAO.

1964

- Following a study by Dr. John Crispo on the feasibility of collective bargaining and compulsory arbitration, the annual meeting passes a resolution authorizing the board of directors to secure special legislation, which would give RNs, through RNAO, the right to bargain collectively with their employers and to submit items in dispute to binding arbitration.

1965

- Draft legislation for collective bargaining for nurses is presented in the form of a brief to government. When it appears obvious the government is not going to act on proposed legislation, membership endorses the principle that collective bargaining be initiated in any way deemed advisable by the nurses involved. The program of collective bargaining under the *Labour Relations Act* begins.

1967

- To commemorate Canada's centennial, the association establishes the category "member emeritus," which grants the privileges of regular membership for life after 40 consecutive years of RNAO membership.

1970

- Members can enrol in an RNAO-sponsored professional liability (malpractice) insurance plan.
- Through negotiation, RNAO's testing service becomes the property of the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), forming the nucleus of national testing service.

1973

- RNAO supports the establishment of a central vehicle for collective bargaining for nurses, and endorses the formation of the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA).
- A statement on nurse midwifery is accepted at the annual meeting, setting the stage for RNAO's promotion of this role.

1974

- ONA is certified by the Labour Relations Board. RNAO transfers activities related to collective bargaining to ONA.

1975

- RNAO marks its 50th anniversary.

1976

- RNAO approves a one-year pilot project to collect data to serve as a basis for development of a possible structure for RNAO interest groups. The aim is to develop a system whereby groups can be connected to the association.

1979

- The structure of RNAO is revised through bylaw changes at the annual meeting. A smaller board of directors – with 12 regional representatives, five members-at-large, a president and president-elect – is created. An assembly of presidents is also formed.
- Formal recognition is given to interest groups within RNAO. Six are developed during the extended pilot project.
- RNAO's board of directors adopts the position that baccalaureate nursing preparation be the entry level to the practice of nursing as an RN.
- RNAO continues to meet quarterly with the Minister of Health. RNAO documents presented include: *RNAO Position Paper on Health Care Costs*; *RNAO Statement on the Role of the Registered Nurse in the Operating Room*; *Standards for the Organization and Administration of the Nursing Department, Public Health Units*; *RNAO Position Paper on Continuing Education for Registered Nurses*.

1984

- RNAO provides a nursing presence throughout Phases I and II of the Grange Inquiry hearings. The inquiry examined unexplained deaths of babies at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.
- RNAO submits a brief and makes an oral presentation to the Bovey Commission on the Future Development of Universities of Ontario.

1986

- The voluntary Legal Assistance Program (LAP) is established by RNAO to assist nurses with legal problems that may arise in work-related circumstances.

1989

- The Minister of Health announces amendments to *Regulation 518/88 of the Public Hospitals Act*, an act that enables nurses to participate in decision-making related to administrative, financial, operational and planning matters in the hospital. RNAO advocated for these changes for over eight years.

1990

- *Health Professions Regulations Act* (HPRA) is to the legislature for first reading in the spring of 1990. RNAO supports the egalitarian principles of this act, and is concerned about the *Nursing Act*. RNAO lobbied government to reintroduce HPRA after the September 1990 elections. RNAO worked on this issue for 10 years.

1995

- RNAO celebrates its 70th anniversary.

1998

- A report entitled: *Putting Out the Health Care Fire* is submitted to Premier Mike Harris at a March meeting with RNAO.
- Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer announces the creation of the *Provincial Nursing Task Force* at RNAO's Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- The RNAO *Centre for Professional Development* is launched.

1999

- Minister Witmer announces \$500,000 in funding to RNAO's *Centre for Professional Development* (the name changed in 2001 to the *Centre for Professional Nursing Excellence*) to lead, in collaboration with the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (RPNAO), a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan for the province.
- The Workplace Liaison Program is launched with two pilot sites.
- The *Nursing Education Initiative* (NEI) reimbursement fund is launched in March.

2000

- The association celebrates its 75th anniversary.
- An announcement is made by Minister Witmer and Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, that, beginning in 2005, a baccalaureate degree will be the educational requirement for RNs practising in Ontario.
- RNAO focuses on the preservation of the *Canada Health Act* and joins forces with nursing organizations across the province to call for a moratorium on the privatization of health care in Ontario.
- RNAO spearheads the formation of the *Coalition for Primary Health Care* to fully endorse the primary health care strategy from the Health Services Restructuring Commission.
- RNAO lobbies for – and welcomes – the announcement of the new chief nursing officer position created by the provincial government as part of its senior management team.
- RNAO, in collaboration with RPNAO, submits a report entitled: *Ensuring the Care Will be There: Report on Nursing Recruitment and Retention in Ontario* to the Minister of Health, which drives provincial recruitment and retention efforts.
- RNAO is assigned by the MOH to lead the advanced clinical fellowships and training fellowships for RNs in the province.
- The association launches its *Take your MPP to Work* program, which allows political leaders to hear first-hand from nurses.
- RNAO is assigned by the Ministry of Health (MOH) to lead a major project on the development, implementation, and evaluation of nursing Best Practice Guidelines (BPG) for Ontario.

2001

- RNAO issues the report entitled: *Earning Their Return: When and Why Ontario RNs Left Canada, and What Will Bring Them Back*, the first of its kind in Canada.

- The BPG program, along with the *Centre for Professional Excellence*, organizes the first international BPG conference held in Toronto.

2002

- RNAO begins a public awareness campaign entitled *Speak Out Ontario*, which intends to raise the level of public debate and support for a publicly-funded, universally accessible, not-for-profit health-care system.
- RNAO launches a new website service to connect Ontario's health-care employers with RNs called *RN Careers*.
- RNAO responds to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (Kirby Commission) on the final volume of its report on Canada's health-care system: *Recommendations for Reform*. This report contains sound proposals to invest in Canadian health care – though its willingness to expand the use of for-profit health care is alarming to RNAO.
- RNAO endorses the final report of the Romanow Commission, *Building on Values: The Future of Health Care in Canada*.
- The BPG program launches its first four guidelines, all related to care for the elderly, at RNAO's international conference.
- The BPG program launches the Best Practice Champions Network by inviting interested health-care organizations to nominate key individuals in their organizations to participate in the network and promote, influence and implement BPGs in their setting.
- The BPG program launches an international collaborative with organizations from the U.K., Scotland, Netherlands, Australia and the U.S. The first Nursing International Collaborative in Evidence-based Implementation and Research with Guidelines (NICEBIRG) is held in Oxford, England.

2003

- RNAO reschedules its 78th AGM from April to September due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak. The association supports the nursing community during the outbreak. SARS takes the lives of 44 Ontarians; two are nursing colleagues who worked with SARS patients: Nelia Laroza, 51, and Tecla Lin, 57. RNAO representatives attend both funerals.
- RNAO delivers a formal request to Premier Ernie Eves asking Ontario to order an independent commission of inquiry under the *Public Inquires Act* into the SARS outbreak. In response, Premier Eves announces an independent investigation into the outbreak that falls short of a full public inquiry.
- RNAO leads, in collaboration with RPNAO, *VIANurse*, an electronic registry, maintained confidentially on RNAO's website, of RNs and RPNs who are willing to be voluntarily immediately available for deployment to an Ontario health-care facility that has been deemed emergency status.
- RNAO releases a report called *Survey of Casual and Part-Time Registered Nurses in Ontario*.
- On September 29, RNAO releases another report: *SARS Unmasked: Celebrating Resilience, Exposing Vulnerability: A Report on the Nursing Experience with SARS in Ontario*.

- The Healthy Work Environments BPG Project, funded by the MOH, is designed to support health-care organizations in creating and sustaining positive environments for nurses through ready access to evidence-based guidelines.
- The RNAO-led BPG doctoral fellowship program initiative is launched, in partnership with the MOH. It aims to develop research capacity in the evaluation of clinical outcomes, as well as financial and system outcomes associated with the implementation of RNAO BPGs.
- The BPG program releases the guideline implementation resource: *Toolkit: Implementation of Clinical Practice Guidelines*.
- The first annual Best Practice Summer Institute is held at the Nottawasaga Inn in Alliston, Ontario.
- Health Canada announces it will provide over \$2-million in funding to projects that address priority issues facing Canada's nursing workforce. RNAO is granted \$800,000 to disseminate BPGs, encourage their implementation and provide learning opportunities across the country.
- RNAO launches its Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) program. This new project is a three-year partnership between selected organizations and RNAO, sponsored by the MOH in support of implementation and evaluation of BPGs.

2004

- The BPG program is funded by Health Canada to conduct 20 full-day workshops on BPGs across the country, to translate several BPGs into French, and to fund two BPSOs in provinces outside Ontario.

2005

- In January, RNAO, with the University of Ottawa's School of Nursing, launch the Nursing Best Practice Research Unit (NBPRU). The NBPRU strives to promote nursing excellence through the study of the best strategies to promote the uptake of research results in all aspects of nursing care and the nursing work environment.
- RNAO receives funding from the MOH to develop a strategic plan to enhance nursing contributions to innovations in health care related to electronic applications, now known as the **e-Health Project**.
- RNAO releases *The 70 per cent Solution* report, which shows that government efforts to increase full-time work for RNs are starting to pay off – but the goal of having 70 per cent of all RNs working full-time will not be met without more targeted funding and better working conditions for nurses.
- At the end of November, and to ramp up efforts for the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, RNAO proudly launches the *Woman Abuse: Screening, Identification and Initial Response BPG*.

2006

- RNAO's celebrates its new building on Toronto's Pearl Street with an open house. Over 100 RNAO members, politicians and members of the media attend. The government also announces a Retention Trust Fund to be managed by RNAO, ONA, and RPNAO.
- The Ontario government announces guidelines for the Tuition Support Program for Nurses, which is part of the government's commitment to provide more families with access to primary health care, and to support the recruitment and retention of nurses to rural and remote areas across the province. The program follows RNAO's recommendation *Back to Ensuring the Care Will Be There* report issued in 2000.
- The Government and Elder Health Coalition (RNAO is the founding member), works on a vision for elder health in Ontario. The paper, entitled *Seniors and Equity* was released in the fall. RNAO and the Ontario government also partner to deliver the fifth annual invitational think tank with the Elder Health Coalition.
- RNAO signs a contract with the Beijing Nightingale Consultation of Culture Co. Ltd. (BNCC), to develop educational programs for nurses in China.
- RNAO holds the Opening Spotlight Organization launch and professional retreat to announce 12 innovative three-year partnerships with provincial health-care organizations to implement and evaluate nursing BPGs.
- By April 2006, three more BPGs are developed – *Developing and Sustaining Nursing Leadership*; *Interventions for Postpartum Depression*; and *Nursing Management of Hypertension* (the latter created in partnership with the Heart and Stroke Foundation).
- RNAO's summer institutes become a hot commodity with the association's inaugural *Creating Healthy Workplaces Summer Institute*.

2007

- The first nurse practitioner-led clinic is launched in Sudbury under the leadership of NPs Marilyn Butcher and Roberta Heale. On August 30, Ontario's Minister of Health George Smitherman attends the official grand opening of the clinic, with RNAO's executive director in attendance.
- The Healthy Work Environments BPG program completes three additional guidelines: *Developing and Sustaining Nursing Leadership*; *Collaborative Practice among Nursing Teams*; and *Professionalism in Nursing*.

2008

- RNAO is an active participant of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC) public hearings across the province, which examine changes in legislation that will expand the scope of NPs' practice, and allow them to practice more autonomously.
- The personal digital assistants (PDA) project focuses on developing software applications based on the RNAO Clinical and Healthy Work Environment BPGs in order to optimize access to research and utilization of best practices by point-of-care nurses.
- The Centre for Professional Nursing Excellence is involved in a major international initiative: an international conference and workshops in Beijing, China to be held in October. Over 300 participants attend *Nurses: the Solution in Health Care Transformation*.

- Those who wish to support the work of RNAO, but do not meet the criteria of “member” or “associate,” can become a “Friend of RNAO,” a new category approved at the 2008 AGM.
- Two new topic areas are identified as areas of focus for the Healthy Work Environment BPG project: *Violence Prevention in the Workplace* and *Practice Education in Nursing*.

2009

- Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and David Caplan, Ontario’s Minister of Health, come to RNAO home office in person to announce the successful proponents for the next three NP-led clinics in Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay and Belle River, modelled after the first in Sudbury.
- RNAO takes a leadership role in the *Safer Healthcare Now!* national falls collaborative, which aims to reduce falls and injury from falls by 40 per cent in enrolled long-term care homes across Canada.
- RNAO hosts John Gerretsen, Minister of the Environment, MPPs, environmental, and health activists to celebrate the introduction of the most progressive cosmetic pesticide regulations in North America. RNAO was pivotal in helping to enact these regulations.
- The inaugural **Practice Academe Innovation Collaboration award** is presented to representatives of RNAO, the joint RNAO/University of Ottawa NBPRU and 21 designated BPSOs. The award recognizes the significance and value of collaborative efforts between nursing practice and academia to improve the health of people internationally.
- RNAO is acknowledged by the Canadian Dental Association for its contribution to oral health promotion. The **Oral Health Promotion Award** is given to RNAO for the BPG *Oral Health: Nursing Assessment and Interventions* and the related implementation resources that support its uptake.
- RNAO is honoured with the **Minister’s Award of Excellence** for its innovative approaches to enhancing nursing practice in long-term care.

2010

- MOH confirms that the nursing graduate full-time employment guarantee will continue.
- The health minister announces permanent funding to support RN first assists.
- In August, the government announces the remainder of the 25 NP-led clinics that were promised in the last election.
- RNAO’s communications department organizes a press conference with representatives from the Government of Spain, where the association announced its partnership with the Unidad de coordinacion y desarrollo de la Investigacion en Enfermeria (Investen-iscii) to advance evidence-based practice in the Spanish-speaking world, with the Spanish translation of its 42 BPGs.
- RNAO’s BPG app is now available to download from the Apple store. The app, which can be downloaded to an iPhone or iTouch, contains the condensed versions of RNAO's 42 clinical and healthy work environment BPGs.
- University of Hartford’s Faculty of Nursing in Connecticut becomes the association’s first international BPSO candidate in October 2010.

- RNAO's 86th AGM makes history: Premier Dalton McGuinty announces NPs will now be able to admit and discharge patients from in-patient hospital units. In another move to recognize the expertise of nurses, McGuinty acknowledges his government's recent work to amend the *Public Hospitals Act*, so that chief nurse executives have a seat on hospital boards and quality committees. He reveals the province is also mandating all 37 public health units in Ontario appoint a chief nursing officer by 2012.

2011

- BPG translations expand to include Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese.
- RNAO is invited to provide expertise on a long-term care task force on resident care and safety.
- Ontario's Ministry of Energy announces the permanent closure of two additional coal-fired generators, in partial response to an RNAO, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, and Ontario Clean Air Alliance campaign to close coal plants immediately.
- RNAO launches a groundbreaking Primary Care/Family Practice Nurses' Task Force to recommend adjustments to the role of RNs and RPNs in primary care settings.
- RNAO leads a federally-funded program with CNA to develop a curriculum aimed at preventing elder abuse. Ten long-term care facilities serve as Prevention of Elder Abuse Centres of Excellence (PEACE).
- RNAO signs BPSO agreements with two organizations in Chile, and BPSO Host agreements with Spain (eight BPSOs), and Australia (three BPSOs). An agreement is also signed with Brazil to translate BPGs into Portuguese.
- RNAO partners with Ontario to establish a central database of nursing-sensitive indicators for RNAO's clinical BPGs. Called *NQUIRE*, the database will play a critical role in understanding the impact of BPGs in the association's BPSOs.

2012

- The association is among key stakeholders invited to provide advice to a provincial panel developing a seniors' care strategy for the MOH.
- The association launches a comprehensive visioning exercise to map out a secure future for the nursing profession and the health-care system. Almost 2,000 members participate in webinars, focus groups, and surveys to help create a vision of what is needed so nurses can contribute their full expertise and potential for the benefit of patients today and in 2030.
- Canada's Minister of State for Seniors visits RNAO in June to announce funding for the association to create a BPG on the prevention of elder abuse.
- More BPGs are launched: *End of Life Care During the Last Days and Hours*; *Promoting Safety: Alternative Approaches to the Use of Restraints*; and *Preventing and Mitigating Nurse Fatigue in Health Care*.
- Canada's premiers and territorial leaders decide to focus on nation-wide adoption of clinical practice guidelines as a way of delivering higher-quality health outcomes at a lower cost. The premiers choose RNAO's guideline for diabetic foot ulcers as one of two guidelines for national implementation.

- RNAO launches the *Nurse Practitioner Utilization Toolkit* to provide NPs and hospital administrators with resources to operationalize NPs' legislative authority to admit, treat, transfer and discharge hospital in-patients.
- RNAO releases a landmark report, *Primary Solutions for Primary Care*, at a media conference in June. The report recommends Ontario maximize and expand the roles of RNs and RPNs who work in primary care, to improve access for patients and achieve greater system cost-effectiveness.
- RNAO releases its game-changing report, *Enhancing Community Care for Ontarians (ECCO)*, in October, which presents a model that advances a strong foundation for community care by anchoring the health system in primary care, and improving health-system integration among all sectors through a single planner and funder: the LHINs.
- During a media conference at Queen's Park, RNAO releases *Why Your Health Matters*, a policy platform that sends a clear message about the top priorities of RNs.
- Production of *Nursing Order Sets* begins, comprised of actionable nursing interventions based on RNAO's BPGs, to facilitate use at the point-of-care. RNAO partners with the International Council of Nurses for coding, and with PatientOrderSets.com for distribution.
- RNAO's BPSO program marks its 10th anniversary. Since its inception in 2003, 68 BPSOs, representing 298 sites in Ontario, Canada and around the world, have formally joined the designation, and are systematically implementing multiple BPGs and evaluating their impact on patients' health/clinical outcomes, as well as organizational and system performance.