



A year in reflection

THIS ISSUE OF THE *JOURNAL* includes coverage of RNAO's 2017 annual general meeting (AGM) (page 20). I was so pleased to be part of this year's festivities. The meeting capped my first year as your president, which can only be described as inspiring, thrilling and, yes, the highlight of my career.

As you may know, I missed last year's meeting because I had just lost my dear mother a few days before. She always inspired me and was so pleased when I had shared the news that I was taking on this role. She would have been so proud of the many accomplishments we have achieved together over the past 12 months.

I have met wonderful members, each a leader in their own right, whether working as a clinician, administrator, educator, researcher or policy maker. For example, during my fall tour, I remember speaking with staff members at a busy acute care hospital in northern Ontario who expressed concern about hospital overcrowding. They were providing care to patients in hallways and in tub rooms. They were doing their utmost to provide quality care and clearly putting the needs of the patients first to the best of their abilities. Another nurse, in a manager role, spoke about her staff working in a busy acute care emergency department and their incredible teamwork and commitment to supporting each other when the competing

demands seemed overwhelming. The dedication and compassion of these nurses made me so proud of our profession.

It is these and many other RNAO members that propel me – as your leader – to speak with

values, evidence and courage to advance nursing and healthy public policy in Ontario.

The power of RNAO is a power fuelled by the energy of its engaged, committed and active members. When you sign action alerts, meet with MPPs at Queen's Park or in your workplace during Nursing Week, it is your belief in our collective causes that marks a path for government to follow and makes RNAO the strong professional voice it is. Whether it is the social or environmental determinants of health, health system restructuring, the role of RNs and NPs, or the future prospects for nursing students, we share a common trajectory of collective action.

Over this past year, I have had the opportunity to "refine the art" of political engagement. This "art" requires a lot of preparation and some stressful moments, but I have learned to go with the flow.

We have much success to

celebrate, including independent RN prescribing and an expanded role for NPs prescribing controlled substances. Through such changes, the power of RNAO is making a difference in the lives of the people we care about most: our

The second example is RNAO's contribution to demystifying the flu vaccine. Immunization advances population health and reduces health disparities. As RNAO president, I was featured in a [video watched by thousands](#).

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patients, neighbours, friends and families.

Let me mention just two examples, among many, where the impact of RNAO made me proud, both as a member and as your president.

The first is supervised injection services (SIS). It was my workplace, Toronto Public Health, led by Dr. David McKeown, which spearheaded the charge to secure SIS. And it was RNAO that was approached to help make sure the change happened. RNAO members in the thousands pushed for funding, which was announced in [April's provincial budget](#). SIS is an essential component of a comprehensive harm reduction strategy. As a nurse leader in public health, I can speak to the evidence for that. Addiction is an illness and, just as we would with any illness, we need to respond with a comprehensive plan. I am proud that RNAO is now creating a best practice guideline on SIS.

Many wrote to thank me for lending my voice, and RNAO's voice, to this worthwhile cause.

Colleagues, I am half-way through my term and proud of the journey we have walked together. If our achievements this year are any indication of what the next year will bring, then, what can I say? With an RNAO board and assembly such as we have, with wise and engaged members like you, and the combined strength of 41,000 RNs, NPs and nursing students across all corners of this province, and added to this amazing list our expert staff led by a fearless CEO, well, the sky is the limit.

Anchored in our values, driven by evidence, and fuelled by courage, we will continue to make a difference for nurses, the people we serve, the organizations where we work, and the province in which we live with pride. **RN**

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