



My pledge: to support, serve and advocate

IT IS A PRIVILEGE AND HONOUR TO serve as RNAO's 55th president. When Carol Timmings passed the ceremonial gavel to me during RNAO's annual general meeting (AGM), I pledged to support, serve and advocate. That is my motto for my presidency.

For those of you who don't know me, I am sharing a bit of my journey from the bedside to the boardroom. I began my career in clinical practice, working in different sectors and different roles, including public health and primary care. Following two decades on the front-lines, I became an educator and researcher. I was a member of RNAO's board of directors from 1996 to 1998 and returned in 2014 as member-at-large for nursing research. In 2017, I was voted in as your president-elect. These experiences – past and present – have allowed me to witness first-hand RNAO's monumental and inspiring transformation from a relatively quiet organization to a powerhouse.

Throughout my career, I have been aware that leadership is key to improving patient outcomes. During my earlier role as a director of nursing, I proposed that we use the Association of Women's Health, Obstetrics and Neonatal Nurses' standards to increase the budget, ensuring adequate staffing in the hospital's maternity unit and positive health outcomes for new mothers. Every nurse has the power to be a leader simply by advocating for their patients.

An important part of advocating for patients is recognizing Ontario's diversity. Based on my clinical observations, we can do a better job delivering culturally competent care. When the care we provide matches a patient's or resident's perception of their

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health problems, incorporates their individual beliefs and practices into care planning, and meets their expectations for treatment, nurses are providing culturally competent care.

If you are not familiar with RNAO's best practice guideline *Embracing Diversity in Health Care: Developing Cultural Competence*, I encourage you to read it. And if you are conducting clinical research on patients or families, I encourage you to include culture as a variable in your studies. Adding culture to research studies provides a comprehensive approach and improves the credibility of findings. If your organization lacks cultural competence policies, you may also want to facilitate the development and implementation of them in your work settings.

Another way we can advocate for patients is to continue speaking out about the policy recommendations outlined in our election platform, *Improving health for all*. By the time you read this, the people of Ontario will

have already elected a new government. However, that does not change our resolve or our approach to our policy and political action. We will continue to engage all parties to ensure all our recommendations become policy.

Together with our board of directors and CEO, I will support you in advancing nurses as members of a vital, knowledge-driven, caring profession and significant contributors to health. We will do this by continuing to advocate for adequate numbers of RNs and NPs, and ensuring all practise to their full scope.

During my presidency, I will also continue to do what I have always done: promote the value of belonging to RNAO, the strongest professional association. We all have a role to play in stimulating membership, and we can achieve this together by encouraging colleagues, peers, nursing faculty, nursing students, staff nurses, administrators, executives, and former members to join RNAO. Nursing professors and instructors should also encourage their graduate nursing students to keep their RNAO membership and stay engaged in the association. Just think about the camaraderie, life-long friendships, professional growth, and opportunities to influence policy and practice, not

to mention RNAO's robust professional liability protection, which is included as a benefit of membership, and the Legal Assistance Program (LAP), which we can each choose to join.

We are 41,130 members strong and growing. It's my

goal to have 45,000 members by the end of my presidency in 2020. We can do it. And I want you to join me in achieving this important target.

Together we will build a stronger-than-ever RNAO and a stronger-than-ever Ontario.

Together we will resolve problems and issues.

Together we will make a difference in the health-care system and society.

We know we can do it because we know our collective voice has already made a difference.

Let's move forward with the same determination that has brought us unimaginable success. Let's show everyone what a committed and diverse group of RNs, NPs and nursing students can achieve.

Let us continue to be courageous, strong and a force to be reckoned with. **RN**

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