

REGISTERED NURSE JOURNAL

Registered Nurse Journal sat in on one of the many small group meetings that nurses had with MPPs during RNAO's 13th Annual Day at Queen's Park. Details from that meeting with Cabinet Minister Linda Jeffrey are included in the March-April issue of the Journal. We also caught up with members who attended meetings with Progressive Conservative Deputy Leader Christine Elliott and NDP MPP for Kenora-Rainy River, Sarah Campbell. Here's what the nurses had to say about the unique opportunity to meet face-to-face with an MPP...

SARAH CAMPBELL, NDP MPP, KENORA-RAINY RIVER

Kathleen Fitzgerald, RNAO's Region 12 representative on the board of directors, has attended the Annual Day at Queen's Park event for many years. But for Sarah Campbell, NDP MPP for Kenora-Rainy River, this year was her first. Fitzgerald says she was impressed by Campbell's receptiveness and interest in what nurses had to say.

One of the main topics of discussion during their hour-long meeting was the issue of OxyContin addiction in the north, and the recent decision to stop paying for the painkiller in Ontario. This, says Fitzgerald, will put a strain on health-care professionals who are already feeling the pinch. "It's going to create huge demands," she says. "It is a crisis right now in our region." Campbell "was very receptive" to the conversation, she says. "She knows the issues, she knows the challenges."

Another topic that cropped up was the potential for a public sector salary freeze, and the effect on nursing leaders at the mid-management level. A freeze would mean fewer RNs going into formalized leadership roles, says Fitzgerald, because unionized members are earning more working in bedside positions. Campbell listened, she says, and asked good questions about the topic.

Fitzgerald provided her contact information to Campbell when the meeting wrapped up. She also arranged to send RNAO's election platform from 2011 to the new MPP, as well as a copy of RNAO's recent annual report. "I was impressed she was looking for more information about RNAO. She wants to learn," says Fitzgerald. "She really did impress me as a politician, as an individual."

CHRISTINE ELLIOTT, DEPUTY LEADER FOR THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, AND MPP, WHITBY-OSHAWA

RNAO President David McNeil was upbeat about his group session with Conservative Deputy Leader Christine Elliott. "I think it went well," he says. "We had an opportunity to talk about issues important to her, and that aligned with RNAO's platform." In particular, the group discussed children's mental health. McNeil says the meeting was productive and focused on how to move the provincial government's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy forward.

Elliott, says McNeil, indicated she was meeting with the Minister of Health and would get the pulse on what is happening with that file.

When the group asked the Conservative MPP for advice on transforming Ontario's health-care system, her recommendation was for an all-party committee, says McNeil.

Overall, McNeil says the meeting was a positive one. "(There was) a real genuine willingness, I felt, that, regardless of political stripe, politicians want to work to make the system better."