



Making CNA membership a choice

YOUR RNAO BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BOD) is comprised of women and men from across the province, working in all sectors and all roles within nursing. As elected officials, the BOD is committed to RNAO's success and to a thriving nursing profession. The BOD makes decisions on behalf of members, and sometimes these decisions are difficult.

Over this past year, your BOD has focused on a key element of its fiduciary responsibility: that RNAO remain a fiscally sustainable organization. This has meant a thorough review of budgets, expenses and liabilities. RNAO CEO Doris Grinspun has acted to control expenses through cost-cutting, negotiating, and other means of resource allocation. The BOD examined liabilities around pensions, the Legal Assistance Program (LAP), real estate holdings, RNAO contracts with the Ministry of Health, and other services the association provides. Each has been reviewed to ensure financial risk and costs are managed confidently, and you can rest assured RNAO has a stable and sound financial base for the foreseeable future.

As part of this review, the BOD proposed an increase to membership fees – the first time in 14 years – as we could no longer absorb the rising cost of inflation (about 30 per cent). The proposed eight per cent fee increase was approved by members who voted for it prior to this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM). It will come into play

when you renew your membership on November 1, 2013.

It is in this context that the BOD also examined the risks associated with CNA membership fees being embedded in RNAO fees, as they are now, and without choice for members. The BOD had lengthy and open debates and decided to unbundle the fees and make CNA membership optional for RNAO members.

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You may ask: Why? What's the risk? First, under the old arrangement, any CNA fee increase would either reduce RNAO's revenues (if the RNAO fee remained unchanged) or it would bring about an increase in RNAO fees (if RNAO passed on the added fee to members). In either case, RNAO's financial sustainability becomes vulnerable to changes made externally for which it has no control. Under the new arrangement, the CNA membership fee will become optional and will be a “pass-through” cost for RNAO, thus reducing the financial risk for RNAO.

Second, a driving consideration was the BOD's knowledge of the financial uncertainty facing CNA in the years ahead.

There will be an important loss of revenues in 2015 resulting from a decision by regulatory bodies to drop CNA as the provider of the RN entry examination. Legislative changes in some jurisdictions are also forcing provincial organizations to separate their regulatory and advocacy functions, and their relationship and financial arrangements with CNA are being affected as a result.

It is important to emphasize that professional liability protection (PLP) through RNAO membership, provided by Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS), is not affected by the changes. CNPS and CNA are two separate organizations, and CNPS coverage will continue as a benefit for all members.

The notion of individual choice has always been a basic tenet of RNAO membership. You can choose to join RNAO, you can choose to join an interest group(s), and you can choose to join LAP. But until now, you could not choose CNA membership. By making CNA membership optional, we are providing you with that choice.

When this change becomes operational in November 2014,

RNAO membership will not include CNA membership, and the RNAO fee will be reduced accordingly. RNAO members who opt in for CNA membership will need to pay both fees: RNAO and CNA. This means their total fee will remain unchanged from November 2013. RNAO members who opt out of CNA will pay a reduced RNAO fee, and will not receive the benefits of CNA membership, such as its journal, *Canadian Nurse*. The reduction in fee will go to ratification by members prior to RNAO's May 2014 AGM.

Some members will express concern about how these changes affect CNA. Your BOD, in making its financial decision, reiterated its commitment to CNA. Our intention and desire is for RNAO to remain a proud jurisdictional member of CNA, while ensuring RNAO protects its financial stability.

Optional membership provides an opportunity for CNA, as it means its members can choose to opt in to CNA because they view the positive impact it has on nursing and health issues nationally. Nurses will remain members of CNA because they believe, as RNAO's BOD does, that a national professional voice for nursing is vital. We will promote belonging to both RNAO and CNA as a valuable choice for each and every RNAO member. **RN**

RHONDA SEIDMAN-CARLSON, RN, MN, IS PRESIDENT OF RNAO.