



Feeling enlightened after meeting members face-to-face

ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF MY presidency so far took place in October, when I embarked on RNAO's fall tour (see more on page 20). It was my first opportunity to meet many of you in your workplaces and in your regions and chapters.

Durham Northumberland was my first stop. I was so impressed and energized by the group that gathered in Whitby to hear me present on the role of RNAO's board of directors and how our priorities are based on what you – RN and NP members – experience as you provide the best possible care across all sectors of our health system. I also spoke about [Mind the Safety Gap in Health System Transformation: Reclaiming the role of the RN](#), the report we released during Nursing Week, which continues to drive our advocacy efforts today.

My next visit took me to London, where I visited a beautiful hall in the city's local library, and was joined on stage by London-area MPPs Jeff Yurek (PC) and Peggy Sattler (NDP). Much of the discussion that evening focused on our call to stop RN replacement. I was pleased to hear our guest politicians share their complimentary views about RNAO's recommendations in *Mind the Safety Gap*.

My visit to Ottawa was part chapter meeting, part take-your-president-to-work, and provided more validation of our advocacy work. Some members shared honest

concerns about current staffing levels in their workplaces. Others shared concerns about new nurses being fast-tracked too soon. The younger nurses said they need adequate time to observe and to feel assured and comfortable before they can care for patients on their own.

Earlier in the day, I had the pleasure of being taken on rounds in an Ottawa hospital. I

met a geriatric emergency management (GEM) nurse who talked about how her patients are much older and sicker than ever before. GEM nurses provide specialized care to frail seniors in hospital emergency departments. They are able to assess and identify at-risk seniors and connect them with the right services. The director of the emergency department invited me to sit in on their daily huddle. I appreciated the time my colleagues took to welcome me and show me around despite the hectic pace of work in that setting.

My visit to Hamilton was organized by the local chapter in partnership with members of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk chapter. One of the most intriguing things I heard during that visit was the need for nurses to have more education in cultural competence.

The nurse who raised this issue works in home care and told the story of a boy she had treated who had lost a limb during the Syrian war. The family had come to Canada to begin a new life. As she was changing his dressing, she realized language wasn't the only barrier. She also wished she had better information about this family's background

Based on our conversations, you can count on RNAO to be your voice when it comes to RN replacement, NP full scope of practice in all sectors and settings, and the other recommendations outlined in our report. We need to hold the government to account because, at the end of the day, the safety of our patients is what matters most.

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so she could develop the therapeutic relationship she knew was just as important as the clinical piece.

My last stop was St. Catharines, where I met with members of RNAO's Niagara chapter. It was their annual general meeting and a changing of the guard was taking place. It was great to witness succession planning in action.

During this visit, I also had the opportunity to tour a long-term care home. I could feel the warmth and caring at that facility immediately. I was moved by the compassion and the focus on residents. To all RNs, NPs and other health professionals who work in this setting; I salute you. RNAO will continue to do its part to ensure there are more NPs and RNs in this sector (a recommendation in *Mind the Safety Gap*). Seniors deserve nothing less.

I am so pleased that our CEO Doris Grinspun and I had a chance to connect with so many of you. That's the objective of the fall tour; to see you in your lived practice reality. It has deepened my understanding and knowledge of the issues RNAO is working on for you.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all chapter executive members I had the pleasure of meeting. My only regret is not making it to Dryden. I got as far as Thunder Bay before the weather and timing conspired against me. Our members in the north know all about the challenges of travelling in this part of Ontario. I was sorry I couldn't meet with you. Rest assured, I will be visiting in the new year. **RN**

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