

ONA Welcomes Over 12,000 Ontario Nursing Student Affiliates



Milestone event in ONA history: ONA 2008 Biennial Convention delegates break out into resounding applause following a unanimous vote by members to change ONA's Constitution to allow for a new ONA nursing student affiliate membership. At front left is Tyler Kuhk, who was Ontario Regional Director with the Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA) at the time of the vote. Kuhk has moved on to become the CNSA's national president.



ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN, brings greetings on behalf of ONA membership during the Ontario Regional Conference of the CNSA, held October 31-November 1, 2009 at the Radisson Hotel in Sudbury. Haslam-Stroud attended the conference with ONA First Vice-President Vicki McKenna, RN.

The Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) has always been committed to nurturing and supporting the nursing students of today, who will be the nurses and union leaders of tomorrow.

In that vein, we began to develop links with the Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA) and the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario's (RNAO's) Nursing Students of Ontario (NSO) Interest Group, and we continue to seek ways to strengthen that connection.

In 2008, at our Biennial Convention, as we were celebrating our 35th anniversary, we also noted another major milestone. ONA Local leaders overwhelmingly carried a constitutional amendment to establish a nursing student affiliate membership for Ontario Region members of the CNSA.

We have since proudly welcomed into the fold more than 12,000 Ontario nursing students.

Growing the Leaders of Tomorrow

"This is a huge step in sowing the seeds for ONA's future. Our nursing students of today are the nursing leaders of tomorrow. We are deeply committed to nurturing and mentoring nursing students. They are our future and will carry the torch for ONA and patient care for the next generation," said ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN.

"We have a lot to learn from each other! We welcome their enthusiasm, spark and energy, and we can share with them our experience, knowledge and skills. It's a win-win situation!"

The intent behind establishing an affiliation was to support nursing students and also provide exposure to ONA prior to their graduation. In most cases, when students graduate and take positions in the Ontario health care system, they become ONA members.

This affiliation introduces nursing students to ONA before they enter the job market, and they are already familiar with the services we provide to our members by the time they are hired. The hope is that they will become enthusiastic participants as new ONA members and eventually take on leadership roles within the organization.

"Looking beyond, it is also a step in succession planning. A substantial segment of our membership is approaching retirement

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age, with the average age of our members around the mid to late-40s mark. We need to plan for the future. We need to nurture and grow our future leaders now to prepare for the day when they assume the role we currently play. This affiliation is a first step," said Haslam-Stroud.

What Student Affiliation Means

By definition, a student is an affiliate who is enrolled in a nursing program at an Ontario college or university that is affiliated with CNSA. Their affiliate membership with ONA automatically ceases when a student is no longer involved in the nursing program.

Services available to nursing student affiliates include access to the Member Section of our website, which is undergoing a redesign. A special student section has been set up on the current website and will hold a prominent place on the new site. Currently, students need log-in information, which is provided to them by their campus delegates. The new site will not require log-in information.

Students receive the ONA membership magazine, *Front Lines*, via their campus delegates.

Student members also can attend and participate in ONA meetings, including Board of Directors meetings, Area Coordinators Conferences (ACCs), Provincial Coordinators Meetings (PCMs) and Biennial Conventions, as well as Local and Bargaining Unit meetings. They are not entitled to move or second motions or vote at meetings, nor are they eligible to stand as a candidate for office.

Student members can also attend ONA education sessions. They are now able to register for education workshops using the same process as ONA members by calling the Provincial Education Coordination Team (PECT) primes in the regions where they live. Information on this is posted on ONA's website at www.ona.org in the Member Section under Education.

As well, student affiliates can participate in ONA rallies, political activities and Nursing Week activities.



Student Affiliation Going Forward

- ONA continues to liaise with CNSA affiliate leaders/members every two months. Topics of discussion have included communication, the ONA website, the student supervision premium, core curriculum and practical ways of engaging CNSA students in ONA at the provincial, Local and Bargaining Unit levels.
- National CNSA President Tyler Kuhk, who was the Ontario Regional Director and has passed that baton to Branden Shepitka, will be doing a practicum with ONA in the new year, working with Haslam-Stroud at ONA's Toronto office with supervision from ONA Communications and Government Relations Team (CGRT) Manager Peter Birt.
- ONA continues to take action on our strategic plan for welcoming our affiliates, and looks forward to working with the students and leaders – our future ONA members!
- Haslam-Stroud and ONA First Vice-President Vicki McKenna, RN, attended the CNSA Ontario Regional Conference in Sudbury at the end of October.



Fast forward: One of the benefits of student affiliation is that students can attend ONA meetings, including Board meetings, Area Coordinators Conferences (ACCs), Provincial Coordinators Meetings (PCMs), Biennial Conventions and Local and Bargaining Unit meetings. Here, student attendees at ONA's November 2009 PCM pose with ONA leaders. From left to right: ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN; CNSA Ontario Regional Director Branden Shepitka; CNSA National President Tyler Kuhk; and ONA First Vice-President Vicki McKenna, RN.

How Do I Become a Nursing Student Affiliate Member of ONA?

As a member of the Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA), Ontario Region, you are automatically an affiliate member of the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) and entitled to participate in activities of our Union.

And when you begin your careers, many of you will become bona fide dues-paying ONA members, covered by our collective agreement with access to our whole range of member services. Membership is automatic once you take a job at a health care employer where ONA is the union representing the nurses and allied health workers.

ONA represents 55,000 front-line registered nurses and allied health professionals, and more than 12,000 Ontario nursing student affiliates, providing care in hospitals, long-term care facilities, public health, the community, clinics and industry.

As Canada's largest nursing union, we work on behalf of our members to protect their interests in the workplace, so they can be there to provide the best patient care.

We are on the forefront of nursing and health care issues in Ontario, whether it's fighting for quality patient care, preserving our national public health care system or protecting our rights as front-line health care providers.

Every day, you will see ONA Provincial President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN, or a front-line Local leader speaking out on key issues affecting nursing and patient care in this province.



ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN, talks about the challenges and opportunities facing today's nursing students during the Ontario Regional Conference of the CNSA.



There are many reasons why it's beneficial to work in a unionized environment. Aside from the protection you receive in the workplace against unfair practices and unsafe work conditions, ONA offers many services and benefits to its members (see story "What is ONA?").

Please visit our website at www.ona.org for more information about ONA, particularly in the Member Section, which you would access with the ID provided to you. If you haven't received log-in information, you can obtain it from your CNSA Official Delegate on campus. To find a list of delegates, visit the CNSA website at: <http://www.cnsa.ca/english/aboutus/regions>.

For more information, contact CNSA at ontario@cnsa.ca. As well, ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud would love to hear from you. Just e-mail her at president@ona.org.



A nursing student signs a campaign postcard at an ONA information table during the Ontario Regional Conference of the CNSA in Sudbury.

New Student Section on ONA's Website

Check out the new student section on ONA's website at <http://www.ona.org/nursingstudents>. Currently undergoing a complete redesign, our website will be re-launched in the new year at the same location (www.ona.org). More easily navigable and containing much more information, our new site will also include a special section for students. And more good news! It will no longer require logging in to access.

Affiliation: What Nursing Students Have to Say



Tyler Kuhk, National President, Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA).

In an interview in *Canadian Nurse*, Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA) National President, **Tyler Kuhk**, the immediate past Ontario Regional Director of CNSA, said that giving nursing students a greater voice through CNSA will encourage tomorrow's nurses to advocate for broader changes within the health care system.

He told *Canadian Nurse*, "If you're going to be a nurse for the next 30 or 40 years, you should try to be-

come agents of change from the get-go."

Kuhk was still CNSA's Ontario Regional Director when ONA members voted unanimously on a constitutional amendment establishing a nursing student affiliation with ONA at the November 2008 Biennial Convention. He indicates it was an amazing and rewarding experience to be present at the vote and to be part of a milestone event for both Ontario nursing students and ONA.

Kuhk thinks it will be of tremendous benefit to both ONA and nursing students.

"ONA is a respected voice in the health care system, and now Ontario students have an avenue to be heard through their association," he said.



Branden Shepitka, Ontario Regional Director, CNSA.

Branden Shepitka, the new Ontario Regional Director of CNSA, agrees the ONA nursing student affiliation is a positive step for both ONA members and nursing students, and looks forward to working with ONA on various projects. He plans to make sure his members know about the many services available to them from ONA through affiliation. He himself has already attended provincial ONA meetings.

"This affiliation and the opportunities it provides to nursing students means we get a first-hand view of ONA processes and activities, which is especially helpful seeing as for many of us, ONA will continue to be our union upon graduating and entering the workforce," said Shepitka.

"This relationship exposes us to the kind of services ONA provides to its members and how important and helpful it is as a champion for nurses in their workplaces. Through attending and participating in ONA meetings, we are engaged in this process. ONA's leaders truly are role models we as students can aspire to."

WHAT IS



There are many benefits to being a member of the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA), the union representing 55,000 registered nurses and allied health professionals, and more than 12,000 nursing student affiliates, providing care in Ontario hospitals, long-term care facilities, public health, the community, clinics and industry.

From protection in the workplace against unfair labour practices and unsafe work conditions, to collective bargaining and advocacy for the nursing profession and the public, we provide a vast array of services to our members.

Canada's largest nursing union, ONA speaks out for our members on every aspect of their professional worklife, including issues related to the collective agreement, such as wages, overtime, shift/weekend premiums and benefits, and other issues, such as workload, professional responsibility, occupational health and safety, and human rights and equity.

In the decades since our founding on October 13, 1973, tens of thousands of our members have depended on ONA. Our primary role is to represent them all and protect them in the workplace.

We do so by providing such key services as:

- Negotiating collective agreements, which are employment contracts setting out the terms and conditions of our members' jobs (including wages and benefits, professional practice/responsibility, health and safety, hours of work, education and upgrading, etc.)
- Representing our members in grievances, as well as in legal matters and before the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO).
- Providing labour education.
- Protecting our members' health and safety in the workplace.
- Lobbying on their behalf to the government and the media.

We also have:

- Specialists advocating for our members at the Workplace Insurance and Safety Board (WSIB).
- Occupational health and safety specialists, who stay on top of health and safety legislation and work to ensure employers are in compliance, and that our members have guidance and access to the processes they need to ensure they are protected in the workplace.
- Professional practice specialists to stay on top of College initiatives and requirements, and to ensure ONA has input into College decision-making.

ONA?



Our Mission: Ontario Nurses' Association: Our Union. Respected. Strong. United. Committed to members who care for people.

Our Vision: ONA is a proactive union committed to improving the economic welfare and quality of work-life for our members, to enable them to provide high quality health care.

- Human rights and equity specialists to deal with matters of discrimination and human rights abuses, and to promote the diversity of our membership.
- Litigators providing expert legal advice in labour relations matters and representing them before the College, arbitration boards and in the court system.
- Professional liability insurance and a Legal Expense Assistance Plan (LEAP).
- Communications and government relations experts to help with advocacy work for ONA members and their patients, clients and residents to promote safe, quality care.

Being part of ONA means steadily improving wages and benefits, negotiated through the collective agreement process.

Being part of ONA means having access to a professional responsibility process that helps our members document and resolve workload issues and unsafe patient situations in their workplaces, and the right to have input into patient care.

Being part of ONA means having protection against occupational health and safety hazards, including access to personal protective equipment such as N95 respirators and safety measures to protect against workplace violence. ONA has also been working with some employers to help design and implement violence prevention programs at their facilities with a great deal of success.

Being part of ONA means having a strong public advocate and voice for our profession and our patients. Our public advocacy campaign, *Cutting Nurses, Cutting Care*, continues to hammer the message

home that Ontario health employers can't afford to cut more nursing jobs or nursing hours in an effort to balance their budgets, without compromising patient care and safety. Designed to educate the public on the perils of the nursing shortage and to put pressure on the government to stop nursing layoffs and implement solutions, the campaign continues through the efforts of our Local leaders, who make the *Cutting Nurses, Cutting Care* message central to political action activities. ONA speaks out regularly on behalf of our members at commissions, before government committees and in the media.

Being part of ONA means a voice on liaison committees with other nursing organizations like the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) and Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (RPNAO), and as a member of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU), to advocate for the front-line nurse. We also have a strong connection with the labour movement as an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) through the CFNU, as a member of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) and as an active participant in advocacy groups like the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC). These affiliations and the work we do with these organizations really do have an impact on health policy decisions.

ONA protects the interests of our members in the workplace, so our members can provide the best patient care.

ONA truly is the voice of front-line nurses and allied health professionals in Ontario. We are inspired by the skills and courage of our members, and believe that whenever changes need to be made, it is ONA that will take the lead.

Supervising Students and Mentoring Nurses: ONA Member Accountabilities

ONA members are accountable to provide support and supervise the activities of nursing students in the workplace, as well as mentor new graduates. This accountability for supervising students and mentoring new grads comes from the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) Practice Guideline, “Supporting Learners.”

For those ONA members employed in hospitals, there is also language in the central hospital collective agreement for supervising students and mentoring nurses.

Article 9.08 (a) Student Supervision states: “Nurses may be required, as part of their regular duties, to supervise activities of students in accordance with the current CNO accountability standards for RNs and RPNs working with students. Nurses will be informed in writing of their responsibilities in relation to these students, and will be provided with what the hospital determines to be appropriate training. Any information that is provided to the hospital by the educational institution with respect to the skill level of the students will be made available to the nurses recruited to supervise the students. Upon request, the hospital will review the nurse’s workload with the nurse and the student to facilitate successful completion of the assignment.”

Where a registered nurse is assigned nursing student supervision duties, the nurse is paid a premium of 60 cents per hour for all hours spent supervising nursing students. It is ONA’s position that this means **all hours in all years** of clinical training. This article does not apply to job classifications that are paid above the RN classification rates set out in Article 19.01(a), where the higher rate of pay is, in part, based on nursing student supervision duties.

Article 9.08 (b) states: “Nurses are expected, as part of their regular duties, to provide guidance and advice to members of the health care team.”

Article 9.08 (c) Mentorship, states: “Nurses may, from time to time, be assigned a formal mentorship role for a designated nurse. Mentorship is a formal supportive relationship between two nurses, which results in the professional growth and development of an individual practitioner to maximize her or his clinical practice. The relationship is time limited and focused on goal achievement. Orientation to the organization or general functioning of the unit does not constitute mentorship.”



Nursing students listen to their instructor (picture 1) and try their hand at “patient care” in a clinical setting (picture 2).

Appendix 7, the letter of understanding re mentorship guidelines, states the hospital, the nurse being mentored and the nurse doing the mentoring are expected to clearly understand the goals/expectations of the mentorship relationship. Goals are individually determined based on the learning needs of the nurse being mentored, and, as such, may not be consistent for all nurses.

After consultation with the mentor and the nurse being mentored, the hospital will:

- Identify the experiences required to meet the learning needs of the nurse being mentored.
- Determine the duration of the mentorship assignment and expectations of the mentor.
- Identify appropriate training.

ONA Members Talk about Mentoring

During the consultation process, the hospital will review the mentor's workload with the mentor and the nurse being mentored to facilitate successful completion of the mentoring assignment.

The hospital will provide on a regular basis all nurses with an opportunity to indicate their interest in assuming a mentorship role, through a mechanism determined by the local parties. The hospital selects and assigns the mentor for a given mentoring relationship. At the request of any nurse, the hospital will discuss with any unsuccessful applicant ways in which she or he may be successful for future opportunities.

A nurse assigned this additional responsibility is paid a premium of 60 cents per hour in addition to her or his regular salary and applicable premium allowance.

Summary

ONA members should ensure their rights are upheld when working with students and when mentoring other nurses. Most importantly, in this current environment of scarce resources and understaffing, ONA members should be ensuring their workload is reviewed to determine if it needs to be adjusted to ensure successful completion of the mentoring assignment.

It is to everyone's benefit – student nurses and front-line members, those being mentored and their mentors, employers and patients – that a positive and productive relationship exist between all parties, within the bounds of the College standards and ONA's collective agreement.

When interviewed for the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) "Intergenerational Interests in the Health Care Workplace" project earlier this year, **Maria Pena, RN**, Local 25, Guelph General Hospital, Post-anesthetic and former Emergency Room nurse, had this to say about the RN role as a mentor: *"Mentoring is so integral to what we do. Not everyone likes to do it, and pairing a young nurse with an appropriate mentor is very important. I'm very comfortable in that role. I like the thought of passing on the things I value as a nurse, and my knowledge and experience. I'm talking about the personal touch, the extra attention to the patients, the warmth, caring and communicating. I like explaining to the patient rather than being very impersonal and clinical. I think it's a more positive experience for the patient at a very difficult time. I am hoping that younger nurses will see that and learn to do the same thing. It will enrich their nursing experience too."*



Maria Pena, RN

Said **Cindy Orlicki, RN**, Local 75, St. Joseph's Hospital, Hamilton, Nurse Educator in ICU, Day Surgery and Pre-Assessment (Pre-Op) Clinic: *"My goal as an educator is to help my seasoned experienced nurses understand the junior novice nurses who don't have that library of experience and knowledge to draw from, and that we are role modeling for them. How we role model or behave is how they're going to perceive the job needs to be done. What makes a good role model? Someone who adheres to the standards of nursing practice and is a team player. Someone who uses discretion when talking about things, in the right place at the right time. Maintaining professionalism around patients. Using a filter of discretion, which I think a lot of us lose when we're comfortable in an environment. And someone who has a positive outlook and wants to share their knowledge and experience, and is willing to accept shared knowledge from others – even junior staff."*



Cindy Orlicki, RN

Matt Dexter, Local 70, Hamilton Health Sciences, McMaster University site, Operating Room, who was a fairly new nurse when the CFNU interviews were conducted early in 2009, said: *"When I first started, I relied on more experienced nurses to help me with advice. I listened to their experiences and used what they learned to better understand my role. I relied on their tips for dealing with situations. I still look to more experienced nurses for help when I need it. My expectation on a day-to-day basis is to provide the best care possible for my patients. If I do encounter any new situations, I do my best to get through it. And if someone more experienced is there, they can be a resource to help me through. I learn from the experience."*



Matt Dexter, RN

Award-winning Essay Captures the Spirit of ONA



Madelaine Gordon.

The following essay, written by Queen's University nursing student Madelaine Gordon, earned a \$1,000 scholarship from ONA through the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU), one of 10 awarded annually to nursing students across Canada.

Madelaine's essay captures the spirit of ONA and why our union is so valued by our members and nursing student affiliates.

Representing the nursing students at Queen's as an Official Ontario Region Delegate of the Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA), Madelaine is the daughter of ONA member Tracy Campton, who works at Providence Care-St. Mary's of the Lake, ONA Local 67, in Kingston.

The Importance of the Ontario Nurses' Association

Since 1973, ONA has given a voice to registered nurses and allied health professionals across Ontario. The importance of ONA is that it represents thousands of health professionals' interests and plays a key role in negotiating collective agreements.

ONA has been involved in bargaining for increased wages, benefits and safer working conditions for its members. Before ONA, nurses and allied health professionals could be let go without justification by their employer. Today, ONA may take legal action against an employer who wrongfully dismisses one of its members.

Before ONA, nurses may have worked long hours for little pay. With ONA, negotiations may be made with employers to increase wages and benefits, giving nurses and their families a better quality of life.

Most notably, before ONA, nurses and allied health professionals may have worked in conditions that were unsafe for both health professionals and patients. ONA lobbies for the safety of its members and by doing so, improves patient care.

Two slogans produced by ONA, "*Not Enough Nurses*" and more recently, "*Cutting Nurses, Cutting Care*" can relate to the tough politics ONA faces with the Ontario government. Cutbacks in health care spending may target primary care providers such as nurses. ONA understands the fundamental loss patient care will endure by cutting nurses. Many nurses may lose their jobs, and the nurses who remain employed may experience heavier patient loads and fewer resources, increasing job stress and decreasing the quality of care nurses are able to provide.

ONA is an important lobbying group that brings forth nurses' concerns to the Ontario government and into the public eye. As a nursing student, I feel proud to know that when I become a registered nurse, I can belong to ONA, a strong union that will support me and my colleagues throughout my nursing career.

For more about the CFNU scholarship available through ONA to a nursing student, visit the Member Section of our website at www.ona.org. See Education/Financial Aid and Bursaries.



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