

ARTICLE – ONA WEBSITE

ERIN ARISS RN

NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT

Dear ONA Members,

I am a proud Registered Nurse who worked full-time in an Emergency Department during the pandemic until one year ago when I came to serve you on ONA's Board of Directors. For 19 years, I worked in Critical Care and I witnessed first hand what has transpired in our workplaces. I want to lead the charge for the changes we demand! We cannot wait another minute to take collective action to ensure that we have safe and equitable workplaces that ensure high quality healthcare for all Ontarians.

I have been an ONA Member since 2002. Since that time workloads have increased, violence is a daily occurrence, governments continue to underfund our healthcare system and employers place impossible demands upon us. All these factors inspired me to make change.

I started as the Human Rights and Equity Rep in my Bargaining Unit in 2015 and then I took on the role of Health and Safety Rep. Shortly after, I became the Local Secretary and then I was elected as Bargaining Unit President in 2019.

In 2021 I was elected Local Coordinator and then elected to ONA's Board of Directors Vice President of Region 4.

Through my advocacy, I believe significant changes were made for the ONA members in my hospital. I lead the Emergency Department through an IAC and took the lead on three successful OLRB appeals.

When PPE was locked away at the beginning of the pandemic, my Bargaining Unit fought back and we won! This cannot be done by one person alone. Change will require a mobilized and united Union. It is time for ONA Members to feel empowered, not overpowered!

I am proud that I worked on the frontlines during the pandemic and of the fierce advocacy I provide to my members.

ONA's mission is to defend the rights of and to advocate for nurses and healthcare professionals who care for the health of Ontarians. This is my vision of how we can achieve this.

Informing the public and Political Action – Since April I have planned and taken part in twenty Political Action Rallies and Actions against Employers. I have travelled across Ontario to support our members at an Ottawa area Hospital, taken part and spoken at several OFL events and worked with the leadership of the Five Hospital Unions (ONA, CUPE, OPSEU, UNIFOR and SEIU) on joint campaigns. I have been establishing relationships with the Provincial Leaders of other healthcare Unions through work on the Provincial Steering Committee and Action Committees. Community advocacy groups including District Labour Councils and the Ontario Health Coalition will be vital in building the momentum to ensure that our health care system is restored to the one deserving of Ontarians. I have already made several connections and by speaking to these groups, thousands of Ontarians have heard the concerns of ONA members and have offered to join in our collective action. This work must continue and take priority. We have seen firsthand what solidarity and community support can accomplish.

Educating Union Representatives – To represent our membership, we need to educate the people doing the work of the union. Education must be a priority. Over the past year, as the VP with the portfolio of Local Finance, I have assisted dozens of Locals with their budget preparation. Through my experiences as a local leader and on the Board, I was able to emphasize the importance of investing in quality education. Learning prepares members and representatives for their roles and accountabilities. I was also able to bring a governance lens to these discussions. It was rewarding to help leaders understand that education means engagement, both for themselves and grassroots members.

ONA members from across the province have attended numerous workshops I have developed and delivered. Along with the Finance Team and Membership Education Team, I have been instrumental in the development of the Local Treasurers Workshop and the New Executive Partnership. At the Leadership Summit, I was an ONA coach and facilitator for the delivery of the Queen's IRC negotiations education. ONA's workshops must continue to evolve, improve and become increasingly accessible to all our members.

Strong transparent leadership – ONA needs a leader that places the needs of members first and honours ONA's Constitution and Policies. As a Regional Vice President, I have undergone formal governance training from Queen's IRC and have been a member of ONA's Governance and Nominations Committee since 2020. The experience I already possess will be transferable to my role as ONA's Provincial President. It is essential that we unite and support each other so that we can strengthen our collective rights. The best way to achieve this is through open transparent communication.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity – As a woman of the LGBTQ community and one who faced her own discrimination in the workplace, I believe strongly in Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity. I have supported the Human Rights and Equity Caucus throughout the years. I was a volunteer and proud supporter of the first in-person Pride parade since the pandemic. Knowing the passion I have for EDI, I was asked to be a facilitator in our breakout rooms, now known as Communities of Support. I have championed the recent ARAO action plan and know that this work must be an integral part of the organization

going forward. ONA represents a very diverse membership, and it is important that we are representative and inclusive of them all.

As an ONA member in a small community hospital with limited resources, I came to realize the power of solidarity is immense. This power lies in the collective strength of a unified group of people. With this strength behind them, your next Provincial President will be able to bring positive change to all ONA members, from all sectors, in Bargaining Units both big and small and most importantly, in all the Regions of Ontario. When United, we can overcome obstacles that would otherwise seem insurmountable.

Together we will fight injustice and harness our collective power to create change that is unstoppable.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ERIN ARISS', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Erin Ariss RN