

## **ARTICLE – ONA WEBSITE**

### **RACHEL MUIR**

#### **NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT**

The past 3 years have been ones of incredible challenge and hardship for healthcare workers in Ontario, particularly nurses and this needs to be resolved. Resolution is going to be difficult as the issues we face have been years in the making. Working with the board and ONA staff I hope to continue the work that has been started and help develop new and additional strategies to complement and augment this work.

As a Bargaining Unit president and Local Coordinator at The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) I have the privilege of representing a large and diverse group of nurses. The difficulties and challenges we face are the same ones every ONA member faces and the experience and knowledge I have gained and continue to gain, during my tenure will help me as I expand my role to provide support to all the nurses and healthcare professionals who are ONA.

Like many of ONA's leaders my union involvement started with a sentinel event. In my case a PRWC. Meeting with our Bargaining Unit VP galvanized me to step up, put my money where my mouth was and be a representative for my coworkers. This started my active union involvement and I quickly moved from unit rep to lead nurse rep, site VP and then Bargaining Unit president. A role I moved into in January of 2020. I learnt hard and fast that year as both my members and I dealt with the fear of the unknown called COVID-19, PPE issues, redeployment, staffing shortages, vacation cancelations and so much more. Thanks to the support and mentorship of my bargaining unit team members and LRO's I was able to be the voice of Local 83.

This, along with being part central and local collective agreement negotiations both before and during COVID-19 has provided me with the knowledge of what ONA members want in their work life and how important work/life balance is to each one of them.

I have become politically involved organizing and participating in rallies, speaking with the media at every possible opportunity, locally, provincially and nationally. Speaking at rallies with our fellow unions, being the voice of nurses and healthcare providers in my region. Working with CUPE and OPSUE leaders at TOH as we strive to achieve the common goals of safe, healthy work lives and environments for our members. I have developed relationships with local MPP's and party leaders, as well as Federal MPs each time speaking out clearly and honestly about the crisis our profession and healthcare is in. These relationships have afforded me the opportunity to speak in front of the Provincial Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs regarding Bill 36, An Act to Implement Budget Measures and Amend Various Statutes and I have been invited to apply to speak in front of this committee again.

I am a member of the Ottawa Health Coalition and an active participant with the Ontario Federation of Labour here in Ottawa. These affiliations are important and ONA's leaders have to be part of these organizations, provincially and locally, to not only build our strength and support as a union but to make us part of a united labour force. As we all know, our power and strength increase when we stand together, and this has never been more important than it is today.

ONA members have become angry because of the conditions and restrictions they have seen over the last 3 years, starting with Bill 124. This bill not only sought to deny us our rights to negotiate freely and fairly, it also sought to break unions by destroying trust, pitting member against leader. Divide and conquer and it nearly succeeded. ONA has recognised the urgent need to rebuild relationships and trust with all members and has started on the path of transparency, better communication and recognition of the needs of it's members. As President I would continue this work, once again working with the board, using their knowledge and expertise as a guide, while also bringing my ideas and interpretations to the table.

As a leader I have sought the education needed to be a successful leader and I will continue to do this. It is important that I recognise the knowledge and experience I have, while also acknowledging the knowledge and experience I do not have and with that in mind I will work with the team, learning from them and with them as we work towards the common goals of achieving that which is both wanted and needed by our members, building on what has been started and planning for what is to come. This is how we change and grow to remain the strong, vocal, current, political force that is ONA.

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*Rachel Muir*

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**(Signature of Candidate)**