



2021 Biennial Convention Highlights

Our Voice is Our Strength, ONA President Stresses

Vicki McKenna began her final address as ONA President with a bit of an understatement: it's been a tough two years since our last Biennial Convention.

"Who could have predicted that we would face a global pandemic that has knocked the wind right out of us?" she said. "Right out of the gate, we told the government, the Minister of Health, the media, our stakeholders – all who would listen – that we must protect Ontarians and health-care workers. Did the government or Minister of Health take immediate action? No. But ONA acted on behalf of our members and your patients, residents and clients because we knew from past experiences and outbreaks that COVID-19 was going to spread. And spread it did."

Armed with the horrific realities provided to us by our front-line members about your lack of personal protective equipment, we lobbied the Ford government for a directive that ensures proper access – they certainly weren't consulting with ONA and, in fact, fought with us the whole time, McKenna noted – and took employers to court so our members could be protected. Throughout it all, we made sure our members were kept in the know via emails, telephone town halls, *Front Lines*, our website, social media, etc. In fact, our online followers grew in leaps and bounds! And we were in the media on a daily basis.

"But it almost seems like we have been fighting two viruses: COVID-19 and the virus of disrespect," she continued. "The government passed legislation, including wage-suppressing Bill 124, Bill 175 and Bill 195, which are wreaking havoc on our members and disregard the loyalty you have to your profession, and to your patients, residents and clients. But did these bills prevent members from having your say? No. It was heartening to see so many – thousands, in fact – advocate on issues like never before. You are engaged in rallying, lobbying government, speaking with your MPPs, and keeping the public informed. Because the more you can tell the public your stories, the more engaged they too will be."

And that activism will serve us well in the lead-up to the provincial election in June 2022, where we must let our displeasure about harmful government decisions be known.

"We need everyone to step up," McKenna urged. "We need your enthusiasm, your energy, your strength. This pandemic has been the most exhaustive experience of our work lives and I know you have very limited energy. But we need your commitment to help make change in this province. It won't be easy, but I know we can do it."

And while McKenna won't be there leading members as ONA President – she is retiring on December 31, 2021 – she said she will be watching and cheering on the sidelines (she might even join an event or two!)

"For 16 years, I have helped lead this powerful union as a Board member, and ONA has changed for the better. But I'm now at the point where I'm ready to switch my focus full-time to my family and to once again being an active participant in my community. That's not to say I didn't have a family here at ONA. I did and I do. And I have drawn on your energies and been inspired. I now leave ONA in the capable hands of President-Elect Cathryn Hoy, who, along with other members of the amazing Board, will continue to transform ONA into a more vibrant and engaging union. With the Strategic Plan firmly guiding us for the next several years, I see a future of endless possibilities. Opportunities are here and I urge you to embrace them. Dive in. Stay at it. Now, more than ever, we need you. Because after all, ONA is *your* union; it is *your* future.

"We are strongest when we work together."

– ONA President Vicki McKenna, RN

HRE Caucus Challenges Delegates to Go “Beyond Good Intentions”



ONA members Leslie Davis, Dorcas Ndiangui (left and right) and Hellen Komen-Taabu (inset) detailed how they launched Healthcare Professionals Against Racism to address racism and oppression in their hospital. They joined many speakers throughout the day-long Human Rights and Equity Caucus in discussing the role each of us must play in ensuring the equal treatment of all members – and all persons.

Your Stories Matter, First Vice-President/President-Elect Says



ONA First Vice-President/President-Elect Cathryn Hoy

Building on the words of ONA President Vicki McKenna, First Vice-President/President-Elect Cathryn Hoy provided several examples of how members have taken up the fight for your rights, profession, and patients, residents and clients in her Local political action and professional issues report.

“I’m very proud of our members who have taken some form of political action these past two years,” she said, noting that action means anything from wearing a button to organizing a rally. “We’ve dealt with a global pandemic, horrific working conditions and extremely restrictive provincial legislation. But through it all, you have showed everyone that we will not tolerate disrespect!”

And you did so in very creative ways due to public health restrictions. You blasted your stories on social media, attended virtual rallies, and talked to your MPPs on the phone and through Zoom. You sent thousands of emails and made hundreds of telephone calls to Premier Doug Ford.

“We need to let the people of Ontario know about the state of health care,” she said. “ONA does that provincially, but it’s your stories, your lived experiences that matter.”

And that advocacy and storytelling applies to our workplaces too, Hoy said in turning her attention to professional issues.

“Over the past two years, our members have faced workload issues like never before that impact our professional responsibility and the care we are able to provide. Short-staffing, patient acuity, surge capacity, infection prevention and control, lack of personal protective equipment – the list is endless. ONA’s professional practice work continues to grow. In fact, more than 200 new professional practice files have opened since our last Biennial.”

Of those, ONA has achieved dozens of substantial settlements, completed three very successful Independent Assessment Committees and continues to work with Local leaders on solving your workplace issues. To assist, we have revised our professional practice resources and tools, and launched “Ask a Specialist” webinars.

“All of these wins begin with you,” Hoy concluded. “You are central to identifying and raising problems through your workload forms. There’s a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow when you fill them out.”

If there was one theme that echoed throughout our annual Human Rights and Equity (HRE) Caucus, which kicked off Biennial Convention Week, it is the need for everyone to stand up against racism.

"We must take proactive steps together," Region 1 Vice-President Dawn Armstrong, who holds the HRE portfolio, said in opening the Caucus, which continued the theme of last year's event, *Beyond Good Intentions: Confronting Racial Discrimination Through Solidarity*. "Speaking about racism and discrimination can be a difficult conversation that can emit powerful sentiments. But that's just one small way to try to address it. We must listen. We must reflect and observe. And we must take concerted actions to better understand it. A positive path forward begins with you. I am hopeful the Caucus can provide you with an opportunity to learn."

The jam-packed agenda did precisely that. It featured award winning scholar, author and teacher Dr. Karen Flynn discussing the history of racism in the nursing profession and greater Canadian society, urging delegates to learn about Black history and how the past influences the present; a video interview with

former Board member Ancilla Ho-Young, whose dad taught her to stand up for those who can't; three hospital members who launched the Healthcare Professionals Against Racism group to offer support to one another and issue 10 calls to action to their CEO; and Esi Edugyan, author of *Washington Black*, the first selection of ONA's HRE Book Club, highlighting the importance of storytelling.

"The equal treatment of our members – and all persons – and the freedom from racism and discrimination are core tenets of our union," said ONA President Vicki McKenna, highlighting the position statement that outlines our commitment to create meaningful change and our member-driven Anti-Racism Advisory Team. "This team, a dedicated working group and an external consultant are starting a major multi-year plan addressing anti-racism and anti-oppression. It's a big project, but the Board is very excited. We must all dedicate ourselves to being a stronger voice and advocate for positive change at every opportunity. We cannot be silent."

Read more in the winter issue of Front Lines.

ONA Staff, Management "Sprung into Action," CEO Notes

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, ONA sprang into action to continue to expertly serve members, CEO Beverly Mathers told delegates.

"We have continued to service members with very limited interruptions while safeguarding our staff," she said. "Because of the provincial public health directives, we closed all ONA offices. Our staff were sent home with ONA laptops and began to work remotely."

In reporting on their creative and dedicated work, she noted, "our Information Technology Team ensured staff had the equipment to work from home. Our Dues and Membership Team turned things around fast – protecting the safety of members' data. Our Finance Team ensured that vendors got paid and dual dues were refunded through e-transfers. And the Administration Team also went virtual, with reception taking calls remotely."

In fact, staff did whatever it took to support members during this difficult time, flexing their hours to accommodate your needs, she added.

"I can't thank our staff enough for smoothly adjusting to this new way of work. Each District Service Team had an on-call Labour Relations Officer on the weekend to troubleshoot problems. Our Communications and Government Relations Team also worked through weekends when the government made significant announcements on Fridays. Our Membership Education and Events Team provided quality education and events online. Our WSIB, Legal and Legal Expense Assistance Plan teams also continued work on



ONA Chief Executive Officer Beverly Mathers

your cases. I would be remiss if I didn't give a shout-out to our expert Health and Safety and Professional Practice teams, who weathered this unpredictable storm. All teams worked so hard."

ONA is planning to reopen offices in January, ensuring staff follow public health directives and working with our Joint Health and Safety Committee to gradually move towards face-to-face meetings with members, she added.

"We will continue to use new technologies to do things better. We will continue to listen to members. We will continue our excellent service. Thank you for your superb work."



Regional Vice-Presidents Share Portfolio Reports



**REGION 1 Vice-President
Dawn Armstrong
Human Rights and Equity**

In addition to planning the Human Rights and Equity (HRE) Caucus earlier in the week, this has been a very creative period for ONA's HRE Team, despite the necessity of not being physically together, Armstrong began.

"Among the new initiatives undertaken by the team is the launch of the HRE Book Club, which received an excellent response," she said, noting the club has read four books to date. "Currently, the team is reviewing human rights and equity information on ONA's website to ensure it is relevant and useful."

Armstrong added that our Anti-Racism Advisory Team, supported by staff, is up and running, focusing on taking action to prevent racism and harassment. Their first meeting was held last March and a four-year action plan to move this work forward is being designed with a consultant.

"There is a new and energized focus on expanding the work of ONA on human rights and equity issues," she concluded. "We're very excited."



**REGION 2 Vice-President
Bernadette Robinson
Education**

Robinson credits the pandemic with providing an opportunity to use digital environments to their full advantage.

"This has actually allowed for broader member participation and expanded the range of activities possible," she said. "ONA has continued to provide virtual workshops and education sessions on ONA's new event platform."

The Membership Education and Events Team redefined 28 workshops and continues to review and rejuvenate others. While ONA's eLearning site is now under construction, our videos remain accessible on the website. Members wishing to see what is available can visit the online calendar at ona.org/education and use our new online fillable registration form.

Regardless of how future events take place, 2022 is shaping up to be a busy year on our provincial calendar, she concluded. A business meeting will be held on March 21-22, followed by a Provincial Leadership Meeting on March 23-24; our annual Health and Safety Caucuses will take place in May; the June Provincial Coordinators Meeting (PCM) will be hosted by Region 5 in Windsor on June 14-15; and the November PCM is scheduled for November 8-11 in Toronto.



**REGION 3 Vice-President
DJ Sanderson
Labour Relations**

Sanderson began his report on a somber note: members continue to face a number of pandemic challenges, including short-staffing, employer vaccine policies and more.

"ONA has taken action on these issues through grievances, the courts and more, and we remain committed to achieving the best contracts for our members possible under the circumstances," he said, adding that the wage-suppressing Bill 124's impact on bargaining has been a major issue. "The June provincial election is an opportunity for members to mobilize and make change."

In his role, Sanderson sits on ONA's All-Sector Strategic Bargaining Project Team, which has produced and updated a number of tip sheets, service delivery guidelines and member guides, all available on the ONA website, he said.

"I also sit on the Board of Directors of the Ontario Federation of Labour. ONA's work there remains focused on the provincial election and advocating for our members and all Ontario workers."

Regional Vice-Presidents Share Portfolio Reports



**REGION 4 Vice-President/
First Vice-President-Elect
Angela Preocanin
Health and Safety**

Unsurprisingly, ONA has been focused on the mental and physical pressures members have been under throughout the pandemic, Preocanin noted.

"Access to personal protective equipment (PPE) was an early pandemic vital focus of ONA, and despite progress made, some members are still finding it a challenge to access N95 respirators or better," she said. "I urge all members to insist on access to N95s and if refused, to inform your Joint Health and Safety Committee. All exposures are to be immediately reported."

Because neither the Ford government nor employers were prepared for a pandemic, ONA leaders and staff responded by escalating unresolved issues, filing grievances and occupational health and safety appeals, she said, adding that "ONA will build on what we have learned, and will not rest until employers plan and update pandemic plans regularly, and are educated on how to maintain a supply of PPE going forward."

Turning her attention to workplace violence, Preocanin noted it is significant that the CEO of Southlake Regional Health Centre, which has been plagued with a multitude of violent incidents over the years, became the first individual actually charged.

"The prevalence of violence shows just how important ONA's work is," she concluded. "There are new tools available to help members, and ONA's website lists Ministry of Labour orders. The pandemic has demonstrated more than ever the importance of health and safety."



**REGION 5 Vice-President
Karen Bertrand
Local Finance**

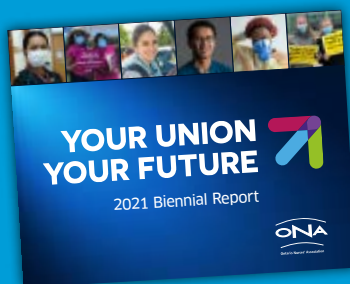
Even the world of Local Finance hasn't escaped the wrath of the pandemic, Bertrand said, noting leaders are exhausted and there has been a shift in the demographics of Treasurers.

"Ten new Treasurers were onboarded this year and ONA's Finance Team and incoming Vice-President of Finance will support them," she said, making reference to her retirement as of December 31, 2021.

A plethora of education is also offered to our Treasurers, including the Treasurers Workshop, webinars and other online education, as well as refresher courses for current Treasurers. Annual education is scheduled for December.

In light of our new reality, "ONA provided enhanced Internet funding for Local Coordinators and Treasurers, purchasing Zoom licences for everyone in 2020," she said, adding that in view of funding cuts made by the Ford government, we also approved new funding to support Bargaining Units within all Locals, with memberships of more than 1,200 receiving \$1,500 to support leaders. "Unused education funds will be rolled over and Local executives can now do longer-term planning."

She concluded by thanking members for all their hard work, noting she will deeply miss them and this role.



Want to Read More?

Looking for more information about the work of our union over the past two years, which was highlighted throughout the Biennial Convention by the Board of Directors and staff? Check out our *2021 Biennial Report*, distributed to all delegates and placed on our Biennial Convention platform. Read yours at ona.org/biennial.



Board Committees Provide Updates on Their Work

In 2018, ONA's Board of Directors began discussing how they could best do the work needed to support membership, and as a result, created three Board Committees, comprised of both Board and ONA members, and supported by staff. The committee chairs/Board members provided a summary of that work:

- **Finance and Risk Committee** (Chair, First Vice-President/President-Elect Cathryn Hoy): "This committee has done an enormous amount of work in assessing the risks in a variety of priority areas to keep our organization safe," noted Region 3 Vice-President DJ Sanderson, who also sits on the committee. Priorities include: ONA's insurance program to meet member, employee and building infrastructure needs; cyber security; tendering processes to ensure we are spending members' dues wisely and responsibly; information technology planning; education; and financial activities. ONA branding will be reviewed in 2022 as part of our new Strategic Plan.
- **Quality of Service to Members Committee** (Chair, Region 2 Vice-President Bernadette Robinson): "The mandate of our committee is to develop the founding principles for continuous improvement to the delivery of services to members and to

mitigate operational risk," said Robinson. "We are reviewing ONA's professional practice and health and safety processes, as an example, to ensure our members receive the support they need." Other key areas include: understanding membership satisfaction survey results; education and events; the dashboard used by District Service Team managers to review files; and the new Access ONA membership portal.

- **Governance and Nominations Committee** (Chair, Region 5 Vice-President Karen Bertrand): "This committee's many activities keep us incredibly busy, but it's a worthwhile endeavour," stated Bertrand. Priorities for this committee are to: review Board/leadership competencies; assist the Board in policy development; develop tools to assist Local leaders in planning; and initiate improvements for the provincial election policy.

"These three committees assist the Board in fulfilling its fiduciary duties and accountabilities, while including direct membership input – and they create a platform for leadership development and succession planning," added ONA President Vicki McKenna.

Staff Take to the Stage



ONA senior staff were a big part of the Biennial Convention, with (left to right) Senior Executive, Finance and Operations Yvonne Carey-Lee providing an overview of our financial statements; Senior Executive, Labour Relations Andrea Kay highlighting our key labour relations work; Senior Executive, Legal Sharan Basran discussing legislation and ONA's recent legal challenges to address members' concerns, particularly over COVID-19 and employer vaccine policies; and Chief Negotiator Steve Lobsinger detailing the status of bargaining in all sectors, including our recent arbitration decisions.



Prime Minister Thanks Members

In a recorded bilingual message to our Convention, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau expressed his gratitude for your dedication and sacrifices throughout the pandemic.

"Together, we are going to finish the fight against COVID-19 and get the job done on vaccines," he said. "And as we build back a better Canada from this pandemic, our government will continue to deliver on the progressive priorities of Canadians. We're going to get \$10/day childcare done in every province, including Ontario. We're going to build better and safer long-term care for our seniors and improve the wages and working conditions for PSWs. We will support the hiring of 7,500 more nurses, nurse practitioners and doctors, and we're making mental health care a priority by increasing support across the country."

You have the Power to Make Positive Change for Indigenous Peoples, MPP Stresses

MPP Sol Mamakwa, who represents 24 fly-in First Nations in the far north riding of Kiiwetinoong, urged ONA members to speak out about the injustices Indigenous peoples face. Here are some snippets of his heartfelt – and oftentimes heartbreaking – comments in a special video message to our Convention.

First Nations have the poorest health outcomes out of any group in Ontario. Our people are continually failed by a health-care system that appears to be broken, but I've learned is not. The systems that are there provincially and federally are working exactly the way they are intended, which is to take away the rights of our people to the lands that we have access to. This shouldn't even be a discussion. When we talk about humanity and human rights for Indigenous peoples, what our nations ask for should be supported.

To those who work in First Nations, nursing stations are the first point of health care contact, and your role is essential. Nurses are doing great work, but many of the things I'm talking about today are systemic.

In addition to health care, our governments need to work on improving infrastructure and access to everything from education to housing and water, factors in the social determinants of health that can lessen the need for acute care and ease the burden on nursing stations. The things that happen on reserves and in nursing stations would not be allowed anywhere else in Ontario. There are people dying in our communities. The system in the north is a sickness system; it's not a health system.



In my home community, we get five days of physician services per month – 60 days per year. Out of those five days, two are travel days, which leaves three days per month of physician services. That's what health care looks like in our communities. This is the other Ontario, the other Canada. Why are we not entitled to the same health and safety as everyone else in Ontario?

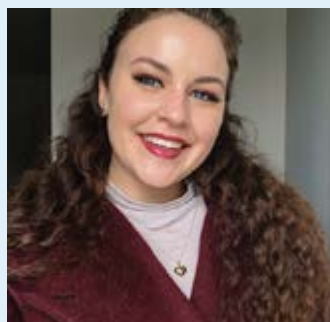
First Nations peoples have come forward and said to the government, over and over again, that we are suffering and are provided substandard services. Yet, governments are stubbornly consistent in listening, but not hearing us.

My hope is that professionals such as yourselves continue the valuable work you do to provide care, and to commit yourselves to ongoing learning about the legacy of residential schools, treaties, Indigenous rights, and our ways of life. You have power: at the bedside, to make positive change in the way Indigenous people are cared for; and as a large group of caring people, who can collectively raise your voices to tell your elected representatives that the status quo will not be tolerated.



Allies Send Virtual Greetings of Solidarity

They may not have been able to join us in person, but ONA's allies were still able to bring greetings of solidarity and appreciation to our Convention. Here are some highlights.



ABIGAIL JARRETT

Ontario Regional Director, Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA): "Part of representing CNSA students involves a partnership with ONA. ONA has been working with CNSA to advocate for

student needs during the pandemic, particularly as it pertains to financial support and in-person clinical placements, as some students are still gaining their placement experience in a virtual format, which does not translate well in the world of nursing. I am forever grateful for the support that ONA has provided to us. Thank you for standing behind our efforts."



BEA BRUSKE

President, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC): "You are the backbone of our health-care system and your work is essential to our communities. Yet, too often your work is undervalued and underpaid.

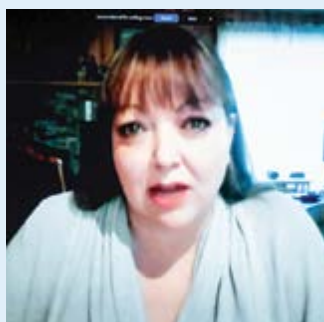
It's time for governments to recognize the important role that nurses play and address the issues you have been calling out since before the pandemic: staffing shortages, inadequate wages, insufficient mental health supports, workplace harassment and violence – just to name a few. The CLC stands with you and supports you in your fight for fair and safe working conditions. And for your dedication and courage in keeping us safe and healthy, I want to say thank you. We owe nurses a debt of gratitude."



PATTY COATES

President, Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL): "The past 20 months have been harrowing and you have worked day in, day out in some of the most demanding conditions ever

– conditions made worse by the government. The people of this province have so much to thank you for, but we know you need more than words. You need an end to Bill 124. You need better health and safety protections and a government that prioritizes the wellbeing of the people in Ontario by investing in a strong public health-care system. At the OFL, we say thank you on behalf of every Ontarian by uniting with you to demand these actions. We are stronger together and can collectively hold each other up."



NATALIE MEHRA

Executive Director, Ontario Health Coalition: "Please know that your work is seen and is so deeply respected. We support your amazing efforts, like the successful pay equity ruling you won against the

for-profit long-term care industry and, shamefully, the Ontario government. We will stand by you to address crushing workloads and critical staffing shortages to protect public health care and to insist there be real change and capacity-building coming out of this pandemic. We will not go back to what it was before. It has been the privilege of my life to do this work alongside you."

Making a Difference Collectively!

To make the Biennial Convention a bit more interactive while making an impact, throughout the week, we asked delegates to take a collective action right then and there – and did they ever!

For example, when we asked delegates to go to ona.org/bill124 and complete and submit our online form demanding the Ford government repeal Bill 124, more than two-thirds did so! Imagine the impact of that many demands going to our elected officials at once!

Lead from Strength, Not Fear, Keynote Speaker Urges

In a compelling keynote address, Sheila Watt-Cloutier used the century-long history of the traumas of Inuit peoples and their impact to this day to teach lessons in leadership and interconnectivity.

In her work as a public speaker and advocate, Watt-Cloutier is convinced that we cannot separate human trauma and issues such as climate change or the pandemic because “the two are the same.”

She noted that the time is right for values and governance model changes to address world issues from a human perspective and urged nurses and health-care professionals not to lose sight of why crises are happening.

“The pandemic has been a grim reminder of how interconnected and dependent we all are,” she added. “It opened up more widely the unresolved issues of racism and social injustices.”



Change will happen on a personal level, and the pandemic has resulted in a lot of us thinking differently at what we should be doing.

“Treat one another differently,” she said. “We have to reimagine a new way forward.”

Her advice to ONA is to never lead from fear, and to humanize issues for others.

“Bring a human rights perspective into the discussion. The economy is always put at the forefront, but it shouldn’t come at human expense.”

Watt-Cloutier believes the knowledge of Indigenous peoples is helpful. The values of fairness and respect are vital. “Less is more. Let’s go back to basics.”

Leaders must authentically model a sense of calm, clarity and focus. “Always check inward to ensure you’re leading from strength, not victimhood or fear,” she advised. “The world is us. The revolution that will save the world is a personal one.”

CFNU President Linda Silas: “Together, we are unstoppable!”

In addressing the nursing shortage and the impact of COVID-19, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) President Linda Silas told delegates that the further loss of nurses will be devastating.

“Our nurses are the security blanket for our health-care system. They are the quality insurance we have for our patients. We can’t let them leave,” she said.

To drive that point home, one CFNU activity in 2021 was a Day of Action on September 17, with information pickets held across the country. Holding a Day of Action was a resolution from the CFNU’s virtual Convention in June, timed for the September 20 federal election – with a focus on the nursing shortage made worse because of the pandemic.

“Nurses here and across the world are fed up! Too many are saying ‘Enough, I’m gone!’,” said Silas, adding the workplace burnout and physical/verbal abuse nurses experience also increased during the pandemic. CFNU found that 83 per

cent of nurses pre-COVID said there isn’t enough staff to meet patient needs; 63 per cent said they are showing signs of burnout; and 30 per cent show clinical signs of burnout because of understaffing and violence in the workplace.

CFNU is booking meetings with MPs and will be caucusing with all parties to talk about the crisis in the health workforce – 70 per cent of which are nurses. It will also continue working with its provincial nursing union members and international organizations, such as Global Nurses United and the International Council of Nurses, to share information and learn more about the global nursing shortage and the continued impact of COVID-19.

CFNU is embarking on a new research project in 2022, hoping to match the data collected with pre-COVID-19 numbers to see if the numbers on burnout, staffing shortages and workplace violence line up with the current reality. And CFNU is undertaking a “nurses’ voice project” to



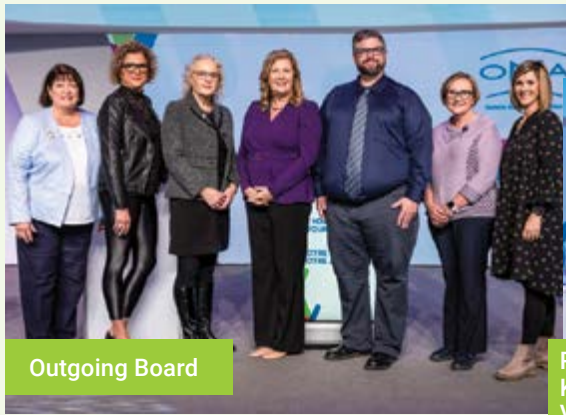
capture nurses’ experiences during the pandemic, which will be launched during Nursing Week 2022.

“We need to humanize the disastrous effect that COVID had and is having on our workplaces,” said Silas. The plan is to have a report on the data to present at the Premiers’ Conference in July.

Silas signed off with a video clip from Wonder Woman with the key words in the accompanying song that were a resounding reminder to ONA members – *I’m invincible. I’m unstoppable. I’m so powerful. I’m so confident.*

Said Silas, “Together we are unstoppable.”





Outgoing Board



Retiring Region 5 Vice-President Karen Bertrand and President Vicki McKenna



Incoming Board

A Warm Welcome and Fond Farewell to Board Members

As ONA continues to adapt to many challenges in the health-care system, including the continuing pandemic and an Ontario government that has shown itself to be anything but a friend to RNs and health-care professionals, we will also be seeing some important changes to our provincial leadership.

"As 2021 comes to a close, we say goodbye with mixed emotions to outgoing Board members and welcome those who are joining the Board for the 2022-24 term," said CEO Beverly Mathers. "ONA relies on the steady hand of our Board members, who are guiding lights for our organization."

ONA congratulates Cathryn Hoy, elected as our new Provincial President. Hoy previously served two terms as First Vice-President and was the Region 2 Vice-President.

Hoy replaces retiring President Vicki McKenna, who is completing her second term as Provincial President after six terms (12 years) as First Vice-President. Delegates wished McKenna the best of luck and thanked her for her leadership and vision.

ONA also congratulates Angela Preocanin, acclaimed as First Vice-President, after serving as Region 4 Vice-President since 2020.

Returning to the Board are incumbents Region 1 Vice-President Dawn Armstrong, Region 2 Vice-President Bernadette Robinson and Region 3 Vice-President DJ Sanderson. Joining them are Erin Ariss, acclaimed to the position of Region 4 Vice-President, replacing Preocanin, and Alan Warrington, acclaimed as Region 5 Vice-President, taking over from Karen Bertrand, who is retiring after serving seven, two-year terms on the Board. She was thanked for her dedication to ONA and our members.

"Our Board's expert decisions help our union navigate through good times and difficult times. They are at the forefront of everything we do, and it has never been more apparent than through the pandemic," concluded Mathers.

Read more about the new Board in the cover story of the winter issue of Front Lines.

Poetic Licence



Delegates were in for a special treat when Ontario's first Poet Laureate, Randell Adjei, recited an original poem written exclusively for ONA members.

"I heard this quote once that the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others," began Adjei, who also formed Reaching Intelligent Souls Everywhere (RISE) to provide youth with inclusive and safe platforms to creatively express themselves through the performance arts. "I can only assume that you found yourselves many times over. There aren't enough words to say thank you for all you've done and continue to do."

As Ontario Poet Laureate, Adjei promotes art and literacy in Ontario and raises awareness of poetry and the spoken word.

Strategic Plan “Important Turning Point for Our Union”



Region 1 Vice-President Dawn Armstrong, First Vice-President/President-Elect Cathryn Hoy and Region 4 Vice-President/First Vice-President-Elect Angela Preocanin (left to right) are part of the Strategic Plan Guidance Group.

ONA's first-ever Board-endorsed Strategic Plan, which sets our direction for the next five years, has members at its heart, the Guidance Group behind the plan told delegates in unveiling its contents.

“Strategic plans make it clear for everyone in an organization where they are trying to go together – what is important and what to prioritize,” said Region 4 Vice-President Angela Preocanin. “They are a tool in keeping an organization focused on shared goals for the future.”

“We know there are members out there who want a different ONA,” added Hoy. “We have heard your concerns. This plan is

part of change, an important step in strengthening our union, bringing the grassroots membership in.”

In fact, the Strategic Plan, approved by the Board last June, was built from the input of more than 3,000 members and staff, who shared what was important to them, along with their hopes for the future, via surveys, workshops, focus groups and individual interviews. The resulting Strategic Plan contains an updated Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Defined Values, ONA's six priorities for the next five years, and 22 concrete actions under each of those priorities.

“This plan will help us become proactive and prioritize,” noted Region 1 Vice-President Dawn Armstrong. “All of us have been working hard and doing great things, but we know there are still areas of improvement and gaps to fill.”

ONA's implementation plan will help define the steps linked to each planning priority and action, when those steps should be taken and in what order, who will be involved and accountable, and the resources needed. Members will receive periodic updates on the status of those priorities and actions.

“This is an important turning point for our union to build a better ONA, a better future for our members, and enable better care for Ontarians,” concluded Hoy. “I'm excited to see what we will build together in the years to come.”

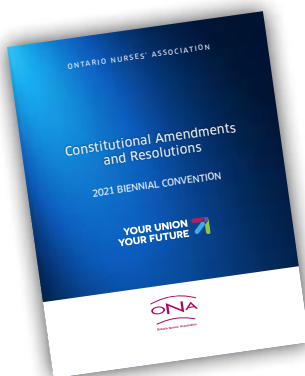
View the full Strategic Plan at ona.org/stratplan (English) or ona.org/planstrategique (French).

Key Constitutional, Statement of Beliefs Amendments Carried

Thirteen constitutional amendments and six statement of beliefs amendments were passed by voting delegates, and one resolution was carried.

A number of amendments to Local By-laws dealt with qualifications for serving in Local Executive Committee positions. Delegates passed the amendments relating to the Local Coordinator and Treasurer, as well as the Vice-Coordinator in a single Bargaining Unit Local.

With respect to ONA's Statement of Beliefs, the new Vision, Mission and Values statements developed as part of ONA's Strategic Plan were supported. Other supported updates included reference to our health-care professional members; recognition of our continued affiliation with the Canadian



Federation of Nurses Unions and the Ontario Federation of Labour; and ONA's collective bargaining goals.

The political process section was amended to reflect ONA's long-time and consistent approach of advocating to the government on issues of high priority to our members, including a publicly funded and administered health-care system.

The only resolution put forward, dealing with the current dues tiers, was passed. The current dues tiers have been in place since 2015 and a request was made at the 2019 Biennial Convention to have the Board examine them. Members voted to increase the current dues tiers by \$5 effective January 1, 2022 as follows:

Straight Time Hourly Rate

- ▶ Equal or greater than \$32.50: \$111.25/monthly
- ▶ Greater than \$26.00 but less than \$32.50: \$81.19/monthly
- ▶ Equal or less than \$26.00: \$65.62/monthly

The *Constitutional Amendments and Resolutions Passed* document is available on our website at ona.org/biennial.



Change is Possible with Collective Action, Education Session Shows

Collectively, we have the power to make a difference. That was the key message from the education session that wrapped up Biennial Convention Week.

"This may be our most important education session ever," began ONA President Vicki McKenna. "We have a provincial election next June and need to ask ourselves questions about how the Ford government's initiatives have affected us, and talk about the things that impact us the most. We are the experts."

Many got a taste of that during the fall federal election in which ONA seconded 15 members to mobilize others to vote. Three of those secondees – Melanie Holjak, Maureen Withers and Shelly Ormsby – shared their experiences.

"I wanted members to know the importance of having a political voice by informing them that the federal government is responsible for health transfers to the provinces," said Ormsby while Holjak added, "what I heard from members was an overwhelming loss of passion for the work. They expressed feeling sad, burned out and angry. I tried to redirect those emotions."

"There is a lot at stake with our health-care system and they appreciated that I gave them a way to make change," noted Withers.

And make change they did, with Team Lead, Government Relations Etana Cain noting that "in the 23 key ridings where there was a very close race, the Conservatives only had a net gain of one seat." Member Mobilizer Stacey Papernick added, "this is collective power:

exercising strength in numbers through high-participation action."

Because the underfunding of the health-care system is a major issue, guest speaker Randy Robinson from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives broke down how it can be funded with political will, while Nora Loreto from the Canadian Association of Labour Media added that "nurses have power and the support of the public to make demands of the government that are not only reasonable, but can be paid for."

ONA Digital Communications Specialist Hamzah Moin concluded the session by highlighting the power of social media to exert pressure on politicians and change public opinions.

"When used properly, social media can be extraordinarily effective. If you wonder how a tweet can change things, you are undervaluing your own voice."



Watch your MPPs' social media platforms and comment on them to clarify nursing election issues. That's a gateway for other forms of activism ONA encourages."

"You advocate for your patients every day and it's vital we take that advocacy and put it into the provincial election," concluded Region 2 Vice-President Bernadette Robinson. "Continue to write emails, make phone calls, go on social media, attend a rally and hold politicians accountable."

Read an overview of our Nurses Vote 2021 campaign in the winter issue of *Front Lines*, and learn about social media do's and don'ts at ona.org.

All Over the Map!

ONA's virtual map is here!

Launched at the Biennial, the map – our first interactive one – allows users to sort, select and learn about their Bargaining Unit and/or Local and employer. Each "pin," essentially a marker on the map, provides real-time information about the workplace location, which means it is up to date based on ONA data.

Access the map at ona.org/map.



Watch Again – and Again and Again if You Like!

Most videos shown at the Human Rights and Equity Caucus, Biennial Convention and Education Session are available on ONA's Youtube channel

youtube.com/OntarioNurses



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