Parting words from ONA President:

Continue to Get Loud for Our Members and Our Profession!

ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN, urged provincial leaders to continue to GET LOUD on behalf of ONA members as she gave her final keynote speech as ONA President on Day 1 of ONA's 2017 Biennial Convention, Dec. 5-6-7 in Toronto.

As of December 31, Haslam-Stroud wrapped up 14 years as ONA's Provincial President and 40 years as an ONA leader and union activist at the Bargaining Unit, Local and Provincial levels.

To open her speech, Haslam-Stroud wished attendees a happy anniversary as ONA heads into its 45th year in 2018.

“You know 45 years is pretty young for a union, but we certainly have done a lot in that period of time. We should be loud and proud of our Union as we celebrate this sapphire anniversary milestone,” said Haslam-Stroud.

“This is my last chance to speak to you directly, to fire you up, to put gas in your tanks and to inspire you to continue to do the great work you do each and every day for our members and for our patients.”

Haslam-Stroud explained how a personal situation led to her four decades of union activism. In 1978, after being repeatedly denied a day off for her wedding by her employer, ONA helped Haslam-Stroud get that day off.

“I am so lucky that early in my career, I saw first-hand how ONA could make a difference in my life as a front-line registered nurse. I realized that ONA was a great union,” she said.

“I started in nursing at age 16 at Mohawk College and graduated as an RN at 18. They put me in charge of an 80-bed surgical unit at St. Joseph's in Hamilton, Local 75, and all 80 patients made it! When Cathy McQuillan, an ONA founding member, invited me to a union meeting, and then invited me to run for a position on the executive, I quickly learned that I could have an impact on nursing worklife. I realized that ONA was a great union. I have never regretted my decision to become involved in ONA. It gave me the courage and confidence to be an ONA leader.”
Reflecting back to when she started out as a union activist, Haslam-Stroud said better scheduling provisions, employer violations of the collective agreement around premium pay, vacation scheduling, Christmas and New Year’s scheduling, staffing, occupational health and safety and job posting were some of the priority issues for her Bargaining Unit members, and they continue to be priority issues today for ONA members.

In her address, Haslam-Stroud highlighted ONA’s successes in many areas, such as bargaining, public advocacy, human rights and occupational health and safety.

“Throughout our 45-year history we have faced a multitude of issues and challenges together. We have triumphed again and again,” said Haslam-Stroud. She cited some ONA highlights, key milestones and watershed events over the years, including:

- The 2005 horrific murder of Lori Dupont, RN, which prompted ONA to push the government for legislation – Lori’s law – to keep our members safe from violence in the workplace. Workplace violence protections are now entrenched in Ontario’s Occupational Health and Safety Act, but it continues to be an uphill battle to gain support from employers. We will continue to get loud on this issue!

- We take on the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) on a regular basis. Due to our relentless efforts, we got the CNO to change its policy on the NCLEX entry-to-practice exam for nursing students. Where before they had been restricted to three rewrites if they failed the exam, RN students now have unlimited rewrites. We continue to press the CNO to amend its redesigned public register, Find a Nurse, which invites the public to “search by practice information,” which we believe will serve only to target and shame individual nurses. In addition, we pressured the CNO to revisit how it referred to RNs who did not take advanced education for their new expanded practice standard of prescribing medications. This is another issue we will continue to get loud about!

- Fighting the policy of a few hospitals for nurses to accept a mandatory influenza vaccine or wear a surgical mask for months. The issue was not a debate about the effectiveness of the flu vaccine but a matter of principle. Everyone has the right to privacy regarding their health care, and everyone has the right to make their own decisions about their health care. No one should be forced to ingest medication against their will. And no one should be outed in public as not having had a flu shot, which is what the surgical mask is intended to do. We were able to demonstrate to an arbitrator through our expert witness that a surgical mask would not provide protection. It was purely intended to shame our members into having the vaccine. This fight is not over.

- Faced with the unfairness of what was being offered to our community care access centre (CCAC) members, ONA trusted them to make an informed but risky choice. Our members once again showed courage when nine of our 10 Bargaining Units voted to strike in January 2015, during one of the coldest winters ever. It demonstrated the power of a union, and the power and respect that nurses and health-care providers command by our patients. That wasn’t from one strike – it was because of years of ONA advocacy.

As a cautionary note, Haslam-Stroud warned members to guard against complacency.

“We must always be vigilant, because if not, our patients will pay the price. “The message I want to leave you with is that you are not alone. You will continue to encounter challenges as you always have, and ONA will rise to the challenges and take them on. We have a long history of strong leaders, of fearlessness and of patient advocacy. That will not change,” she said.

“Please continue to be engaged in the work of ONA, work to make the lives of members better, so that patient care can improve. You have the knowledge, power and strength of ONA behind you, and you must never, never, never give up.”

And in keeping with the theme of the Biennial Convention, Haslam-Stroud wrapped up her speech with ONA’s rallying cry, “Let’s get loud!”
Lessons in Leadership

The secret to strong leadership is to engage your members, communicate with them every day and listen to what they have to say, according to Navy Commander Michael Abrashoff, who spoke about leadership at ONA’s Biennial Convention. “It’s up to you as leaders to figure out a way to connect with your fellow nurses and get them to have the same amount of pride you have, but also to treat them with respect. It all comes down to caring, being technically competent at what we do and having the self-awareness in how we engage with other people.”
ONA Lobby Pays Off! Nurses to be Included in PTSD Legislation

ONA finally got the answer we’ve been lobbying for regarding the inclusion of nurses in the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) presumptive legislation for first responders.

Nurses will finally be covered under the legislation.

In his keynote address to members at ONA’s Biennial Convention in December, Ontario Health and Long-Term Care Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins announced the province is “moving towards introducing legislation that will give all nurses who provide direct patient care access to the same supports, without having to struggle to prove they suffer from PTSD.”

ONA has been lobbying for this change for well over a year since the legislation was introduced in 2016 for first responders.

“We have heard you and are committed to taking care of our nurses too, because it is the right thing to do,” said Hoskins.

Hoskins said the Ontario government recognizes that nurses are first responders and need the same level of support as those who are under the same presumptive legislation passed in 2016.

“Nurses will have quick and easy access to benefits so they can get the treatment and time they need to heal. You will see this historic narrative evolve in the coming weeks ahead as we work towards getting nurses the support they deserve,” he said.

The Health Minister said he will work with Labour Minister Kevin Flynn to introduce legislation in the near future.

Hoskins credited ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN, with being instrumental in campaigning for awareness about workplace violence.

“She knew that to get loud and not accept what she was seeing happen on the job for the past 40 years as a nurse, was the only way to change the direction of nursing for the better,” said Hoskins.

“She saw first-hand what was happening in hospital rooms, ERs, clinics and everything around that and how that was affecting nurses and how they did their job – but more importantly, how it was affecting them as people. She fought hard to make the case that if a nurse suffers from PTSD there should be no question that it is work-related.”

ONA responded to the Minister’s announcement with high praise.

“We are ecstatic that the government has decided to do the right thing and include front-line nurses in the presumptive legislation. ONA has always known that nurses are in every way first responders and vulnerable to developing post-traumatic stress disorder. It’s a great day for nurses who work so hard to provide quality patient care,” said Haslam-Stroud.

ONA has been “getting loud” about the omission of nurses from the legislation since it was passed in 2016. Most recently, members participated in an online campaign, emailing more than 1,000 letters to their MPPs, the Health Minister and Premier calling for nurses to be included.

“This is a wonderful development and a great way to end my tenure as the elected Provincial President of ONA,” she said. “Our incoming President, Vicki McKenna, RN, will be working with the government to implement the legislation in a timely manner.”

McKenna assumed the role of ONA Provincial President on January 1, 2018.

Hoskins said ONA’s advocacy was very instrumental in making workplace violence a front-burner issue.

“It is never okay to be afraid to go into work and workplace violence should not happen in our hospitals or any other part of our health-care sector,” he said.

“Nurses do suffer from PTSD due to their workplace experiences,” noted ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN, citing the top-five triggers for PTSD in nurses as:

1. The death of a child, particularly due to abuse.
2. Violence at work.
3. Treating patients that resemble family or friends.
4. Death or injury of patients.
5. Heavy patient workloads.
OFL President Chris Buckley Welcomes ONA Back!

ONA will be rejoining the “house of labour” as a member union of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), effective January 2018.

ONA President-elect Vicki McKenna, RN, explained that as part of a bigger group, “we are stronger together. As part of the OFL, we can work with all unions to make our province stronger.”

Biennial delegates heard from OFL President Chris Buckley, who expressed his delight that ONA is rejoining the OFL, after withdrawing several years ago along with a number of other unions while OFL went through internal issues.

“This is good for ONA and for the labour movement. You have dedicated your lives to improving the lives of every worker in Ontario, and we have that in common. We are glad to see your organization continue in this direction, focused on labour reforms that benefit all workers and rebuilding the labour movement,” said Buckley.

“After multiple years of austerity, which everyone in your organization has experienced first-hand, we agree with you that we need a renewed focus on rebuilding and defending public services, reversing rising inequality and ensuring that every job is a pathway out of poverty. And each of us has an important part to play in that.”

Buckley said that OFL will be pushing for more RNs across Ontario in the coming year.

“The fact that there are over 750 fewer RNs than there were a year ago and that violence continues to grow in our hospitals is shameful,” he said.

“Our RNs across Ontario are there to take care of people in the most vulnerable times of their lives, and yet there are fewer and fewer nurses, while our population is growing older and sicker. I want to help you build your movement. I want to help you put more RNs in every hospital. I will be with you during the entire fight to make our hospitals something we can be proud of, hospitals that are staffed appropriately and with safety measures in place so that nurses don’t have to worry about violence every day of their working lives.”
Human Rights and Equity Caucus: We Need to Talk!
ONA held another hugely successful Human Rights and Equity Caucus to open Biennial Week on December 4. The theme was: We Need to Talk: The Reality of Stereotyping.

Participants saw five video vignettes illustrating how some ONA members have suffered from stereotyping. The video and discussion were moderated by Dr. Leeno Karumanchery (pictured above), who later provided the keynote speech on understanding how people might stereotype in their day-to-day interactions.

Also during the Caucus, Human Rights and Equity Team member Susan Archibald shared stories of the painful biases she experienced as an indigenous patient in our health-care system.

ONA Local 75 Bids Goodbye
It was an emotional moment for Biennial attendees as members of Local 75 gathered around Provincial President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN, to say their goodbyes. Haslam-Stroud is retiring as Provincial President after 14 years at the helm and 40 years of ONA activism. Local 75 is her “home” Local at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Hamilton, and where she got her start as an ONA leader! Other tributes to Linda included heartfelt send-offs from ONA counterpart nursing union leaders from across Canada.

Education on Workplace Investigations
ONA’s two-hour education session, which wrapped up Biennial week, was entitled “Truth or Consequences: Workplace Investigations are no Game.” The keynote presenter was renowned trainer Gareth Jones, former Director of the Special Ombudsman Response Team of the Canadian Forces, a former investigator with the Attorney General of Ontario and author of Workplace Investigations: Getting Beyond He Said, She said. In his presentation, Jones covered the building blocks of investigations, gathering and assessing evidence, and interviewing ONA members and witnesses.

Members enjoy yet another highly successful Human Rights Caucus.

Nova Scotia Nurses’ Union President Janet Hazleton (left) and ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud share a laugh as nursing union leaders from across Canada wished Linda well in her retirement as ONA President.
Constitutional Amendments

- Voting delegates carried a motion to post the Ticket of Nominations of candidates seeking election to the ONA Board of Directors on ONA’s website. Members will be able to see the information about each candidate and voting procedures, and to vote online. The televote process will also remain in effect for those who wish to vote by telephone.

- Voting delegates carried a motion to change the wording of Article 10.04 and all related articles to “administration” from “trusteeship.”

Resolution

- Carried: A motion to reflect the current practice re. dues increases “up to 3 per cent” to be reviewed by the Board annually, and a business case to be presented to Local leadership.

The Ottawa Hospital’s “Journey” to a Safer Workplace

A panel of representatives from The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) provided an update during the Biennial Convention on the hospital’s workplace violence prevention pilot initiative, which is having a system-wide impact in making the hospital safe from workplace violence. Panelists included: ONA Local 83 Coordinator and TOH Bargaining Unit President Marc Page (at right in the photo); Debra Bournes, TOH’s Chief Nursing Executive and Vice-President of Clinical Programs, as well as the former Chief Nursing Officer of Ontario; TOH President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Jack Kitts (at left); and Thomas Hayes, Director of Safety, Security, Parking and Staff Health. ONA health and safety specialist Nancy Johnson moderated. Page spoke about how five health and safety committees at five sites joined forces for a collaborative approach to violence prevention. Dr. Kitts told Biennial attendees “You can't have the best of patient safety if you don’t have staff safety.” For a full story on TOH’s efforts, see page 24 of this issue of Front Lines.

What’s “App”ening?

ONA’s new App for mobile device users made an impressive appearance at the Biennial Convention. ONA is so cutting edge! The App provides one-stop mobile access to ONA information, and is a new way to feature important ONA resources. It is available from the iTunes App Store and Google Play. Features include: direct access to collective agreements, article by article – users can search the agreements using key words; and ONA news, events and actions. New features include the ability for users to customize their profiles to receive the information they are most interested in. Stay tuned for more updates!
ONA’s partnership has strengthened nursing students’ group

Kelsey Fallis, RN, the Ontario Regional Director of the Canadian Nursing Students’ Association (CNSA), thanked ONA for its ongoing support for nursing students.

“ONA has been a strong partner for CNSA in Ontario, helping strengthen our advocacy efforts,” said Fallis.

“When the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) brought in the American entry-to-practice exam, the NCLEX, they implemented a three-write limit. Anyone who failed three times would need to complete another BScN degree. Thanks to the joint advocacy between CNSA and ONA, CNO has now implemented unlimited NCLEX attempts. We have made great strides towards making changes to this flawed exam, but there is still much more work to be done.”

A recent graduate of York University’s nursing program, Fallis is now a card-carrying dues-paying member of ONA, at Local 95, St. Joseph’s Health Centre in Toronto, working full-time in the emergency department.

Workplace Violence Tools

Henrietta Van Hulle from the Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA) spoke to Biennial attendees about the many tools available for violence reduction in the workplace.

Van Hulle, PSHSA’s Executive Director, Health & Community Services, introduced the Violence, Aggression and Responsive Behaviour (VARB) initiative that will be discussed in more depth at ONA’s spring health and safety caucuses.

You can read more about VARB at www.pshsa.ca/article/marb-project and more about the PSHSA’s violence programs at www.pshsa.ca/workplace-violence

The Fight Continues!

In her Biennial Convention speech, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) President Linda Silas, RN, outlined plans for CFNU work in the coming year, including the continued fight to protect and increase nursing positions across the country, a national pharmacare plan and comprehensive reform for seniors’ care and for indigenous people.

Said Silas, “We have to keep reminding ourselves that the public trusts us 90 per cent, and we can lose that trust quickly. You hear about patient adverse effects because of inadequate staffing. We need to speak up and defend our positions and patient care. Our job as nursing unions is to protect the jobs of RNs and make sure we can provide excellent care. We need your voice out there!”

Hospital Bargaining Forecast: “This is our time” – Marie Kelly

ONA Chief Executive Officer/Chief Administrative Officer Marie Kelly spoke about ONA’s work, including successes and challenges in the one-year period since the 2016 Biennial Convention.

You can read about ONA’s achievements in the Biennial Work of the Union booklet on our website here: www.ona.org/biennial

In talking about the coming round of bargaining for our 55,000 members in the hospital sector, Kelly said it’s a difficult landscape for ONA members but “we have the right bargaining team for the right time.” Bargaining was set to begin in the first two weeks of January.