

The Importance of the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) for Nurses

In the decades since 1973, the Ontario Nurses Association has advocated on behalf of Ontario's nurses and for the rights and recognition they deserve. Since their beginning, ONA has continuously fought to ensure that nurses are paid fairly for the important work they do and to improve nurses' working conditions. This is a sentiment that my late grandmother Patricia (Pat) Bethune, former ONA president, echoed in a 1989 article saying;

“Let's face it... the hours are long and hard, we work around the clock and through every holiday... The conditions are appalling. Imagine anyone being asked to work two twelve hour shifts in a row, let alone a nurse who has such a high-stress, high-responsibility job” (Cohen, 1989, p.1270).

The efforts of people like my grandmother led to real improvements in our healthcare system and in the field of nursing in Ontario. One example that comes to mind is that of the SARS epidemic. ONA advocated for better safety precautions including the stockpiling N95 masks to ensure the safety of all health care professionals and their patients. Efforts like this contributed to better preparedness for the pandemic we are currently facing, COVID-19. On another note, many ONA members reported experiencing workplace violence (ONA, 2017). This expressed concern is what led ONA to create their *Code White* campaign, which calls for better protections for employees against workplace violence. Nurses need a work environment where they feel safe to do their jobs effectively. This, among many other reasons, is why ONA is so important for nurses in Ontario. ONA works tirelessly to improve the working conditions of their members, allowing nurses to focus on their important work. Finally, I feel confident knowing that, because of ONA, I will always have a voice in the work I do as a nurse.

References

- Cohen, L. (1989). Why are Canada's nurses quitting? *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 141(12), 1270-1272. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1451537/>
- ONA. (2017). Ontario Nurses' Association Calls a Code on Health-care Funding, RN Cuts, Workplace Violence Against Nurses. *Ontario Nurses' Association*, Retrieved from <https://www.ona.org/news-posts/ona-calls-a-code/>