ONA’s President Says “Let’s Get Loud!”

With her trademark humour and passion in place, Linda Haslam-Stroud’s Biennial Convention 2016 President’s Address achieved what she set out to do: inspire, reenergize and reignite members’ and leaders’ passion for what they do.

Haslam-Stroud noted that she is “proud to get loud” – to the point that sometimes, her husband turns off his new hearing aids. But get loud is what ONA leaders and members need to do to continue to lead the labour movement in Ontario as a respected, strong and powerful union.

“I am proud to be LOUD as I advocate for you, our members and leaders, to ensure that you are able to do what you do best – deliver high-quality care for our patients, residents and clients,” Haslam-Stroud told Biennial attendees.

“I have said it before, and I am going to say it again – I am honoured to be your President, and I am renewed in my passion in this role because of each and every one of you…our amazing nurses and allied health professionals, who care deeply about care.

Haslam-Stroud urged ONA leaders and members to join in the efforts to fight the relentless RN erosion that is happening in Ontario, and “tell employers, government, patients and the public about RNs’ value,” noting that because of the efforts to date, “we’ve been able to slow down, and in some cases, erase the erosion.”

With regard to workplace violence, she asked, “How is it that five male police officers in riot gear can come into the ER and leave a patient with one RN? Enough is enough! We are not punching bags.”

Vowing that the “rubber is hitting the road” regarding workplace violence, Haslam-Stroud cited a City TV news report recently as a sign of just how much ONA’s sustained effort to prevent workplace violence is breaking through.

“The reporter interviewed Danielle (Bargaining Unit President/Local 54 Coordinator) Larmand-Latulippe, of Toronto’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health [CAMH]) and then CAMH’s Chief Nursing Officer. The Chief Nursing Officer told the reporter that it was a shame about nurses being attacked, but said no more security was needed. Now, this is something I have never seen before – the reporter actually said to her, ‘but you’re not the one being kicked and punched!’”

Haslam-Stroud also commented on ONA’s many successes over the past few years, including the NCLEX-RN win for nursing students (due to ONA’s lobbying, the College of Nurses of Ontario [CNO] has now removed the three-write restriction), the win with regard to the listing of members’ status on the
CNO website (CNO will no longer publicly list the names of nurses who have recovered, or are in recovery, from mental health and addiction issues as incapacitated), and the new sense of solidarity forged within the ranks of members working in Community Care Access Centres during the 2015 strike.

ONA has allies in the fight for preserving RN care – she noted the solidarity among ONA, the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (RNAO), Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) and the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC), as well as many other organizations.

ONA also has exceptional leaders and members getting loud about the threats to patient care and RNs, and the President thanked them all.

“I need you,” Haslam-Stroud said. “We are credible, respected, valued as leaders and in our work lives. As union leaders, we have to be beyond reproach.”

Acknowledging the time and effort that being a leader takes, Haslam-Stroud thanked them for providing leadership, and urged everyone to not give up the fight and not lose their passion.

“Telling people the truth hurts will get us to a better place,” she said. “You have my promise that we will continue to get loud. We’ve earned our respect. We have the power to change bad decisions.”

Key Constitutional Amendments, Resolutions Carried

Significant Constitutional Amendments were carried by voting delegates at the Biennial Convention as well as amendments made necessary by them. This summarizes the key amendments/resolutions that were carried:

**Constitutional Amendments**

1. **Common terms of office for the Board of Directors (Article 4.12 and related articles):** Currently elections for the office of President and First Vice-President are held in alternate years to the elections for the five Vice-Presidents. This amendment establishes a common term and allows the entire Board to be together for a two-year period, thus enabling the Board to implement its strategic plan without the possibility of turnover and preparing for elections every year. This amendment removes the requirement for annual elections and all Board members will be elected biennially. The Regional Vice-Presidents will serve a one-year term from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017 and then all Board positions will be elected for a common two-year term from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019.

2. **Joint Sector Meeting to replace March Provincial Coordinators Meeting (PCM) (Article 6.32 and related articles):** PCMs will continue to be held two times a year (in June and November). A provincially funded joint sector meeting replaces the March PCM for the purpose of information sharing and dialogue on provincial issues and to engage more Bargaining Unit leaders in labour relations work on behalf of our members. This would be a meeting of all Bargaining Unit Presidents and Local Coordinators from all three sectors (hospitals, homes and community). The Board has approved annual provincial financial support for all Bargaining Unit Presidents and Local Coordinators to attend.

3. **Discipline of members for strike-breaking (Article 9.01 and 9.02):** Expands the current article on member conduct considered to be detrimental or reflecting discredit on the Union to include discipline that will be applied for a member that crosses a picket line established by ONA or when working for an employer at which ONA is on strike or lockout. Also established is what the discipline will be for strike-breakers, which includes loss of Legal Expense Assistance Plan (LEAP) coverage.

**Resolutions**

1. That the provincially funded Biennial Convention be held in November 2017 and in every odd numbered year thereafter. Having the Biennial Convention coincide with the election of the new Board of Directors will enable the development of membership strategies for a two-year period based on membership feedback provided at the Convention. Note the proposed 2017 budget provides for provincial funding for all Local Coordinators, all Bargaining Unit Presidents and an additional person from each Local to attend the 2017 Convention and engage in the work of the Union.

2. That ONA continue to educate the public about the deplorable conditions in the long-term care sector and the need for appropriate staffing for residents.
ONA Bids a Fond Farewell

ONA members said goodbye to a number of folks who have made long-time notable contributions to the success of our Union.

DAN ANDERSON, ONA Chief Negotiator

Since ONA’s inception in 1973, Dan Anderson has dedicated his professional life to improving the working conditions of our RN and allied health professional members, and also to fighting for the maintenance of our public health-care system. For his efforts, Anderson was awarded an honorary ONA membership.

As Chief Negotiator, Anderson was instrumental in significant advancements ONA made in pay equity and during central negotiations in our hospital, CCAC home care/community and nursing home sectors over the years. He has always worked to ensure that ONA members received the best possible wages and benefits.

Also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan, Anderson has been vigilant in the fight to ensure that ONA members’ defined benefit pension plans are maintained to the highest degree so they can retire in dignity.

ELIZABETH MCINTYRE, ONA General Counsel

Following her presentation on ONA Liability Inc., ONA said goodbye to General Counsel Liz McIntyre, who has been expertly representing members for the past 40 years, as she gets ready to retire as a partner from the law firm Cavalluzzo Shilton McIntyre Cornish.

It was what McIntyre described as a “fortuitous summer job” that brought her to ONA back in the early days, laying the groundwork for her pursuit of social justice on behalf of health care and other professionals.

While there have been many noteworthy contributions from McIntyre, who received an honourary ONA membership in November 2015, two stand out: She acted as counsel before the SARS Commission conducted by Justice Campbell, and the resulting “precautionary principle” is largely due to her. McIntyre’s arguments at the Lori Dupont inquest that her tragic murder was a workplace fatality, not just an incidence of domestic abuse, led to significant amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act regarding violence in the workplace.

ANNE CLARK, RN ONA Board Member

Anne Clark, who is retiring from the Board at the end of the year after serving as Vice-President for Region 2 since 2005, has “expertly and compassionately represented thousands of members in eastern Ontario,” ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud told Biennial attendees.

An ONA member since 1980, Anne has worked in the Queensway Carleton Hospital in Ottawa on a combined urology/orthopedics and general surgery unit for over three decades. Throughout those 30-plus years, she has been actively involved in ONA at the Local level, having held the positions of Local 84 Coordinator, First Vice-Coordinator, Bargaining Unit President, Grievance Officer and Treasurer.

She was also twice elected as the Region 2 representative on ONA’s Hospital Central Negotiating Team. As a Board member, Anne held the portfolios of Labour Relations and Education. She also served as chair of the provincial Nursing Week Committee and Public Health Network and CCAC teleconnects.

Anne was a great mentor to us all!
Health Minister Advances Dialogue on Workplace Violence, RN Job Cuts

Marking his second appearance at an ONA Biennial Convention (he also spoke in 2014), Ontario Health and Long-Term Care Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins reiterated the Ontario government’s commitment to strongly supporting nurses “at every stage of their careers and professional development.”

“We have been implementing a nursing strategy with the goal of ensuring a stable nursing workforce today and into the future, from education through to recruitment and retention,” Minister Hoskins told Biennial attendees.

Check out ONA’s Front Lines magazine and our website at www.ona.org for updates on such provincial initiatives as the New Graduate Guarantee and the work being done at the Workplace Violence Prevention in Health Care Leadership Table, of which ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud is a participant.

Said Hoskins, “Expect to hear more in the weeks and months ahead as we work together to address one of the most serious challenges we face as front-line health-care providers. And let me be clear, I am committed to making regulatory and legislative changes, if required, to ensure that we are addressing the problem head on and that we have robust enforcement mechanisms.

“No one should ever, under any circumstance, have to face violence in the workplace. Sadly, I know from my own experiences, we as health-care providers see and experience things I know I wish I could forget. And I know that, with nurses often acting as the eyes and ears on the front line of our health-care system, especially in our hospitals, you are particularly exposed.”

Added Hoskins, “As Ontario’s Health Minister, I am committed to doing everything I can to prevent health-care workers in Ontario from having such experiences. So thank you for working with our government to ensure that we get this right.”

ONA Leaders Ask Pointed Questions, Demand Answers!

Following Health Minister Hoskin’s remarks several ONA members asked pointed questions on what the government intends to do about workplace violence and ongoing cuts to RN positions.

Said Bargaining Unit President and Local 54 Coordinator Danielle Latulippe-Larmand from Toronto’s Centre for Mental Health and Addiction (CAMH), “Nurses are still being punched, kicked and used as punching bags and employers are not being held accountable. What is the minister planning on doing to protect the nurses of Ontario from violence?”

In an emotional presentation, Latulippe-Larmand cited a litany of horrifying incidents of violence at CAMH just in the last year, including nurses and other staff being beaten unconscious and suffering concussions, possible permanent blindness and a fractured nose.

“These are daily occurrences for nurses in Ontario. Staff feel unsupported, are fearful to come to work and sometimes stop at the side of the road to cry, thinking is it me today? That is not including the racism, sexism, homophobia, grabbing, pinching, sexual leering that also takes place on a daily basis in Ontario,” said Latulippe-Larmand.

“Let’s Get Loud!”

“When will we not be punching bags? Minister, when and how will you keep nurses safe and prevent a death in the Ontario health-care system? We need it now!”

As she finished, Biennial attendees gave Latulippe-Larmand a standing ovation and pounded on the tables, shouting “Let’s Get Loud!”

ONA Region 2 Vice-President Elect Cathryn Hoy, the Local 99 Coordinator and Kingston General Hospital Bargaining Unit President, then asked Hoskins about ongoing RN job cuts.

Said Hoy, who assumes the role of ONA Region 2 Vice-President in January, “RNs continue to be cut from hospitals. Public health nurses are being cut and replaced with health promoters and pharmacists or not even being replaced. In long-term care, RNs are being whittled away so that
Dear MPP Lisa Thompson,

I just spent the past week in Toronto at the Ontario Nurses’ Association (ONA) Biennial Convention. As you know, ONA is lobbying the current government on a number of issues. First off, there are the cuts to RN positions across Ontario. Our province now has the shameful position of having the least number of RNs to population in the country. You can’t tell me that this is not going to filter down to patient care. It most certainly does.

We have been affected by this at our hospital, with nurses working 12 and sometimes 16 hours without a break.

Workplace violence is another huge issue for our ONA members. I have personally been spit on, grabbed, scratched and had my life threatened over the years. Just a few months ago, a patient picked up an IV pole with a pump attached and swung it at me and hit me. I called the police for assistance because as you know, or may not know, the security system at the Kincardine hospital is essentially 911.

The third area that I feel strongly about is Bill 163, the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) legislation for covering first responders. Nurses were left out of the bill as first responders. After over 30 years of service to the people of this province, I could tell you stories of situations that myself and other nurses have had to deal with that would shake even author Stephen King. Our nurses just leave work and go home and quietly deal with the trauma of the day, often without a debrief.

I would be willing to stand up in the visitor’s gallery at Queen’s Park in opposition to Bill 163 as it is currently written. Just let me know when, and I will be there. The bill needs to include the nurses of this province.

Will you support ONA and its members and stand up for these issues that affect all Ontarians?

Diane Jolliffe RN
Kincardine, ON

now we have in many cases one RN per 300 patients. Privatization of home care means RNs are no longer allowed to take patients. Nurse practitioners are being eliminated from hospitals or being replaced by physician assistants. This impacts on our communities, and our communities are our families. Our province now has the worst RN-population ratio in the country, and our united voice of concern seems to fall on deaf ears. We need and demand an end to RN cuts. Can you tell us where you see nurses in your Patients First agenda?”

On the issue of RN cuts, Hoskins reiterated the government is listening and intends to continue working with ONA to stabilize the RN workforce.

On workplace violence, the Health Minister underscored his earlier comments, saying the government intends to continue to work with ONA on violence prevention across Ontario. He indicated he is awaiting the report from the Violence Leadership Table, which he says is doing exceptionally hard work to provide us with a “specific and tangible plan and pathway on how we can reduce and aim to eliminate workplace violence and provide health-care workers with protection.”

Looking visibly moved, Hoskins indicated it is vitally important to get information from the front lines. Poignant stories of what really is going on are necessary. Further, he said, the conversation about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) coverage for nurses in the new first-responders legislation is continuing.

“I wake up every day trying to imagine what steps I can take to put patients first and strengthen your ability to do your jobs safely and effectively. I don’t have all the answers but I hope you understand my commitment to make a difference on these issues,” said Hoskins.
Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) Director Natalie Mehra, always a welcome speaker at ONA provincial meetings, spoke about the organization’s current and upcoming campaigns.

“I love coming to ONA events and seeing so many friends from across Ontario that I have the great fortune to work with,” she began. “Your support has moved me personally, and we have had many successes at saving emergency departments, services, units and beds. We couldn’t have done that without you.”

And Mehra is hoping that support will continue, starting with the OHC’s Care Bear Tour across the province with a giant teddy bear, aptly nicknamed “Tommy” after the architect of Canada’s universal health-care system, Tommy Douglas. The tour is intended to convey the message that non-profit care must be the centre of our public health-care system.

“This is an opportunity to educate people about what a single-tiered health-care system really is,” she said. “We are deeply proud of it as Canadians, but will have to fight to uphold it.”

The OHC is also working on a report on private clinics after learning the vast majority are billing their provincial health plans while also charging user fees, and a second report on Canadians’ experiences with those user fees.

“It’s just greed and it’s got to be stopped,” Mehra said. “A patient is not supposed to face financial barriers to receiving care.”

Mehra says the OHC will also embark on campaigns for long-term care, to ensure the system provides enough care to meet the high needs of residents, and hospital reform, with Ontario now “worst in the country in just about every conceivable area,” including the fewest beds and worst RN-to-population ratio.

Ontario Regional Director of the Canadian Nursing Students’ Association (CNSA) Grant MacNeil, who represents 16,000 students across Ontario, took to the podium to thank delegates “for advocating for students and inspiring us to be leaders.” Citing the recent NCLEX win, in which ONA successfully lobbied for an end to the three-write maximum, and ONA hosting the executive meeting of associate delegates representing Ontario chapters of the CNSA as two recent examples, MacNeil noted, “it’s great to know there is a major amount of support for nursing students out there. And we hope to get loud too!”
The spirited and energetic Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) President Linda Silas took to heart ONA’s Biennial theme – Let’s Get Loud – with a rousing message for ONA members.

“What really worries me is that RNs are fearful of speaking out. Shake it off, my friends, and get loud!” Silas said.

“There is much work to be done on the health and social accord, especially around the development of a national pharmacare program. The federal government and the premiers are backing away from pharmacare, yet as healthcare professionals we must continue to let them know that Canada needs this program.”

What Members are Getting Loud About

In the foyer of the main meeting room, members were given the opportunity to write what they are getting loud about at the Biennial Convention and beyond in thought bubbles on a whiteboard. And did they ever! Here is just a sampling: “My ONA family,” “racism,” “support for new RNs,” “public health funding,” “hospital cuts,” “job security,” “violence,” “member engagement” and “supporting students.” What are you getting loud about?

Ontario Federation of Labour’s (OFL) President Chris Buckley delivered a deeply felt message to all ONA members: thank you for all of the work that you do, for your compassion, your experience, your tireless efforts!

Buckley, who was given the mandate to lead the OFL unanimously at its Biennial Convention in November 2015, was joined by OFL’s Executive Vice-President Ahmad Gaied and Secretary-Treasurer Patty Coates.

“I can tell you on behalf of the OFL, we are with you and we are making positive changes in bringing the Federation forward,” noted Buckley.
ONA Welcomes Comic Mary Walsh

Approximately 900 attendees at ONA’s 2016 Biennial Convention were treated to a cheeky keynote address by comedienne/political satirist/social activist Mary Walsh.

Walsh, famous for her award-winning performances on This Hour Has 22 Minutes and her funny Princess Warrior character Marg Delahunty, also touched on some serious issues affecting our members, including RN cuts, Ontario’s upsetting distinction of having the worst RN-to-population ratio in Canada, violence in the workplace and pay equity (women make 71 cents for every dollar a man makes!).

“We really underestimate how far we haven’t come!” she joked.

See ONA in Action on YouTube!

A large selection of exciting videos was played throughout our Biennial Convention, highlighting the great work ONA has done over the past two years.

Among the videos shown at the Biennial were:

• ONA in Action: a broad overview of the work of our Union.
• Human Rights & Equity: A primer on this team and their successes.
• ONA Leadership Conference update.
• ONA’s significant victory in how the CNO deals with members in recovery from addiction or who have other mental health issues.

To see all our Biennial Convention videos and much more, visit our YouTube channel at: www.youtube.com/ontariornurses.

In her incisive and hilarious way, she poked fun at the US presidential election, “President Mango, the Groper-in-Chief” (Donald Trump) and International Women’s Day (why only a day?!).

Walsh kicked off her speech with some light ribbing of ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud for her formidable reputation in defence of ONA members, the nursing profession and Ontario’s health-care system.

Walsh also made the correct observation that Ontario’s health-care employers are trying to balance their budgets on nurses, the “backbone of our health-care system.”

Dressed as her Princess Warrior character, she brandished a prop sword and cried, “Don’t make me come back and smite you! Without nurses, the whole system would fail.”

Following her speech, she was asked by a nursing student about to embark on her career what she would tell her 22-year-old self. Walsh replied poignantly, “I wish I knew then how to take care of myself. It’s a totally unselfish thing to do. If you can’t take care of yourself, how can you take care of everyone else?”

A proud Newfoundlander, Walsh has garnered over 30 Gemini Awards for both her writing and many performances. A recipient of the Governor General’s Lifetime Achievement Award and a proud recipient of the Order of Canada in 2000, Walsh was also awarded the 2010 Oxfam Spirit of Change Award in promoting the eradication of poverty.

$7,350 Raised for Stephen Lewis Foundation

A selection of gifts donated by ONA Locals were raffled off throughout the Biennial Convention, with ticket sales benefitting the Stephen Lewis Foundation, a non-governmental organization that assists mostly AIDS and HIV-related grassroots projects in Africa. ONA has long supported its work. The total amount raised was $7,350.