
Report from the President

June Provincial Coordinators Meeting Highlights
June 10-11, 2015



Dear ONA Members,

I am pleased to provide the following report from ONA's most recent Provincial Coordinators Meeting (PCM), hosted by Region 5 in the beautiful city of London on June 10-11 2015.

Nobody Does it Better!

I kicked off the meeting by highlighting some of the key successes of our union, which stem from the credibility we have built over the years with the government, our employers, arbitrators, our patients/clients/residents and the public. And the rest of the world *is* paying attention.

It's been a tough time for our members, there's no doubt about it. You are dealing with increasingly complex issues on the front lines, including violence in the workplace, regressive attendance management programs and the need to file grievances you never had to in the past. The government and employers have put additional challenges on us by eroding our positions. But there is much to be optimistic about. We have had significant wins in the areas of WSIB, litigation, bargaining, communications and human rights and equity – to name a few. Unions across the country have not only taken note of these victories, as they impact on their members as well, they have thanked ONA for paving the way. Nursing organizations from the United Kingdom, California and Australia are looking at how we are able to improve workplaces by ensuring our professional standards are met while respecting our collective agreements. We have set the bar higher and nobody does it better!

The government is taking note as well. They know ONA is a force to be reckoned with and when it comes to the important issues of the day, such as Ebola, they turn to ONA for our expertise.

I know that it's difficult back in your Bargaining Units, but there is much to be hopeful for. We are making a difference with these tremendous wins and we will continue to achieve them, whether through the Ontario Labour Relations Board, the grievance/arbitration process, job action or the bargaining table. ONA is a powerful, united union that doesn't back down!

Outstanding Chief Executive Officer/Chief Administrative Officer Named

I was pleased to announce at the PCM that the Board has unanimously appointed Marie Kelly as ONA's permanent Chief Executive Officer/Chief Administrative Officer. She has been serving in that position in an interim capacity since September 2014.

Hired in 2014 as our Director of Labour Relations, Contract Administration, Kelly is a seasoned labour lawyer who understands how our organization works and what the priorities are for our RN and allied health professional members. She has overseen our growing organization and stewarded it through a difficult CCAC strike and challenging discussions with the government around nursing layoffs, contract negotiations, and health and safety.

Prior to joining ONA, Kelly spent more than two decades serving members of the United Steelworkers Union, along with a two-year term as an elected Officer of the Ontario Federation of Labour. She has spent her life on the front lines fighting for positive societal changes for working people, their families and the communities in which we all live.

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The Board looks forward to continuing to work with her as we traverse both the exciting and challenging times ahead.

More Nurses Campaign

The Board has approved \$1.5 million for a revamped *More Nurses* campaign to continue to demand a moratorium on disastrous cuts to RN positions throughout Ontario, which are causing needless suffering to our patients. While we represent members other than RNs, many of whom are also seeing their positions eroded, the vast number of reductions have been to RNs.

In fact, since January 2015, more than 400 RN positions have been cut in our province, which translates into 800,000 RN care hours lost to our communities. The recent Ontario budget froze base funding to hospitals for the fourth year in a row, and when hospitals look for ways to balance their budgets, they turn to their front-line RNs. For every extra patient added to an average RN's workload, rates of patient complications and even deaths rise by seven per cent.

The multi-media campaign follows on the heels of our *More Nurses* campaign launched in February 2014 in the run-up to the provincial election, and includes redesigned signs and placards, radio ads, pre-roll ads that play before streaming TV and videos on several popular sites, video monitor ads in health care facilities and waiting rooms, ads on mobile phones and social media. This plan will ensure the public understands that more nurses are needed to provide quality patient care, today and tomorrow. We need to let the government know the serious implications of these cuts through stealth!

An important component of our campaign is the ability to respond very quickly when RN cuts are announced in our Bargaining Units. We are able to place paid ads on Facebook and other websites, which can be targeted to subscribers based on their postal codes.

In the fall, we will launch the next phase of our campaign by placing *More Nurses* ads in prominent bus shelters around Queen's Park so our elected government officials will clearly see the effects of their ill-thought-out decisions. We will also publish "soft" informational articles about RNs and health care, with an ONA and *More Nurses* mention at the end, which is a very cost-effective way to keep this issue in local news.

Of course, no campaign would be effective without the support of our members, promoting our key messages in your communities. For that reason, we are asking you to get involved with our campaign in any way that you can. See our website at www.ona.org for more information.

Have a Say Bargaining Survey Deadline Extended

We have extended the deadline to complete ONA's electronic bilingual *Have a Say* bargaining survey until **Tuesday, June 30**. It is of the utmost importance that we hear from all our members. The results enable ONA's elected bargaining teams to understand members' priorities while representing them at the upcoming round of bargaining, and will help us sustain our effectiveness in bargaining your contracts.

Log onto our website at www.ona.org and a box asking you to fill out the survey should pop up automatically. If not, look for "Bargaining 2016" on the homepage. Click on that link and enter your email address – nothing else is required. All information is confidential and individuals will not be identified.

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CFNU Biennial Convention

From June 1-5, approximately 200 ONA delegates attended the Biennial Convention of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) in Halifax, hosted by the Nova Scotia Nurses Union. The theme, *We've Got the Power! Making a Difference*, resonated with all of us.

It was a busy week of workshops on critical topics such as social determinants of health, along with a full plenary session, with both a national and international perspective. We also staged a massive lunchtime rally where I spoke about the challenges nurses and their patients face.

I am a member of the CFNU's Resolutions Committee and am pleased to report that a number of resolutions were passed during the Convention in areas such as safe staffing and emergency preparedness. I urge you to check the CFNU's website (www.nursesunions.ca) for highlights.

The most exciting part of the week for me was when ONA First Vice-President Vicki McKenna was honoured with the CFNU's highest honour, the Bread and Roses award for her outstanding contributions to policy and decision-making, raising public awareness, lobbying governments, and educating members and the public. This is well-deserved recognition for someone who works so tirelessly for our members and whom I am proud to work alongside on the Board.

Students: The Future of our Profession and our Union

Kendra Davis, a third-year nursing student from the University of Western Ontario, joined our meeting for the first time as Ontario Regional Director of the Canadian Nursing Students' Association (CNSA), welcoming delegates to her home town.

"I am honoured to be here today," she began. "I am so grateful for you taking me under your wing and making me feel extremely welcomed in your union. I would like to emphasize the incredible support ONA provides CNSA students in Ontario and throughout Canada."

ONA is the only nursing union in Canada that includes all nursing students as affiliate members, which Davis' counterparts from other provinces will bring forward to their student bodies and nursing unions, she said, adding this is yet another example of how ONA leads the way.

"I am proud that ONA is a platinum sponsor of the CNSA's conferences and we are honoured that Board members attend," Davis said, extending an invitation for delegates to attend the Ontario/Quebec Regional Conference in Ottawa from October 16-18 and the National Conference next January 27-30 in Sault Ste. Marie, which may include a student rally in collaboration with ONA. "Thank you for all you do; I look forward to seeing what the rest of 2015 and 2016 brings, and how the collaboration between the CNSA and ONA continues to flourish."

I would also like to note that I have been accepted as a member of the Sheridan College Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Program Advisory Council, which ensures the college's programs meet the needs of students as they prepare for their chosen field, including nursing. I will bring my wealth of experience as a professional nurse and union leader to discussions.

Natalie Mehra: "Nurses are the Heroes who Saved Public Health Care"

Always a favourite speaker at our provincial meetings, Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) Director Natalie Mehra spoke about how critical nurses have been to the movement to protect public

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Medicare, both within your Bargaining Units and in your broader communities, advocating for your patients.

"ONA and the CFNU have been true leaders in the protection of public Medicare in this country and I hope you are very proud of the incredible work you have done," she began.

But we face challenges, she added, noting RN cuts are deeper than we have seen since the Mike Harris era. There are more than 50,000 people on wait lists, some on more than one, and in Ontario, that number has never dipped below 20,000 as long as Mehra can remember. Yet, the hospital cuts continue.

"In home care, where the government wants everyone to be shifted, funding per client dipped significantly and is only now back up, but it's still only reached the level it was in 2002," she said. "Meanwhile, the complexity of clients is much greater, and there is a massive downloading of clients whose care needs are not being met. The government likes to use charts to show that it costs so much more per day to stay in a hospital and a long-term care facility than to receive home care. But it's not a full day of care, it's not equivalent care. They are comparing apples to apples, but it's not even apples to oranges. It's apples to raisins."

To fight back, Mehra urged delegates to continue to get involved in OHC campaigns to pressure the government to answer for the real world implications of their austerity measures.

"We need to make the point that health care is not a luxury," she said. "When the government cuts it to the bone, you cannot do your work safely and it creates risks for your patients. But you need to know that we have changed the course of policy for health care. In fact, every time we lobby hard, we win. We have stopped hospitals, units and beds from being closed. But if we don't make the argument, the government will privatize and cut. When nurses talk, the public listens. And when the history books are written about these events, you will be known as the heroes who saved public health care."

Following Mehra's presentation, delegates held a lunchtime leafletting event near the Victoria site of London Health Sciences Centre to let the public about what cuts to hospitals and RNs really mean, while promoting the OHC's Days of Action event in London on June 26. For more information on that event and other OHC campaigns, log onto www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca.

First Vice-President's Report on Political Action and Professional Issues

In her professional practice report, First Vice-President Vicki McKenna highlighted key issues for our members, including the College of Nurses of Ontario's transparency project regarding information that is publicly available on its online register, directed by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, along with the College's requirement that nurses declare they have practised in the last three years before they can renew. We continue to voice our concerns to the College.

McKenna also noted that we have several Independent Assessment Committee hearings in the works, and our 25th professional practice teleconnect, which continues to be very well attended, will take place later in the year.

Turning her attention to political action, McKenna reminded delegates that while the Ontario Legislature has adjourned until September 14, MPPs are still in their constituency offices. It's an

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excellent opportunity to talk to them about the issues that are important to you as a health care professional, union member and patient advocate.

McKenna also noted that ONA is working with the CFNU on its federal election campaign, while putting an Ontario spin on it. This election is critical as nurses are facing funding and staffing cuts, unhealthy work environments and extreme demands for overtime hours, which threaten our ability to deliver quality care. Tackling this will require national leadership. Even more frightening is that the federal government will cut \$36 billion of health care funding over 10 years, starting in 2017, and neglected to uphold its duty and renegotiate the Health Accord. These decisions show a complete disregard for Canada's public health care system.

"As nurses and allied health professionals, we know we must speak up to ensure the health and well-being of Canadians are at the forefront of government priorities. Now is the time to make sure health care is on the ballot. If we don't fight for Medicare, we are going to lose it," McKenna said, urging delegates to get involved anyway possible, including attending town hall meetings, talking to your MPs, family and friends, and handing out flyers (more information will come).

Speaking of getting involved, McKenna noted that political action from our members in their communities is really winning the battles for us, adding that while "ONA does an excellent job of lobbying at the provincial level, the work you are doing at home makes a huge difference."

Nursing Week 2015

Nursing Week is always one of the most favourite times of the year the Board of Directors, as we recognize the year-round dedication and achievements of our RN, NP and RPN members. From holding special lunches and banquets to plastering your communities with our Nursing Week posters, you did everything you could to get your members involved, and we were pleased to attend many of those events with you. Thank you for making it a week to remember!

The theme this year was simple, yet effective: "Ontario Nurses: We're Here for You." That references what matters most to us: being able to provide safe, high-quality patient care and being respected for the value we provide to the health and well-being of our communities. But it also speaks to how ONA is always here for our members as your lifeline.

A Nursing Week radio public service announcement was made available for Locals to utilize during Nursing Week, and my Nursing Week video message to members was also posted on our website. We also received approximately 120 entries from all five regions to our contest asking members to share their Nursing Week stories and photos with us. You can see some of those in *Front Lines*, and on our website (www.ona.org/nw15) and Facebook/Twitter pages.

Recognize Violence. Report it!

ONA members are telling us about ongoing violence in their workplaces and an increase in the frequency and severity of attacks. In fact, I think it's fair to say there is an epidemic of violence in our places of employment. For that reason, ONA has launched a violence prevention strategy.

Our strategy is designed to help front-line members understand what constitutes violence and to help them consistently and effectively document and report violent incidents. The sad reality is that members still tend to under-report violence, considering it a part of your job, which is why our strategy has the tag line, "Recognize Violence. Report it." Please report all unsafe

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working conditions, unsafe staffing levels and incidents of abuse and violence. I can't stress that enough. To assist, we have developed a Violence Prevention Tool Box, distributed at the May Health and Safety Caucus and this PCM, which contains an array of helpful resources. We will be updating materials in the Tool Box as required and will continue to promote its use.

Part of our strategy is also sharing our members' stories, as they are the most powerful tool we have to lobby for changes. Please help us get those stories.

ONA has launched a website dedicated to the issue at <http://violence.ona.org/>, which provides facts, resources and materials for our Local leaders and front-line members to raise awareness about violence in the workplace. Important updates and materials will be posted frequently.

We will, of course, continue our advocacy with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. In fact, I have recently been told the government is creating a Violence Prevention Committee, with the Ministry of Labour taking an "organizational lead," which ONA will be part of. This is a big step and I will update you on this committee's progress as it unfolds.

Your employers have the ultimate responsibility under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to protect your health and safety. Failing to implement policies, measures and procedures that protect our members, or to adequately train their managers and staff to deal with violence and abuse, is in violation of the *Act*. We need to hold them accountable to that and let them know violence will only end if they are committed to stopping it.

Remember, violence should NOT be part of our jobs. If it's not safe for you, it's not safe for your patients/clients/residents either. Report it!

Regional Vice-President Reports

The five Regional Vice-Presidents on the Board – Region 1 Vice-President Pam Mancuso, Region 2 Vice-President Anne Clark, Region 3 Vice-President Andy Summers, Region 4 Vice-President Dianne Leclair and Region 5 Vice-President Karen Bertrand – provided updates on planning for our Human Rights and Equity Caucus this November, our eagerly anticipated Leadership Conferences in September, our Health and Safety Caucus this past May, ONA's work on directives for leaders in labour relations, and the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA).

Human Rights Initiative

I am pleased to announce that in 2015, we are launching an exciting human rights and equity initiative to champion our human rights causes even further, with a full roll-out planned for 2016.

This initiative includes supporting six major observances: International Women's Day (March 8), International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21), National Day of Mourning (April 28), National Aboriginal Day (June 21), Pride (various summer dates) and Labour Day (first Monday in September).

With the assistance and support of our Human Rights and Equity Team, ONA will develop resources on these observances, which Locals/Bargaining Units can easily access from our website and customize. Locals may also use their political action (26.11) monies for additional items, such as t-shirts and pens, to promote ONA's key messages on these observances. Financial resources will be deployed fairly and equitably to all Locals/Bargaining Units.

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While these six observances will be the main focus, we will also promote other prominent human rights and equity dates, and continue to observe other commemorative and special events as we have in the past. Stay tuned for more information in the weeks to come.

Privacy of Health Information: Be Aware and Beware!

ONA General Counsel Liz McIntyre led delegates through a deeply-important discussion on the privacy of patient health information (PHI) so they can not only be aware, but beware.

On November 1, 2004, *the Personal Health Information and Protection Act* came into force, which establishes rules for the collection, use and disclosures of PHI, and protects the confidentiality of individuals while facilitating the effective provision of health care. While we have heard relatively little of the *Act* since, a sudden rash of stories in major daily newspapers about privacy breaches, many including the faces of nurses, have put it in the spotlight.

"Where complaints have been made, there has been an overreaction from the media and, unfortunately, some health care professionals have been caught in it," McIntyre said. "The focus is on the circle of care and if you are not in that circle, you are considered to be snooping. Some have violated PHIs for their own purposes, but it's more often that the training of health care professionals by employers has been inadequate, and there are unclear rules of what is and isn't permission. Practices in hospitals are inconsistent and employers need to make sure everyone is educated."

After detailing the specifics of the *Act*, McIntyre noted that a breach of the duty of confidentiality is very serious, calling it "quadruple jeopardy:" 1) Many employers have a zero tolerance policy and terminate; 2) The College of Nurses of Ontario may enact disciplinary action. 3) There is the possibility of civil liability and damages; and 4) Willful or intentional contraventions are considered to be a provincial offence and may attract fines.

To safeguard your practice, McIntyre recommends that members: ensure your employer has up-to-date and clear policies that you understand and insist on ongoing education on them; log out when not using computers and change your password often; be aware of the audit capabilities of computers; go through the medical records department to access PHI for relatives; do not release information to the police or other third parties and refer them instead to a supervisor or the medical records department; and report accidental access to management.

Front Lines will be publishing an article on this serious issue in the near future.

CEO/CAO Report on Operations

Marie Kelly began her Report on Operations by saying it is an honour and privilege to take on the role of CEO/CAO on a permanent basis, offering her personal thanks to Board for their mentorship and desire to move our union forward, staff for their incredible knowledge and expertise, and Local leaders and members, who are the face of our union and the barometer of what's happening on the front lines.

"Every day I wake up and wonder how I could have been so lucky to have landed here," she said. "I look forward to the challenging times ahead because we will continue to face them. But we have a good bottom line to be able to think out of the box because we don't think small in our union. We think big and creatively in terms of where we want to go for our 60,000 members."

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We have to consider the people who are going to be following us so we can leave our union in the best place it can be. I look forward to working with you all on that."

To support the transition from this generation of leaders to the next, Kelly announced that ONA has created a Membership Secondment Program, whereby two members will be selected to spend several months at ONA and back in their Bargaining Units doing project work. These members could become future staff, allowing us to maintain a healthy balance of RNs and expand the pool of future RN recruits for Labor Relations Officer positions.

Organizing/WSIB Report

Provincial Services Team Manager Doug Anderson announced that we have had a successful certification vote at Harrow Health Centre Family Health Team, and have several other organizing and *Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act* campaigns on the go. ONA will be hiring another organizer, who will be provincially based so "we will send them where they need to go," he said, noting the recent Kaplan arbitration award for our CCAC members, which states ONA is a professional union and deserves better, will be used to our benefit going forward.

Anderson also highlighted the significant improvements to our WSIB Team, which sees Labour Relations Assistants performing intake, responding to all WSIB-related inquiries and initiating new appeal files after determining the ONA representation criteria has been met. That frees up the Labour Relations Officers, who are mandated to review new WSIB Board files for merit within 60 days of receipt, to focus on submissions and appeal hearings.

The Changing Workplace Review

This past spring, the government launched public consultations on the changing nature of the modern workplace, which it said would focus on how the *Labour Relations Act* and *Employment Standards Act* could be amended to protect workers while supporting businesses in our changing economy. ONA is involved in the consultation process.

ONA Director and Chief Negotiator Dan Anderson told the assembly that the broader issues affecting our members' workplaces are many and varied, including: rampant layoffs, excessive workloads, unsafe staffing, disregard for health and safety, a broken arbitration system, and discrimination and harassment. Other workplaces in the province fare even worse with low paid minimum wage jobs, no benefits/pensions/job security, longer working hours and the need to work later in life, and a lack of unionization, primarily in the private sector.

ONA's opinion is that the government needs to encourage and promote unionization, mandate working conditions that enhance dignity and respect for all working people, and improve the labour relations process. We will keep you updated on this review.

Expert Group on Home and Community Care Report

Manager of Negotiations Bev Mathers walked delegates through the report of the Expert Group on Home and Community Care, led by Gail Donner, the former Dean of Nursing at the University of Toronto. The group toured the province talking to home care clients, and issued 16 recommendations in its report, *Bringing Care Home*, on March 15, 2015.

Central to the report is the recommendation that the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care endorse the principles of client and family-centred care as expressed in a proposed Home and

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Community Care Charter and incorporate them into the development of all relevant policies, regulations, funding and accountability strategies for this sector. And that Local Health Integration Networks, working with the Ministry, use the proposed charter for the planning, delivery and evaluation of home community services.

Among ONA's concerns are that the proposed charter does not identify that home care will be delivered according to need, but according to eligibility criteria; no recommendations are made about the structure for the delivery of home care nor about the future of CCACs; and there is no recommendation on the amount of additional funding required. We are also concerned these proposed changes could result in program transfers and, ultimately, *Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act* votes, which could cause labour disruption in the sector as a whole.

ONA will continue to lobby the government to have CCACs lead this work preserving the role of the Care Coordinator and moving the provision of home care services into the employ of CCACs, eliminating the procurement system and the duplication of services. This will keep good jobs in CCACs and expand them to the service providers. I encourage you to read our submission at www.ona.org/submission.

"The government is moving forward with this report in 2015," Mathers warned. "Please watch where our work is going, as this will affect all of our workplaces on some level. It is an uphill battle and this transition is going to be significant."

November PCM

We are already gearing up for the November PCM, which will take place at Sheraton Hotel in downtown Toronto, from November 18-19. The week kicks off with our annual Human Rights and Caucus on November 17 and concludes with an education session on November 20.

PCM Wrap-up Video

To see a wrap-up of the PCM, I encourage you to watch/share our *PCM Précis* video, which will be available on the home page of our website and on ONA's YouTube channel.

Final Words

During these past few weeks and months, we have been challenged like never before. Yet throughout it all, you have remained steadfast. I am so proud of the work you are doing on the front lines and in your communities, and for your dedication and commitment to ONA. Our patients/clients/residents continue to need you to be their voice. And if this meeting is any indication, I know I can count on you. My promise in return is to continue to do my part as your provincial President and to never, never, never give up! We are stronger together!

Sincerely,

ONTARIO NURSES' ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Haslam-Stroud". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN
ONA Provincial President