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# Report from the President

ONA Provincial Coordinators Meeting Highlights  
June 7-8, 2016



Dear ONA Members,

I am pleased to provide the following report from ONA's June 2016 Provincial Coordinators Meeting (PCM), hosted by Region 1 in the beautiful northern city of Sault Ste. Marie on June 7-8, 2016.

## Welcome from the Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie

While he was unable to attend in person, Sault Ste. Marie Mayor Christian Provenzano sent a video greeting to the assembly, which kicked off the meeting.

"Nurses are the unsung heroes of the health-care care system," he began, noting that he has family members who are nurses. "I see their work and dedication and how difficult their jobs are, and I thank you sincerely for doing this work. It's incredibly important. I hope you enjoy our community and all it has to offer."

## Community Service Projects – Giving Back to our Host City

This was a PCM like no other, as for the first time at such a meeting, ONA members spent the afternoon of the first day giving back to the Sault Ste. Marie community.

Prior to the meeting, delegates self-selected one of our four community service projects, which were carefully crafted by ONA based on discussions with each community organization, building on their needs and requirements. The projects were:

- **Garden River First Nation:** Working with community volunteers, members cleaned up and readied the grounds for the public Pow Wow in August, marked the Trap Rock hiking trail and built benches.
- **Algoma Residential Community Hospice (ARCH):** Alongside the ARCH team lead, members planted vegetable and perennial gardens around the patio pod and trellis sitting area at the ARCH complex.
- **Batchewana First Nation Elder Care Centre:** Facilitators from ONA's Membership Events and Education Team provided an interactive and positive education experience to personal support workers and home care workers in the area of patient privacy. As well, members filled planters with summer flowers for the patio area.
- **The Neighbourhood Resource Centre:** Members worked on the centre's "otherside" space and restroom to revitalize these areas, including painting the walls, trim and doors. Toys and other much-needed items were also purchased for the children's area.

Much of the construction and other pre-work for our projects were done by United Steelworkers Union members in the area, many of whom are on a layoff.

I travelled to all four sites with ONA First Vice-President Vicki McKenna and CEO/CAO Marie Kelly, and we were incredibly impressed by the hard work our members and staff put into projects in the short time we had. And so were the representatives of each project, who sang our praises and told us what a tremendous difference we had made.

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At our overwhelmingly positive debrief back in the meeting room, we were joined by Sault Ste. Marie Ward 6 City Councillor Joe Krmpotich, who is also a United Steelworkers Union Coordinator for Local 2251 at Essar Steel Algoma.

“Thank you so much for working on these community service projects and for all the work you do in every community across the province,” he said. “Your efforts are appreciated and will ensure your conference will leave a lasting impression on our community and beyond.

“I have learned a lot through municipal politics, but it is my union that taught me about leadership and the importance of giving back and having a voice at the table,” he continued. “You can never go wrong fighting for working people, and when working people come together, anything is possible. We know RNs are the strength of our health-care system. Without you there would literally be no care.”

I would like to add my sincere appreciation to you for dedicating your lives to public service and social justice and for proving that the compassion we bring to the bedside every single day as nurses and allied health professionals extends far into our communities as well – even when those communities are not our own. I have no doubt that these worthy community initiatives will build ONA’s reputation in Sault Ste. Marie as a union that truly cares, a union that gives back – and a union whose campaigns the people of this city will happily support.

### Central Bargaining

#### **Hospitals**

There’s no question that it’s been a challenging time on the central bargaining front as we have worked tirelessly to obtain collective agreements that respect the incredible work you do.

ONA and the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) concluded an interest arbitration hearing before Arbitrator Chris Albertyn on March 22 after failing to reach a negotiated settlement. We are now awaiting the Arbitration Board’s decision, expected sometime this summer.

Your Hospital Central Negotiating Team insisted from day one that something be done to immediately stop the unprecedented wave of RN cuts, that nurses be given a proper general wage increase and that the wage grid for nurse practitioners be standardized.

This is even more important now that a new report on the country’s nursing workforce by the Canadian Institute for Health Information shows that Ontario’s RN to population ratio has fallen from the second worst in the country to the very worst, at only 711 RNs per 100,000 compared to the national average of 841.

Regrettably, the OHA seems not to understand the value of RNs in our health-care system, wanting concessions which we were adamantly opposed to. In fact, they put forward nothing in the way of improvements for RNs, and further proposed conditions that would eliminate the requirement to provide retirement packages to those who are laid off.

Obviously, we are hoping for a favourable result at arbitration, but there are no guarantees. But there is one thing I definitely *can* guarantee: ONA will not bargain away our future or our ability to provide safe, quality patient care! Nor are we prepared to devalue the contributions we make to the health-care system.

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We will continue to update you as we await the award, which we will post on our website at [www.ona.org/bargaining](http://www.ona.org/bargaining).

### **Nursing Homes**

After eight days, bargaining talks on behalf of ONA's 3,000 nursing home members broke down on June 2, when the employers, representing 179 provincial nursing homes, failed to table a monetary offer for wages and benefits. Instead, they proposed concessions such as stripping our members of any form of job security and reducing benefits to minimal levels.

Heading into bargaining, the goal of ONA's Nursing Homes Central Negotiating Team was to obtain equity with our members in the homes for the aged and hospital sector, the same parity that is recognized in relatively every other province in Canada.

Your negotiating team sees no reasonable justification that members in nursing homes should continue to be treated unfairly, especially as we know resident acuity continues to increase and medical conditions are more complex and unstable, which we made very clear in opening statements.

When the participating nursing homes are prepared to return to the bargaining table with a proper mandate and a willingness to negotiate, ONA will be there. If not, we have no other option but to head to mediation in October and interest arbitration in November (if necessary).

Let me assure you that your team is strong and united and remains committed to a negotiated agreement that appropriately recognizes our commitment and contribution to long-term care residents in our province. We will not waiver on that.

### **Nurses Know Campaign**

Since January, our *Nurses Know* campaign has had a strong presence, both provincially and in many local communities experiencing RN cuts.

The goal of our campaign continues to be on raising public awareness of the importance of nurses to the health-care system and to let the public and health-care system stakeholders know about the devastating impact of RN cuts on safe quality care.

This is crucial as more than 1,455 RN positions have been eliminated since January 2015, 656 this year alone. I am convinced that if it wasn't for our *Nurses Know* campaign, those numbers would be significantly higher because if there's any way to save money, regardless of the consequences, our employers will do it. But they also know we won't back down.

This madness has to stop and *Nurses Know* aims to do precisely that. The province-wide advertising component of our campaign included television, radio, transit and print ads. Our dedicated campaign website ([nursesknow.ona.org](http://nursesknow.ona.org)) features all of our ads, as well as more facts about the system and ways to take action. Online promotion has kept the key campaign messages alive.

Local action has been the key focus of the campaign this spring, as many Locals, workplaces and communities organized to stop RN cuts and defend the quality of their health care. Consider these impressive statistics:

- You helped us gather 35,500 signatures on our petition for better care.

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- You shared with us more than 55 personal stories of how front-line care is being impacted by cuts and underfunding.
- 561 people joined our virtual rally, with the collective reach of more than 250,000 people!
- Almost 44,000 local materials were distributed, including more than 15,000 customized materials.
- We had approximately 5,700 radio spots.
- There were 65 million impressions (views) from our transit shelter advertisements. And almost 67 million impressions from our television advertisements.
- RN cuts were addressed in the Ontario legislature 16 times, thanks to you bringing this issue and your petitions to the attention of your MPPs.
- During Nursing Week, nurses from Windsor Regional Hospital and Hamilton hospitals delivered thousands of petitions to Queen's Park, protesting cuts in their area.

It is more important than ever to continue to educate the public about the value of RNs to their care by way of *Nurses Know*. The next step is to encourage members to write letters to their MPPs. A template letter expressing concern for the continued cuts of RN positions and chronic underfunding of our health-care system is available on our campaign website at [www.morenurses.ca/email-your-mpp](http://www.morenurses.ca/email-your-mpp).

Thank you for all you have done promoting this campaign in your communities. I know I can continue to count on you in the months to come.

### Nurses Know Branding

In the coming weeks, we will also focus on reinforcing the broad support for the campaign in the short-term and expanding the “nurses know” brand in the long-term. To do that, we will undergo a rebranding process.

Let me explain. “Ontario nurses,” currently used as ONA’s social media handle, will become ONA’s core identity. And “Nurses know” will be ONA’s key position relative to a range of issues, as it communicates our core strength through two words the public understands and supports.

Rebranding will eliminate the need for a new tag line or slogan each year. “Nurses know” can be applied to different issues, such as workplace violence, organizing and event themes. If needed, an additional theme can be added.

This process is aimed at developing a clear and authoritative brand for ONA that will solidify our central role and voice in Ontario’s health care in the minds of the public, our members and decision-makers. And I know that’s something we can all get behind!

### More Awards for ONA’s Incredible Work!

We all know how impressive ONA’s *Nurses Know* campaign and other communications and advertising work are. Turns out we aren’t the only ones!

I am extremely proud to tell you that at the American Association of Political Consultants Pollie Awards this past April, ONA received a silver award in the International category for the Best Use of Television/Radio for our *Nurses Know* campaign. The Pollies are considered the Oscars of political advertising.

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ONA added to that award at the Canadian Association of Labour Media Awards in Quebec City one month later by winning three awards:

- The Dennis McGann Stroke-of-Genius Award for our *Nurses Know* transit ads.
- The Best Audio Award for the *Nurses Know* radio ad, called “The Long Day.”
- And an honourable mention in the Best Documentary category for our video, *The Tragedy of Lori Dupont: Ten Years Later*, which we showed at our November 2015 PCM.

Congratulations to our Communications and Government Relations Team for their stellar work on our *Nurses Know* campaign and to Judy Fantham, our Senior Executive Officer, who put together the Lori Dupont video. You can view that video on ONA’s YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/ontarionurses](http://www.youtube.com/ontarionurses).

### Kingston Nurses Choose ONA!

With the merger of Providence Care – Mental Health Services and St. Mary’s of the Lake Hospital into one facility, the Ministry of Labour called a *Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act (PSLRTA)* vote between ONA, which represented 84 RNs at St. Mary’s of the Lake and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), which represented 133 RNs at Providence Centre – Mental Health Services to determine which union would represent the more than 200 RNs combined.

I hold my head very high with the very professional campaign we ran to obtain these new members, based on a straightforward discussion of RN issues, including safe staffing levels, safe workplaces and excellent patient care – things that every nurse wants to achieve.

As a result of this tremendous work by our Bargaining Unit Leadership Team, Board members, Local leaders, members and staff, ONA convincingly won after three days of voting in mid-April. When you consider that ONA had fewer members heading into the vote and was the underdog because of that, this was an even more impressive win. But clearly these RNs knew that ONA’s exemplary services and expert staff can’t be beat!

We are now waiting for the Ontario Labour Relations Board to issue the interim certificate so we can transfer representation from OPSEU to ONA.

At the PCM, Local 67 Coordinator Ann Murray, who was front and centre during the *PSLRTA* campaign, gave a big shout out to the organizing team for their “amazing work,” noting that having a Facebook page made all the difference.

To view a video of the campaign, log onto ONA’s YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/ontarionurses](http://www.youtube.com/ontarionurses).

### Allied Win at Health Sciences North

Just a few days later, we had another significant win for our union, warmly welcoming 186 allied health professionals from Health Sciences North in Sudbury through a certification vote.

We had originally applied to represent a smaller group of allied health professionals – the physiotherapists and occupational therapists – but the employer attempted to defeat us by more than doubling the number of employees who could potentially be in the Bargaining Unit and entitled to vote, hoping that they would have no vested interest in joining ONA.

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After a day of negotiations and a battle to determine which positions were included, 186 employees were deemed eligible. Of that group, 84 per cent chose ONA as their union! That outcome is clearly the result of years of ONA being seen as a professional, strong, respected union.

A video featuring our three new allied members was shown, receiving resounding applause when one commented, “We know what ship drives our hospital and we are finally on it!”

### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Legislation – Not for Nurses

Bill 163 (PTSD coverage for first responders) has passed, and ONA continues to vigorously pursue an amendment to have front-line RNs included in the legislation.

This has included sending a letter to the Premier and engaging in discussions with the Labour Minister, where we provided first-hand stories about horrific events experienced or witnessed by our nurses in our workplaces, which show a clear correlation between our work and PTSD. We also provided an expert opinion from renowned forensic psychiatrist Dr. John Bradford, who said he is very surprised nurses aren't covered.

ONA is currently developing a broad campaign to continue our efforts regarding PTSD legislation. We won't stop being loud about this legislation until nurses are included!

### Member Secondment Program

Thirty members applied for ONA's second Member Secondment Program, available to highly experienced RN members who are looking to increase their knowledge base and confidence in labour relations grievance handling and negotiations. We hope this experience will encourage them to apply for a servicing position within ONA, as we need to recruit more RNs on staff to replace long-term Labour Relations Officers who are retiring, or for other leadership positions.

A decision on the final four will be made in the next couple of weeks, so please stay tuned. Thank you for your overwhelming interest in this program.

### WSIB – Justice for our Injured Members

Representing members who have had a denial of their Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) claim continues to be a major part of ONA's work.

We have had some important appeal victories recently, including one that will result in a loss of earning benefits of almost \$485,000 to a part-time 30-year veteran RN, who suffered a disc herniation and aggravation of pre-existing spondylolysis in the lumbar spine in March 2004 when she was pulled off balance by a patient she was trying to prevent from falling during toileting. We will detail that case in a future issue of *Front Lines*.

What incredible work from our WSIB Team! But these victories are not just about money; they are about respect for our members who are injured on the job.

Also positive is a meeting I recently had with Tom Teahen, former chief of staff for Premier Kathleen Wynne, who has returned to the WSIB. He said he wants every worker who is injured and has a legitimate claim to be confident that she/he will obtain all the necessary help from WSIB. He also wanted ONA to know that WSIB collects a lot of data, which we can request.

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Joan Boudreau, a Labour Relations Officer on ONA's WSIB Team, and I also identified improvements that are required by the WSIB, including:

- Including nurses in the presumptive PTSD legislation (see pg. 6).
- Improving the quality of investigations and decision making at WSIB.
- Providing more extensive reasoning and clearly identifying the policy being relied on for denials.
- Changing the psychotraumatic policy to allow psychotraumatic disability/impairment manifesting after five years.
- Amending the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* to be compliant with the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* regarding mental illness.
- Expediting the significant Workplace Safety Insurance Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT) backlog.

### Constitutional Amendments

I led the assembly through a discussion on Constitutional Amendments for consideration at the 2016 Biennial Convention this November, including Local online voting, strikebreaking, Election Team selection, and the common Board term.

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

In her professional practice report, First Vice-President Vicki McKenna discussed current issues with the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), our well-attended teleconnects, and our recent professional practice settlements, noting that workload continues to be the number one issue reported by ONA members.

"We deserve a good health-care system, but we continue to hear about patients in hallways and storage rooms, inadequate supplies and staff – and that is not OK," she said. "Sometimes we get so caught up we can't see the forest for the trees, but always go with your gut. If you or your members believe something is wrong at your workplace, fill out a workload form. I am proud of the work you are doing in your Bargaining Units. You are making a difference."

McKenna highlighted that ONA has written to the Ontario Renal Network regarding its support for several pilot projects implementing personal support workers (PSWs) in various home dialysis programs, noting that it is ONA's position they are not an appropriate care provider in that setting. As part of our CNO standards, RNs must be satisfied that the PSW is fully competent to provide home hemodialysis support. If you are not satisfied, you should NOT sign off. We are preparing a detailed memo with direction for members who may be involved in these projects.

Turning her attention to political action, McKenna pointed out a number of bills that affect ONA members, including federal Bill C-14 (medically assisted dying). Recognizing that RNs will play a central role in medically assisted death under new legislation, ONA's submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights calls for an equal voice for the nursing profession in the legislative debate.

"The new legislation makes it very clear that nurses will be affected by this law," she said, encouraging members to read their CNO *Standard* magazine on this issue as it unfolds. "ONA believes the legislation should balance the patient's right to access medically assisted death while also protecting vulnerable patient populations. We are also calling for the right of nurses to choose not to participate should they be conscientious objectors."

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McKenna also thanked delegates for attending the recent Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) town halls throughout the province on local hospital cuts, and participating in its province-wide “referendum” where 99.6 per cent of those who voted said the government should stop the cuts to community hospitals and restore services to meet the population need for care. McKenna invited delegates to take part in the OHC’s next initiative, the “Rock-in Chair” Tour, which demands a minimum long-term care staffing standard of four hours of hands-on care per day, per resident, improved access to care and reduced wait times.

ONA also continues to work alongside the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions on calls for a renewed Health and Social Accord and a national Pharmacare program, she concluded.

### **Workload Win for All – Sault Area Hospital Independent Assessment Committee (IAC)**

An IAC has concluded the RNs in the acute medical short stay unit Sault Area Hospital (SAH) in our PCM host city have been required to perform more work than is consistent with proper patient care, issuing an unprecedented 91 recommendations.

Two members from that unit, Elliott Marlow and Monique Storzuk, provided an overview of the nursing practice and workload issues put before the IAC, including insufficient base RN staffing levels, unsafe, unmanageable and dangerous nurse to patient ratios, a high level of patient acuity and activity, and an inability to meet CNO standards and SAH policies.

“The IAC was a tough process, with many hours and so much work,” began Marlow. “But I saw the need for change on my floor and how important it is to make that change.”

And it was all worth it as, following a hearing from April 4-6, the IAC issued recommendations including an increase in RN staffing for this acute medical unit. Recommendations also focused on nursing leadership and shared governance, the nursing delivery model of care and associated staffing, and clinical practices/unit processes to address the issue of RN workload.

Placing considerable emphasis on the level of fatigue and low morale on the unit, the IAC found that RN staffing and nurse to patient ratios are inadequate, that the medical unit required additional RN staffing, and that staff need to take their schedule breaks.

“It was an emotional process for us,” said Storzuk, thanking the Board, ONA staff, her Local executive, fellow members, and other hospital staff for the overwhelming support. “It gave us that much strength to carry on. We were allowed to speak throughout the hearing and they were listening to our concerns. With these recommendations, it shows they got the message.”

Added Marlow, “I have never felt so supported in my short career. It was without a doubt the best feeling I’ve ever had as a nurse. We can now make a better change for our patients.”

By coming forward, Elliot and Monique and their fellow nurses advocated not just for their patients and themselves, but for the patients and RNs on every single medical unit in the province. We are all better off because of their advocacy work!

### **ONA’s Great Win for Nursing Students: They Thank Us from the Bottom of Their Hearts**

Nursing students have told us time and time again that the controversial American NCLEX-RN exam for entry to practice is one of their biggest concerns.

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As a result of our extensive lobbying, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care committed to changing a provincial regulation that currently restricts the number of registration exam re-writes the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) may allow. The CNO Council also approved a motion on June 9 to allow unlimited writes of the NCLEX-RN exam and will be moving out an expedited consultation process in the upcoming weeks. Great news for our students!

Thanking ONA “from the bottom of our hearts” for our success around NCLEX-RN, which she called a huge source of stress for students, Canadian Nursing Students’ Association Communications Director Caitlyn Patrick, a second-year nursing student at Sault College, brought greetings to the assembly.

“We had our national conference here in The Soo and students were so impressed with all the support ONA gave us,” she began. “They were also blown away by the workshop on workplace violence delivered by ONA. They didn’t realize how big an issue this is.”

After also commending ONA for our recent Independent Assessment Committee hearing at Sault Area Hospital, which will be the hospital where many of her nursing colleagues will find employment one day, Patrick noted that “ONA has been a great supporter for nursing students, not just here in Ontario, but throughout Canada. I don’t know what we’d do without you.”

### CEO/CAO Report on Operations

After highlighting several examples of injustices faced by nurses and their patients around the world and here at home, including violence in the workplace, CEO/CAO Marie Kelly led delegates through an update on staffing, organizing, WSIB and some recent wins, including our successful appeal of the Ministry of Labour’s non-issuance of specific orders to improve the safety and security of RNs and other front-line health-care workers in the forensic treatment unit at Brockville Mental Health Centre.

“No other union achieves the things we do,” she noted. “ONA is paving the way.”

While acknowledging that the political landscape for the public sector and the labour movement is fraught with challenges, Kelly said we must stand together steadfast to ensure a bright future for ONA and to maintain our leadership role as the best union in the country.

“One of my values is to stand up for what is right – even if my voice is in the minority – and I hope you too will speak up for what you believe is right for ONA,” she concluded. “You *are* our union. Stand together. Stand proud. Live loud! Solidarity Forever!”

### Litigation Report

Litigation Team Manager Sharan Basran highlighted recent significant arbitration decisions and trending issues, noting we are moving our cases forward as quickly as possible.

“We couldn’t do our work without our Bargaining Unit Leadership Team giving us the information we need,” she relayed. “This is very much team work.”

### Regional Vice-President Reports

The five Regional Vice-Presidents on the Board – Region 1 Vice-President Pam Mancuso (Human Rights and Equity), Region 2 Vice-President Anne Clark (Education), Region 3 Vice-President Andy Summers (Labour Relations), Region 4 Vice-President Laurie Brown

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(Occupational Health and Safety) and Region 5 Vice-President Karen Bertrand (Local Finance) – provided updates on key issues in their portfolios.

That included local audits; the importance of regular labour-management meetings; the development of a return to work section on ONA's website to provide practical information during the accommodation process; the return of the overwhelmingly popular Leadership Conference for novice, advanced and activist members this fall; and ONA's continuing violence prevention campaign/strategy to help our front-line members and Local and Bargaining Unit leaders understand what constitutes violence and help them consistently and effectively document and report violent incidents.

### Retirements – Bidding Farewell to Three Familiar Faces

During the meeting, we wished a very happy retirement to Local 75 Coordinator and Bargaining Unit President Donna Bain, who has been by my side since I started in the union; Homewood Health Centre Bargaining Unit President Graham McAnulty, a psychiatric nurse for 39 years; and Communications and Government Relations Team Manager Peter Birt, who are attending their last provincial meeting. I would like to thank them for their dedication and commitment to our members, our profession and our union, and wish them well in the exciting next phase of their lives. I have learned so much from each of them, both professionally and personally, and they will be deeply missed.

"It has been a wonderful experience to watch this union grow as I grew," said Bain. "My goal has always been to do for members the same thing I did for my patients. They are just as important, and giving to them has been just as fulfilling. I am leaving everything in great hands and am very proud of the team we developed together. Thank you all for the memories."

### Biennial Convention PCM

We are already gearing up for the November Biennial Convention, which takes place at the Westin Harbour Castle in downtown Toronto from November 15-17. The week kicks off with our annual Human Rights and Caucus on November 14 and concludes with an education session on a key labour relations topic (to be determined) on November 18. I hope to see you there!

### PCM Wrap-up Video

To see a wrap-up of the June PCM, I encourage you to watch/share our standard *PCM Précis* video, which will be available the week of June 13 on ONA's YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/ontarionurses](http://www.youtube.com/ontarionurses).

### Final Words

During these past few weeks and months, we have been challenged like never before, with the continuing erosion of our positions and difficulties at the bargaining table. Yet throughout it all, you have remained steadfast and strong.

But during this meeting, we have also had the opportunity to celebrate our incredible victories, which I hope fuels your fire and inspires you to continue to fight the hard fight.

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 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

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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".

Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN  
ONA Provincial President