

The importance of the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA)

My mother is a member of the Ontario Nurses Association (ONA) and works as a site representative and also holds the Human Rights and Equity and Occupational Health and Safety positions in her workplace. She is a Social Worker and has often talked about the importance of having a strong and united union in place to protect member rights, including pay equity, safe working conditions and job security, especially now in Ontario's current climate of healthcare reform and move toward health privatization. When her workplace was forced to strike in 2015, ONA was instrumental in supporting the 3000 home and community healthcare members on the strike line and in negotiations.

ONA and CFNU are leaders and the "voice" for members and the public, supporting member contributions in evidence-based research to inform, guide and educate policy-makers to positively shape our health-care system. The associations have worked tirelessly to forge key relationships with its members, the public and the government to influence and educate the public's social consciousness for better healthcare, and to promote safety, security and positive change for its members in practice. These associations have been influential activists in ensuring health care professionals are well-represented and not taken of advantage of in the interest of patient centred care.

It's hard to envision now, but many early Canadian labourers suffered terrible working conditions, meagre pay wages and lived in poverty; employment was rooted by fear of retaliation or even death if workers complained, while industry owner's profits

soared. This inequality led to union formation and prominent associations like CFNU, ONA and RNAO. The importance of the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) for nurses is that I know I will be a part of a respected association that supports its member's rights by promoting nursing contributions, lifelong learning and research, but also works to protect the public and inform the government by raising social awareness and advocating for inclusive, better healthcare for all.

Together we are Stronger