The following is a summary of ONA’s key activities and successes since the last “The Work of the Union” update in spring 2015.
A new Hospital Central Negotiating Team is elected to represent the bargaining priorities of members during the next round of negotiations.

To determine what those bargaining priorities are, ONA encourages members in all sectors to fill out our bilingual Have a Say bargaining questionnaire on our website.

We win a key arbitration decision challenging a hospital’s failure to post a permanent vacancy during the elimination period, which ensures that where work continues to be performed, a permanent position must be posted, and temporary vacancies may only be used in very specific circumstances set out in the collective agreement.

The ONA Board of Directors determines that the remaining funds in Adopt-a-Strike-Line, in which members and allies donated money to keep our striking community care access centre (CCAC) members on the picket lines for as long as it took to reach a fair deal, will be kept in a reserve fund and used for hardship, as needed, in future strikes.

CCAC members who received those Adopt-a-Strike-Line funds express their heartfelt gratitude to their fellow members and allies in a Front Lines story, noting it made a huge difference.

ONA wins a case that alleviates the financial hardship felt by a member who was denied long-term disability (LTD) benefits due to an incorrect allegation that she was not totally disabled and could perform her duties as an RN.

The findings of our Have a Say 2014 questionnaire, which surveyed members to determine where our resources and efforts should be focused, show that not only are we meeting our members’ expectations in our core services, we are very often surpassing them.

The most recent hospital contract interpretation teleconnect, Job Posting Grievances – Collective Agreement Rights for ONA Hospital Members, focuses on collective agreement language for job postings, including the job posting process, when to file grievances, the merits of grievances and ONA member representation.

Benefits are paid to a member who was denied short-term disability for the entire period of sick leave entitlement after ONA is successful in acquiring a medical assessment for her.

Maximizing the Use of the Professional Responsibility (PRC) Clause and Job Security Provisions in the Collective Agreement in Long-Term Care Homes is the most recent long-term care teleconnect, highlighting strategies to utilize both the PRC and the job security provisions of the collective agreement to ensure quality workplaces and resident outcomes.

We are successful in a case where an employer terminated initially-approved LTD benefits for a member experiencing mental health symptoms, proving that insurers cannot rely on rigid policies and rules and must treat every case individually.

ONA is involved in the consultation process for the review of the Labour Relations Act and Employment Standards Act, urging the government to reinstate card-based certification, and mandate benefits for employees working after age 65, first collective agreement arbitration, and health and welfare benefit continuation during a strike.

Thanks to ONA’s persistence and resources, we win a challenging case regarding a member with Sick Building Syndrome and she receives retroactive benefits.

ONA is successful in a case where the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) had denied a member’s disability during a specific period of time, demonstrating that members in the acute phase of an injury should not be penalized by the WSIB for following the advice of their health care practitioners and declining modified work in the absence of medical advice to the contrary.

ONA continues to produce tip sheets on a variety of labour relations and other issues to assist our Bargaining Unit leaders and members.
Thanks largely to lobbying by our members, women will still be able to give birth at Leamington District Memorial Hospital despite a proposal earlier this year that would have seen the obstetrical unit closed due to a lack of government funding.

ONA members at Nipigon District Memorial Hospital launch a campaign to fight for safe quality care for their patients after the vast majority of recommendations from an expert panel to address safe staffing have yet to be enacted by the employer more than one year later.

Local 34 members from the Mississauga Hospital, a site of Trillium Health Partners, picket the constituency office of MPP Charles Sousa to demonstrate their objection to cuts of 15 RN positions from areas where patients need their expertise and skills the most.

Members from Algoma Public Health, who are the lowest paid public health nurses in Ontario, stage an information picket in their fight for a fair contract with their employer, which they later settle.

Local 21 takes part in a Stratford rally to mark the one-year anniversary of the death of the Heath Accord, complete with a casket, grim reaper and tombstones mourning its demise.

After a public awareness campaign to highlight the work they do, 32 public health nurses and RNs from the Peterborough County-City Health Unit reach a three-year agreement with their employer, narrowly averting a strike.

Members of the Espanola and Area Family Health Team stage an information picket to highlight their role and key issues just days before reaching a settlement for a new collective agreement during mediation.

Local 7 public health nurses from the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit visit striking CarePartners workers at their picket line outside of the Simcoe Community Care Access Centre to support their struggle to obtain a first collective agreement.

RNs need to stand up for their patients and stand out from the crowd of health providers, which is why ONA continues to support the Wear White on Wednesdays campaign, reminding members that they have the legal right to do so.

ONA makes it easy to wear white by making available ONA-branded RN apparel and many other promotional products through our brand new eStore, available at myunion-store.com/ona; apparel is also available for non-RN members.

Local Political Action/Member Engagement

Organizing Successes

We hold a successful certification vote at Harrow Health Centre, welcoming nine new members.

The Retention and Recruitment Team continues to field calls from registered nurses and allied health professionals seeking the benefits that ONA membership offers, and a number of campaigns are underway.

ONA is also monitoring the transfer of health services across the province and files Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act (PSLRTA) applications when necessary to protect our work.
ONA launches a More Nurses campaign to demand a moratorium on disastrous cuts to RN positions throughout Ontario, which are causing needless suffering to patients.

The multi-media campaign kicks off with a radio ad in 80 communities outside of the Greater Toronto Area, pre-roll ads in Toronto that play before streaming TV and videos, and new More RNs = Better Care signs.

RNs and their patients will continue to bear the brunt of yet another year of hospital funding freezes, ONA says in response to the Ontario budget, which continues to hold overall base operating funding for hospitals to zero per cent growth for 2015-16 for the fourth consecutive year.

ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud meets with the Minister of Labour to discuss health care mergers and the impact on our members, along with violence in the workplace.

Approximately 200 ONA delegates attend the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) Biennial Convention in Halifax where they participate in workshops and full plenary sessions, listen to national and international guest speakers, and pass key health care resolutions.

The CFNU and ONA officially kick off our federal election platform at the CFNU’s Biennial Convention, demanding that health care is on the ballot.

Hundreds of CFNU Biennial Convention delegates march through the streets of Halifax in a mass rally to demand that more nurses and the health and well-being of Canadians are at the forefront of government priorities.

ONA First Vice-President Vicki McKenna receives the highest honour of the CFNU, the Bread and Roses Award, for her tireless lobbying at the provincial level on behalf of our members and their patients/clients/residents.

ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud and First Vice-President Vicki McKenna meet with the Minister of Labour to discuss our concerns regarding Bill 109, Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, which proposes to amend Section 23 of the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act.

The ONA Board of Directors takes part in the Queen’s Park launch of the Ontario Health Coalition’s (OHC) Days of Action, which protest severe hospital cuts and the threat of privatization outside the constituency offices of senior ministers or MPPs from the Liberal government in Sudbury, Hamilton, Ottawa and London; many ONA members attend the rallies.

ONA meets with new Chief Provincial Nursing Officer Kaiyan Fu about nursing workload, RN jobs losses and violence in the workplace.

An annual donation of $10,000 will be given by ONA to the Ontario Association of Interval Houses, a provincial coalition whose membership includes emergency shelters for abused woman and their children, housing programs and community-based women’s service organizations.

ONA is deeply concerned about an OHC report that finds one in four hospitals in Ontario is facing significant cuts or closure due to a lack of government funding.

OHC Director Natalie Mehra tells delegates at our June Provincial Coordinators Meeting (PCM) in London that when the history books are written about this period of time, nurses will be seen as the “heroes who saved public health care.”

Following Mehra’s remarks, PCM delegates take to the streets of London to let passersby know what cuts to health care and RNs really mean to their community.

World leaders and nurses attending the International Council of Nurses 2015 Conference in Seoul, Korea listen to presentations from ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, First Vice-President Vicki McKenna and ONA General Counsel Elizabeth McIntyre on mental health disabilities and addiction, and safe staffing.

The CFNU National Executive Board, including ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, and two economists meet with the Canadian premiers, who support our call for 25 per cent federal health care fund-
ing for the provinces by 2025, during the Council of the Federation meeting in St. John’s.

Also during the Council of the Federation meeting, ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud discusses health care funding, violence in the workplace and seniors’ care with Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne.

The premiers also support nurses’ call for a national pharmacare program.

In our submission on the Home Care and Community Services Act, ONA says that we support additional nursing hours in home care and believe that community care access centre (CCAC) care coordinators should determine those hours based on client need, not service maximums, as the government proposes.

ONA vows to continue fighting after the anti-union Bill C-377 is passed just before the summer recess by the Senate, which voted against its own speaker.

The Board unanimously appoints Marie Kelly ONA’s permanent Chief Executive Officer/Chief Administrative Officer, noting 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.

ONA continues to raise with the Minister of Health and Long-term Care that Local Health Integration Network accountability agreements must include report-backs regarding staffing additions and deletions, and transparency regarding service changes.

ONA is concerned that a Community Care Charter proposed in the report, Bringing Care Home, does not identify that home care will be delivered according to need, but according to edibility criteria, and that there are no recommendations about the structure for the delivery of home care, the future of CCACs, or the amount of additional funding required.

A focus group on early career nursing is held by teleconference for new ONA grad nurses, which is part of the CFNU’s national study on generational diversity in the workplace.
Health and Safety/WSIB

- ONA launches a campaign to help eliminate or reduce the number of violent incidents health care professionals experience in their workplaces, which is geared towards members, ONA leaders, Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) members, health care CEOs and management, the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, the Ministry of Labour, the Attorney General’s Office and the public.
- At our request, the government announces it will set up a violence prevention task force and ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud is asked to sit at the command table.
- Members learn how they can support those experiencing workplace violence at our spring Health and Safety Caucus.
- ONA’s Health and Safety Specialist leads an education session at the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions Biennial Convention on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the nursing profession.
- ONA also sends a letter to the Minister of Health and Long-term Care regarding inclusion of PTSD coverage under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) for nurses.
- Although ONA is supportive of the premier’s commitment to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace, examining government agency policies must be a key first step, ONA recommends to the Ontario Roundtable on Violence against Women and the Select Committee on Sexual Harassment and Violence, which is examining workplace sexual harassment.
- Members across Ontario take part in somber Day of Mourning commemorative events to honour those who have died, been injured or

Member Education

- Interest in ONA’s exciting new activist camp this September, which targets rank and file members with demonstrated potential for a wide breadth of future leadership roles in our union, is enormous, and successful candidates are chosen.
- In the first four months of 2015, more than 1,700 members receive ONA education, the majority of whom are grassroots members.
- All ONA workshops conducted up until April 2015 have an average satisfaction rate of 91 per cent.
- Two new ONA workshops are launched: Pack a Punch at Labour Management (full-day) and I’m in...Stronger Together (lecturette).
- The completion rates for ONA eLearning continues to steadily increase, with more than 200 programs finished by April, as eLearning proves to be a popular form of education.
- A new program, Representing Members with Mental Health and Addiction Disabilities, is added to our eLearning platform.
- Delegates at the June Provincial Coordinators Meeting receive education from the Broadbent Institute entitled, Building Leaders: Leadership Begins with You, which provides tips on activating and inspiring members by making important connections to their worklife, values and sense of fairness.
- New Treasurers will be offered face-to-face education in early 2016 to support them with upgrades to their accounting software and orientation to new laptops, while web-based learning will be offered to the remaining Treasurers.
- Front Lines and ONA’s powerful video on workplace hazards win prestigious North American Apex awards for communications excellence.
- ONA is also the proud recipient of three American Association of Political Consultants Pollie Awards for material we produced for our
Professional Issues

ONA speaks out on recent nursing statistics from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) that confirm Ontario continues to have the second-worst RN-to-population ratio in the country and that the province is de-skilling our health care system by eliminating RNs to save money.

Delegates at the June Provincial Coordinators Meeting are cautioned by ONA General Council Elizabeth McIntyre to “be aware and beware” when it comes to protecting patient health information, noting that breaches are treated very seriously.

Under the theme, Ontario Nurses: We’re Here for You, Nursing Week 2015 is another huge success, with members holding special events, many attended by members of the Board of Directors, plastering their communities with our poster and entering our contest to share their stories and photos.

As a result of the concerns nurses expressed on their workload forms, ONA signs Minutes of Settlement with Collingwood General and Marine Hospital, whereby the facility brings about a model change in the emergency department, eliminating an RPN position due to the acuity of patients, and creating an RN shift during peak workload times.

ONA Professional Practice Specialists hold mediation sessions with two employers, which may prove to be a good alternative to Independent Assessment Committee hearings, which can only release non-binding recommendations.

Minutes of Settlement are signed with Grand River Hospital, whereby the parties agree to work on an assessment tool for the satellite hemodialysis and progressive hemodialysis units.

Nurse practitioners participate in a teleconnect providing an update on professional and labour relations issues specific to them.

After the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO) proposes by-law changes that would increase the amount of information that will be publicly available on its online registrar, ONA states we have serious concerns about public disclosure of a number of categories of member-specific information.

Education is delivered by an ONA Professional Practice Specialist at the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions Biennial Convention on professional responsibility and making the link between nurses’ workplaces and their standards of nursing practice.

ONA continues to seek clarity from the CNO on its requirement that as of this renewal year, nurses must declare they have practised in the last three years to be reinstated, as we are particularly concerned for nurses who have not been practising for health reasons.

The most recent professional practice teleconnect, Resolving Workload Issues at the Unit Level, focuses on the Professional Responsibility Complaint process.

Professional Practice Specialists participate in Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario’s Best Practice Guideline revisions, such as the Revision of Collaborative Practice amongst Nursing Teams.

made ill from working, noting that one workplace death is one too many.

ONA is part of the litigation involving incidents of violence at the Royal Ottawa Hospital, Brockville Mental Health Centre and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Our union wins an important jurisdictional motion from the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) regarding an employer/Ministry of Labour challenge of the right of the OLRB to consider issues at Brockville Mental Health Centre where an employer challenged the right of an inspector to issue orders not specifically mentioned in the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

While the threat has lessened, ONA continues to provide guidance and information to the Minister of Health and Long-term Care at his Ebola Advisory table.

ONA spearheads a coalition of eight unions, representing more than 500,000 members, taking forward our concerns regarding proposed amendments to WSIB draft policies, which we believe would limit entitlement where a worker may have a pre-existing condition.

2014 More Nurses campaign and subsequent More Nurses, No Hudak campaign ahead of the Ontario election last year.

Activity on our website and social media channels is steady-busy in the spring with Nursing Week, the launch of our More Nurses campaign, the community care access centre arbitration, and our Have a Say bargaining questionnaire.

ONA’s Facebook page reaches a milestone with more than 8,000 “likes,” while our Twitter account closes in on 10,000 followers.

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Human Rights/Accommodation/Return to Work

In an effort to further promote equity issues, ONA’s Human Rights and Equity Team is putting an additional focus on six major days of observance – International Women’s Day, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, National Day of Mourning, National Aboriginal Day, Pride and Labour Day – which includes tailored information and a number of resources, such as posters, that will be easily accessible on the ONA website.

Throughout the province, ONA members show their (rainbow) colours during Pride parades and other special events.

Work is underway for the annual Human Rights and Equity Caucus, which will be held on November 17 at the Sheraton Hotel in Toronto.

ONA wins a precedent-setting decision on physician harassment that allows a member to intervene as a third party in the privileges hearing between the physician and the hospital’s Medical Advisory Committee.

The ONA-led Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) Accommodation Steering Committee is developing return-to-work case studies that could be put on the WSIB website for reference.

ONA donates $1,000, on top of a Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions donation of $5,000, to the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, the first and long-standing indigenous health professional organization in our country.

The most recent human rights and equity teleconnect provides an overview on The Duty to Accommodate – A Roadmap, ONA’s newest guide for members on accommodation and return to work, focusing on the principles of accommodation and its foundation in human rights law as well as practical tips and strategies.

ONA continues our advocacy with the Ontario Human Rights Commission on its review of the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), as we want the barriers that prevent nurses with mental health disabilities from accessing employment removed.

Currently, we have three Charter/Human Rights challenges involving ONA members, regarding the CNO’s postings of findings on its public register/website about disabilities, and in one case, we have been successful in having the nurse’s past history removed.

The Human Rights and Equity Team continues to highlight key issues and stories in this area in each issue of Front Lines.