The following is a summary of ONA’s key activities and successes since the Spring 2019 issue of “The Work of the Union”
A tentative settlement was reached during mediation between ONA’s Nursing Homes Central Negotiating Team and the participating homes, providing wage increases and other improvements. Local Coordinators and Bargaining Unit Presidents in the homes sector gathered for a special meeting to learn the details of the two-year deal to take back to their members, who ratified it soon afterwards.

We are working diligently on behalf of our 4,000 members in the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) sector to ensure their rights under their collective agreements and labour legislation are enforced after news came that the government intends to collapse the 14 LHINs into five oversight bodies.

While our 10 LHINs have bargained individually in past rounds and had planned on doing so again, because of uncertainty with our health-care system, ONA believed the best approach for them was to go through these changes with a strong new central contract. Bringing together a bargaining group in just three weeks, ONA and the employer reached a deal after three-and-a-half days, which was overwhelmingly ratified.

During their two-month strike, more than 80 members at Windsor-Essex

The Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP), which covers the majority of ONA members, released its 2018 results, showing that its funded status remained at a very strong 121 per cent, meaning for every dollar of current or future pensions that HOOPP owes its members, there is $1.21 on hand.

This round, ONA is bargaining centrally for both our Victorian Order of Nurses and Canadian Blood Services members, with teams named for both.

The Ontario Pay Equity Coalition, comprised of trade unions including ONA, women’s groups and community organizations, acknowledged Pay Equity Day this past April 9 with a series of protests. That date was chosen because in Ontario women need to work 15.5 months – 3.5 months into the new year – to earn what a man does in 12 months.

For the purposes of a pay equity job evaluation, the ONA Steering Committee met with the OHA to review the draft of the Job Information Questionnaire (JIQ) as a group and collect feedback. The JIQ will be completed by incumbents in the selected participating hospitals and the information collected will be used to evaluate the job classes.

The most recent Hospital Contract Interpretation teleconnect was an open-
question period, providing participants with an opportunity to ask any question on hospital collective agreement issues.

- ONA provided a written submission on the Pay Transparency Act, which passed last year. The Act was to come into effect this past January, but the government delayed its implementation indefinitely and introduced another lengthy consultation process.

- ONA’s application with respect to pay equity maintenance in 10 community care access centres (CCACs), which addresses the union’s right to participate in pay equity negotiations, was heard at the Pay Equity Hearings Tribunal and the parties are awaiting a decision. ONA’s position is that as a result of the amalgamation of the original 42 CCACs into 14 LHINs, significant changes to the nature of the work performed by care coordinators as well as the addition of numerous new job classes made their original pay equity plans no longer appropriate.

- The Long-Term Care teleconnect followed up on the policies provided by employers to date on the use of cannabis by residents, the Joint Sector Meeting, increases in discipline or reports to the College of Nurses, and an enviroscan.

- A review of all ONA guides, manuals and tip sheets is being undertaken to decide what is relevant to our members, as determined by the Board, and will be ready for the November Biennial Convention.

- After assuming the role on an interim basis for seven months, former ONA Senior Director of Labour Relations Bev Mathers was named ONA Chief Executive Officer by the Board of Directors, and promised to ensure our union remains vibrant and strong.

### The Work of the Union

#### Organizing

- ONA held a successful certification vote during this time period, welcoming new members from Chartwell Royal Oak Long-Term Care in Kingsville (16 RNs).

- The Retention and Recruitment Team fielded calls from RNs and health-care professionals seeking the benefits that ONA membership offers, and additional campaigns are underway.

- We also continued to monitor the transfer of health services across the province and are filing Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act (PSLRTA) applications when necessary to protect our work.

- With news that the government is changing when PSLRTA votes come into play under Bill 74, ONA included in our submission that PSLRTA should apply to all integrations in the health-care sector.
ONA continued to speak out against the sweeping reform the government is imposing with the passing of Bill 74, the People’s Health Care Act, 2019 and the powers it gives itself to merge, amalgamate, transfer all or part of a service, close other services, and shut down entire health-service providers, with few details and consultations with us.

“We are here to demand that the dismantling of clinical services in communities stops,” ONA President Vicki McKenna said at a media conference to launch Health Action Day, a lead-up to the Ontario Health Coalition’s mass rally at Queen’s Park to protect our public health-care system from the drastic changes being rushed through by the government at breakneck speed.

At the rally, which brought together more than 10,000 people from across the province, McKenna said it is going to take a movement to turn the tide, urging everyone to step up, stand out and speak up in their own communities.

Members of the Board of Directors and staff joined fellow community groups and other activists and allies for a one-day Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Power of Many conference to discuss the serious ramifications of Bill 74 and roll out a campaign to push back.

During a presentation on Bill 100, Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019 to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, ONA President Vicki McKenna reiterated our key concerns with Budget 2019 and proposed recommendations to the government, including: re-examine the regionalization of public health until further consultation and move to 100 per cent provincial funding; reconsider a strategy of achieving cost reductions that impact patient care and the retention of nurses and health-care professionals; and consider implementing a human resources strategy to retain nurses and health-care professionals. We also provided a written submission.

ONA attended two sessions of the government’s “consultations” on restraining growth in public sector compensation – one for the community and social services sector and one for the health-care sector – to reiterate that the problem is not growth in wages, it is a lack of revenue compounded by corporate and tax cuts. But there was no meaningful dialogue or exchange of ideas, and our request for additional information was refused.

Soon after, ONA vowed to vigorously defend our members’ right to free collective bargaining after the government tabled Bill 124, legislation that caps total compensation for public sector workers at one per cent each year for a three-year period. ONA was quick to respond, noting real wages for Ontario hospital nurses and health-care professionals have decreased by more than five per cent over the past 10 years and the province already has the lowest RN-to-population ratio of all Canadian provinces, the fewest number of hospital beds per capita, and spends less than all other provinces on government services.

ONA added our name to a “solidarity statement” with fellow unions, stating cuts to vital services like education and health care will hurt us all, and that we will mobilize our members, in partnership with our community allies, in opposition to the policies of cutbacks and privatization.

We are continuing our efforts at the federal level on our national health priorities with our partners the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU), the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Health Coalition, including adequately funding our public health-care system; putting forward a health human resources plan to hire more nurses and stop RN cuts; and developing a safe seniors’ strategy to deal with severe understaffing in long-term care, community and home care.

As part of our pharmacare strategy, the CFNU released a new report showing pharmaceutical and private insurance companies are pressuring the federal government to stop universal drug coverage in Canada while they continue
Member Education

- ONA workshops continued to be popular, with almost 200 full-day and half-day sessions and lecturettes delivered between November 1, 2018 and April 30, 2019 and hundreds of members in attendance.
- ONA’s Membership Education and Events (MEE) Team, in conjunction with the Information Technology Team, is investigating options for our eLearning platform, which provides free online education to ONA members and students, that will ensure a robust environment for learners into the future.
- The most popular eLearning programs are Professional Responsibility Workload Report Form – Hospital Sector; Harassment, Mobbing and Bullying; Return to Work Level I: Is Your Workplace Making You Sick?; Return to Work Level II: Legislation; and Workplace Safety and Insurance Act: What You Need to Know.
- The most popular of our 13 video lecturettes include Duty to Accommodate; Understanding Conflict; ONA Professional Practice; How to be Both a Professional and a Union Member; and RN/RPN Scope of Practice and the CNO Three Factor Framework.
- The MEE Team is also actively reviewing ONA education offerings and delivery mechanisms to ensure members are receiving education that is relevant and responsive to ONA’s goals.
- A record number of ONA leaders came together for our third annual Joint Sector Meeting, which included a full plenary session, 10 concurrent education sessions divided into two streams – Novice and Advanced – and sector-specific breakouts. Several ONA members presented during the education sessions.
- The call went out for participants for ONA’s annual Leadership Summit, which brings together members under three streams – Novice, Advanced and Activist – to build their skill set in labour relations, identifying best practices for challenges encountered in their Bargaining Units.
- Education at the June Provincial Coordinators Meeting, hosted by Region 3 in Markham, assisted Local and Bargaining Unit leaders with understanding and meeting their fiduciary duties, obligations and legal responsibilities to their members and the union.
- Due to the large number of new Local Secretaries, the most recent Secretaries teleconnect covered their role and accountabilities, the importance of maintaining membership records and related documents, and how this will support Local and (indirectly) provincial elections.
- Local 2 Coordinator Kristy Johnston, a very active ONA member, spoke at the Political Action education session on her activism work and best practices during the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions’ Biennial Convention.
Local Political Action/Member Engagement

Many Locals are taking advantage of the $1,000 available to them each year specifically for political action work (Policy 26.11) and are including that in their budget preparations.

Some members used that money to attend the mass Ontario Health Coalition rally at Queen’s Park to hold the government accountable for public health care.

In preparation, members also participated in Health Action Day, distributing stickers and leaflets to raise awareness about the continuing threat of privatization under the current government.

Local 2 (Sudbury region) invited MPPs that serve the ridings where their Bargaining Units are located to their executive meeting, and two showed up to listen to their concerns about quality patient care.

Members lent their support to a Queen’s Park rally to defend high-quality, publicly funded education and the optimal learning conditions that all students need and deserve in response to proposed cuts from the government that will hurt all students.

Members from Local 4 participated in a protest outside of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker’s constituency office to denounce proposed changes announced by the government to an array of public services. Grey Bruce Health Services Bargaining Unit President Pam Lobsinger spoke to the media about nursing layoffs, the provincial budget, a lack of hospital beds, and workload issues.

After expertly leading her members through a strike, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit Bargaining Unit President Barb Deter was presented with the city’s Lois A. Farley Award for her 46 years of service as a nurse in the community.

Local 97 Coordinator Liz Romano spoke at the Ontario Federation of Labour’s (OFL) media conference to address the government’s legislation limiting compensation for public sector workers. The media conference kicked off the OFL’s Days of Action, which were coordinated protests at MPP offices throughout the province. Many members participated in those protests.

The ONA Board of Directors continued to discuss ways to engage members in the work of our union, with the ultimate goal of encouraging those at smaller Bargaining Units without a Bargaining Unit President to step into this important role.

Several Local leaders and members took up our call to meet with their MPPs during constituency weeks, with the assistance of our MPP Lobby Kits, so our elected representatives can hear the realities on the front lines and the solutions from those who know best.

While our third annual Member Secondment Program, which provides high-energy, self-motivated participants with a combination of intensive ONA education on core union services with hands-on work back in their Bargaining Units, came to a conclusion, a call was issued for applications for the fourth year, and four candidates were chosen.

Members at Grand River Hospital held two information pickets in Kitchener to protest the cuts of 25 full-time and 15 part-time RNs and the employer’s attempts to back out of an agreement to
Communications and Campaigns

Four priority campaigns for our union were approved by the Board of Directors: provincial health-care reform, long-term care (LTC), public health, and the federal election.

In light of the drastic transformation of our health-care system by the government, ONA launched the campaign, Priorities and Promises, with a series of powerful print, social media, radio and transit shelter ads, asking the public to contact their MPP, the Minister of Health, and the Premier himself about the negative ramifications.

Our LTC campaign, featuring stories of members in this sector, via radio, social media, Front Lines, and a dedicated website, brought attention to the important work they do for their residents in the weeks leading up to the release of the LTC inquiry recommendations. ONA also commissioned researchers from York University to produce a compelling report on LTC nursing.

Information about our federal election campaign was brought forward to ONA’s Area Coordinators Conferences and the June Provincial Coordinators Meeting. The campaign urges MPPs to commit to preserving public health care by encouraging members to participate in a variety of provincial and regional activities geared to their comfort level. ONA is seconding 25 interested leaders in each region to help lead this important work.

After the government announced it was streamlining our 35 public health units into 10 regional public health entities and 10 new regional boards of health with no details, ONA launched a letter writing and public awareness campaign.

Template letters were prepared for our Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) members to send to their MPPs regarding concerns with the lack of consultation and planning surrounding the restructuring of LHINs.

ONA’s social media channels continued to attract additional engaged followers each month, with Facebook followers totaling more than 26,200 while our Twitter users climbed to more than 17,000.

On the negative ramifications of the government’s health-care restructuring plans were frequently shared and liked on Facebook, with the post about the lack of details surrounding the provincial budget reaching 15,000 viewers alone.

ONA surveyed a sampling of members to explore their opinions related to issues and challenges in their practice environments to assist in the development of our government relations and communications strategy. The data will also provide us with an initial understanding of our members’ perspectives on ONA’s current services.

ONA President Vicki McKenna continued to reach a wide audience with her popular podcast series on current issues and union priorities, with the latest one delving into the government’s health-care restructuring bill, highlights from the Joint Sector Meeting, and our strategy for the release of recommendations from the LTC inquiry.
Health and Safety/WSIB

- ONA reminded members to report all workplace violence incidents, which is their legal duty. We need employers to be aware of all workplace hazards and act on them and the Ministries of Labour and Health to understand how serious this issue is and fund and enforce preventive items for worker protection and patient safety.

- “Please stand up and speak out about workplace safety so that the generations behind us don’t have to work in situations where this continues to happen,” ONA President Vicki McKenna said at Toronto’s National Day of Mourning event, one of many held throughout the province to pay tribute to those injured or killed on the job, including ONA members Nelia Laroza, Tecla Lin, Lori Dupont and Susan Munford.

- The Ontario Association for Interval and Transitional Houses, which ONA strongly supports, launched an Aging without Violence Project, focusing on the intersections of gender-based violence against older women and health, housing, shelter, transitional and legal services.

- ONA was successful in a Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) appeal for a member claiming psychotraumatic disability following a workplace accident, with the Appeal Resolution Officer agreeing with ONA, allowing entitlement for depression and accepting the condition was permanent.

- We joined with labour and social justice organizations from across Ontario to recognize Injured Workers’ Day to stand up for those who have been injured or made ill as a result of their work.

- On its first day of hearings into workplace violence in health care, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) President Linda Silas testified before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, noting that “any Canadian would find it shocking to hear that nurses face a workplace violence crisis that is worsening at a faster rate than for police and correctional officers. And yet, that’s the reality that nurses face every day.”

- ONA is concerned that the government’s review of WSIB to measure its operational efficiencies and effectiveness will further impact injured workers’ access to benefits. We are awaiting the review’s findings and will be evaluating the impact.

- The Board of Directors and members joined a rally at the CFNU Convention urging that federal and provincial governments immediately take measures to end violence against health-care workers.

- The Prevention Office within the Ministry of Labour (MOL) has been directed to develop Ontario’s next five-year occupational health and safety strategy, which acts as a blueprint for how the MOL and health and safety partners will focus their efforts during that time span. ONA has suggested the strategy align with MOL initiatives and year-long focus on high-risk hazards specific to each sector.

- The products and tools from the second phase of the provincial Violence Leadership Table, which is focusing on long-term care and the community sectors, will be available on the Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) website. ONA President Vicki McKenna sits on the table and Local leaders and staff also participate on working groups and advisory tables at the provincial level to ensure our members’ voices are heard and to push for improvements that will make a difference.

- A significant WSIB appeal reversed an initial denial of benefits for an ONA member who suffered neck, upper back strain, concussion and post-concussion syndrome when the elevator she entered at work dropped and stopped abruptly.

- In conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, ONA is working with the PSHSA on the development of an Organizational Risk Assessment program framework for infectious disease threat exposure in health organizations.

- As a result of our advocacy in health and safety, a number of employers are now working with our Bargaining Unit leaders on violence programs, including at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto and The Ottawa Hospital.
The reviews were overwhelmingly positive for our recent Health and Safety Caucuses on the topic, “New Musculoskeletal Guidelines from the Centre for Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs),” located at the University of Waterloo, which will help employers and workers understand and recognize MSD hazards, conduct an MSD risk assessment, choose and implement MSD hazard controls, and conduct an evaluation. Region 1’s Caucus was held for the first time in person.

Student Affiliation

ONA is welcoming several nursing and other students to our provincial office this summer to assist a variety of teams: Rhea Deshpande from McMaster University (Professional Practice Team); Laylah Smith from McMaster University (Finance and Information Technology teams); Andrew Phonexay from Ryerson University/George Brown College (Legal Expense Assistance Plan Team); Marina Gandzi from McMaster University (Communications and Government Relations Team); Kaitlyn Chan from York University (Membership Education and Events Team); and Simon Donato-Woodger and Ferrisha Bolton-Brown from Ryerson University (assisting with nursing research projects).

New Canadian Nursing Students’ Association (CNSA) President Victoria Marchand from the University of Ottawa attended ONA’s Joint Sector Meeting to meet the Board of Directors, Local leaders and staff, and learn more about the work of our union.

ONA is standing behind our student affiliate members with a donation of $10,000 after the government announced it will allow colleges and universities to let students opt out of paying democratically determined membership fees for student unions and other student organizations, which we believe is a very real threat to nursing students’ ability to have meaningful freedom of association.

CNSA Ontario Regional Director Jaclyn Sicard and York University official delegate Jennifer Lesurf joined Region 2 Vice-President Bernie Robinson, Region 4 Vice-President Laurie Brown and Region 5 Vice-President Karen Bertrand at the Registered Nurses’ Foundation of Ontario’s (RNFOO) annual gala, a fundraising event designed to recognize the organization’s award winners, celebrate the profession, and kick off Nursing Week.
ONA made additional gains for our members in addressing their workload and professional practice complaints (PRCs) and have reached settlements without having to advance to an Independent Assessment Committee.

Of the PRC cases that were fully resolved with Minutes of Settlement, jointly signed by ONA and the employers, the majority are binding.

Achievements to date in 2019 include an increase in RN hours in emergency departments (EDs) across the province, significant improvements to orientation programs, an increase in laboratory coverage in EDs, safe staffing ratios for RNs, changes to models of care, and appropriate trained security guards in EDs.

One such PRC settlement addressed the serious skill mix issues at the Queensway Carleton Hospital ED in Ottawa, resulting from staff being pulled from orientation to provide patient care and additional workload being added to nurses because of the significant reduction of lab coverage in the ED. The agreement ensures that only in extreme situations will RNs be pulled from orientation to support patient care, and additional orientation shifts will be rescheduled.

Members continue to be completely satisfied with the representation they receive through ONA’s Legal Expense Assistance Plan (LEAP), with the most recent LEAP Member Satisfaction Survey showing that 100 per cent of respondents found it easy or very easy to contact LEAP, were satisfied or very satisfied with the information/advice they received, considered their LEAP contact person to be sensitive or very sensitive and supportive or very supportive, and were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of representation.

Under the theme, Healing Hands. Caring Hearts, ONA members from across the province took part in lunches, suppers, special teas, bowling and painting parties – to name a few – to acknowledge and celebrate all they do on the front lines during Nursing Week. Members of the Board of Directors attended many of those events.

Minutes of Settlement were reached for members on the mental health (MH) units at Kingston General Hospital over a lack of safe staffing and safety policy, and insufficient orientation for new staff and ongoing education. After an external risk assessment was conducted, the employer agreed to staff the intensive observation area with three RNs 24/7 and another section with a ratio of one RN to two patients with a security guard present at all times; provide in-person education sessions to all MH and ED RNs; expand orientation for nurse hires; and establish a process where the MH charge nurse identifies the need for additional staff in the units.

At the Joint Sector Meeting, Linda McGillis-Hall, a professor at the University of Toronto’s Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, provided an update on the RN4Cast study she is leading, which is examining how organizational features of hospital care impact on nurse recruitment, retention and patient outcomes. Thousands of ONA members filled out the study questionnaire, and a final report will be provided to the Board this summer.

Professional Practice launched a pilot project that moved three specialist positions from the Toronto office into the North, East and West offices, and we are already seeing benefits, including more informal consultation in the offices, which provide servicing Labour Relations Officers with advice.

A PRC settlement was reached with the Chatham Kent Health Alliance to
address our members’ practice and workload concerns, and retention and recruitment issues on the Women and Children’s Unit. The employer agreed to create a clinical education leader position for a minimum six-month term to support training and skill development for new and novice staff and six new RN permanent positions to enhance required baseline staffing resources, and enhance new staff orientation.

With all Canadian provinces facing a growing nurse staffing crunch, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions commissioned the National Nurse Staffing Survey, with the goal of helping governments and major healthcare organizations find solutions to anticipated crises. This study will launch in the fall.

A significant workload settlement was achieved for members in the interventional radiology unit at Hamilton Health Sciences, identifying issues related to a lack of RN staffing, unskilled staff from other areas, unfilled vacancies, high volume and acuity of cases, lack of resources to meet scheduling needs, on-call requirements, ergonomic and safety concerns, and a lack of support for new staff. Achievements include the addition of three full-time and two part-time RN positions and two RPN positions.

ONA continued to work with our Canadian Blood Services Bargaining Units as workload issues have increased in that sector.

Thanks to a settlement reached for members on the labour and delivery unit at Hamilton Health Sciences over concerns related to a lack of RN staffing, high volumes, acuity and turnover of patients, and process and communication issues, we have achieved an increase in RN baseline staffing, the establishment of a Women’s Health Clinic to address non-urgent and scheduled activity, and changes to electronic data entry and communication processes and protocols.
Human Rights/Accommodation/Return to Work

- ONA continued to advance the human rights of our members in a number of ways, through advocacy by Local executives and Labour Relations Officers, the Human Rights and Equity Team, grievance arbitration, the WSIB Team, occupational health and safety, and at times before the College of Nurses of Ontario by way of our Legal Expense Assistance Plan.

- ONA’s Pride committee planned for a large ONA presence at the biggest Pride Parade in the country – Toronto Pride – and members and staff came out in droves. Members outside of the city, including Thunder Bay, London, Barrie, Chatham and Windsor, also heeded our call to join a Pride event near them.

- ONA joined with individuals, unions and other organizations to recognize Indigenous Nurses Day, which highlights the achievements of Canada’s First Nations, Inuit and Métis nurses and recognizes their invaluable work improving the health and well-being of Canadians.

- Through our affiliation with the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, ONA applauded the work of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, noting we must build a future that heals the wounds of the past by ensuring equity, justice and fairness for Indigenous peoples, and that nurses are committed to doing our part.

- The Human Rights and Equity Team’s most recent teleconnect discussed ageism in the workplace, which is often a cause for individual acts of discrimination as well as discrimination that is more systemic in nature. The team is moving towards a less legalistic approach to its teleconnects, and this was its second such trial presenting members’ personal stories.

- In recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day, retired member Carolyn Edgar, along with Region 1 Vice-President Pam Mancuso, Region 2 Vice-President Bernie Robinson, and Region 3 Vice-President Andy Summers, got up bright and early for a Sunrise Ceremony at Toronto’s Nathan Phillips Square, while Thunder Bay District Health Unit public health nurse Lyne Soramaki promoted the Caring for Mother Earth Project in her region.

- We continued to work with employers to establish joint programs that promote a strong health and safety culture, linking return to work with disability prevention.

- Work is well underway for the 2019 Human Rights and Equity Caucus, which kicks off Biennial Convention week this November, under the theme, Pride and Prejudice: LGBTQ+ Issues in Health Care. ONA issued an invitation for members to apply for a special subsidy to attend.

- ONA provided direction to our Labour Relations Officers on key areas where grievances are to be filed following the legalization of recreational cannabis.