The following is a summary of ONA's key activities and successes since the last “The Work of the Union” update in winter 2019.
Bargaining/Labour Relations

- ONA extended the deadline for our Have-a-Say bargaining survey to ensure as many members as possible in all sectors were able to participate.
- That survey helped guide the bargaining proposals of our newly elected Nursing Homes Central Negotiating Team, comprised of members from each region, the ONA President and Interim CEO/CAO (ex-officio) and staff, which came together for the first time at our provincial office.
- As the current nursing homes central collective agreement expires on June 30, 2019, negotiations for a renewed agreement commenced in February. A tentative settlement was reached during mediation in late March.
- Members from the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, who have been without a contract since March 2018, were forced to strike after the employer brought a final offer to the table that did not value their work.
- In the wake of GM’s decision to close its assembly plant in Oshawa after a century of production, ONA reached out to members employed there, expressing our concerns and letting them know we will do everything in our power to support them through the process.
- As Bargaining Units in our Canadian Blood Services and Victorian Order of Nurses sectors will now bargain centrally instead of individually, the Board approved the mandates of these new central negotiating teams.
- ONA met with Justice Eileen Gillese, commissioner of the long-term care (LTC) inquiry into the policies, procedures and oversight of LTC homes, to further discuss our recommendations for the sector as she prepares a final report to the Attorney General by July 31, 2019.
- Our key recommendations include that: the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) should immediately increase LTC funding to reflect the actual needs of residents; for-profit homes must be phased out, replaced by non-profit homes; a nurse-to-resident ratio must be set at 1:20; agency use should be eliminated or the MOHLTC be given oversight of the agencies; RNs should be given wage parity with nurses working in the hospital sector; colleges and universities should provide more education on gerontology and senior care; and a clinical placement in LTC should be mandatory.

The newly-elected Nursing Homes Central Negotiating Team gets to work

- We made our final submission with respect to pay equity maintenance in the (former) 10 community care access centres at the Pay Equity Hearings Tribunal, a critical case as it addresses the union’s right to participate in pay equity negotiations.
- ONA and the Service Employees International Union continue to judicially review the decision of the Pay Equity Hearings Tribunal, which held that while employers in the proxy sector do have an obligation under the Pay Equity Act to maintain pay equity, the Act does not require the seeking employers to return to their external proxy employer for the purposes of conducting a maintenance review.
- With much of the previous government’s Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act (Bill 148) repealed and/or changed, ONA released detailed direction to our Local leaders and members about what that law’s replacement, Bill 47, means to their working lives.
After learning of cuts to 25 full-time and 15 part-time RNs at Grand River Hospital in Kitchener, ONA spoke out about the serious implications to patient care, urging members of the community to contact their local MPP and health minister.

The most recent Hospital Contract Interpretation teleconnect focused on ONA’s interpretation of Article 14.06 of the hospital central collective agreement related to standby/call-back.

ONA applauded a historical win filed at the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, which found there was sufficient evidence to establish that the province’s midwives experienced discrimination between 2005 and 2013 and that “sex was more likely than not one of the factors that explained the difference in compensation levels between midwives and community health centre physicians,” noting the decision will have far-reaching effects for all female-dominated professionals.

We continue to enroll new members in the Nursing Homes and Related Industries Pension Plan, which currently has assets of more than $1.8-billion versus $688 million in January 2010.

Communications and Campaigns

ONA aired our popular ad, The Gift, at cinemas across Ontario and on Facebook to put the spotlight on the value that RNs bring to patients during the holiday season and throughout the year. That was immediately followed by two ads aired on radio and posted to Facebook, which focused on the pride RNs take in providing high-quality care, asking why they are being cut from the health-care system. Our Facebook campaign reached more than one million people, with positive comments posted directly to our site from Ontarians, such as “I have hundreds of nurses to thank for the care I’ve received over the years. They are the reason I’m still here. Thank you.”

ONA’s social pages continued to attract additional engaged followers each month, with Facebook followers increasing by about 500 users (to a total of more than 26,000), while our Twitter users climbed to more than 16,500.

On Facebook, our posts about the Nurses’ Health Program, workplace violence at Southlake Regional Health Centre, and those regarding the Ontario government’s potential changes to health-care delivery and privatization reached more than 20,000 users each.

Our “Find Your Contract” page and the Have-a-Say bargaining survey page received the most page views so far in 2019.

As always, the rest of the website content continued to receive steady page views and actions.

ONA is surveying our members to explore their opinions related to issues and challenges in their practice environments to assist in the development of our 2019 government relations and communications/campaigns 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 current status of the long-term care inquiry, and ongoing issues with violence in the workplace.
Government Relations/Work with Allies

- After the NDP leaked a copy of a draft government bill outlining changes that could open the door to privatization of some components of our health-care system, ONA called on the government to consult with front-line RNs and health-care professionals before any restructuring of Ontario’s health-care system.

- A telephone town hall for members was hosted by ONA to discuss what we know so far about the transformation of our health-care system and to answer our members’ questions.

- The Council on Improving Healthcare and Ending Hallway Medicine, set up by the Ford government and chaired by former Humber River Hospital CEO Rueben Devlin, released its first report, an escan of the issues and challenges of our health-care system, which ONA is closely reviewing in anticipation of the final report.

- ONA President Vicki McKenna presented our pre-budget submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, urging the government to develop a funded plan to close the gap in the province’s RN capacity over the next four years. She also issued a series of recommendations on behalf of our union, including that hospital funding to offset increased cost pressure be at least 4.5 per cent, funding for expanded capacity in home care increase, and a minimum standard of care be implemented in long-term care.

- ONA supported the Ontario Health Coalition’s (OHC) report, Situation Critical: Planning, Access, Levels of Care and Violence in Ontario’s Long-Term Care (LTC), which found that while the acuity of LTC residents has skyrocketed due to a lack of funding and massive hospital cuts, hands-on care has actually declined, noting there have been 27 homicides in LTC homes in the five years leading up to the report.

- ONA will continue to provide an annual sustaining donation and targeted moneys for campaigns totaling $50,000 to the OHC to continue its critical work in protecting our public health-care system.

- 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; developing a national prescription drug program; and developing a safe seniors’ strategy to deal with severe understaffing in long-term care, community and home care.

- We will also be working with the CFNU as it prepares for the 2019 federal election with the goal of getting MPs to commit to making improvements to our working conditions, making patient care safer, and building a better, broader public health-care system.

- ONA President Vicki McKenna and First Vice-President Cathryn Hoy signed a Valentine’s card in support of Have a Heart Day, a child and youth-led reconciliation event that brings together Canadians to help ensure First Nations children have the services they need to grow up safely at home, get
Member Education

- ONA workshops continued to be popular, with a total of 399 full-day and half-day sessions delivered from November 1, 2017 to October 31, 2018, and almost 2,800 members in attendance. The overall workshop satisfaction rate was almost perfect at 97.17 per cent.
- E-Learning, which provides free online education to ONA members, was a favourable option, with approximately 500 program completions in 2018 for the 25 program offerings.
- The most popular e-Learning 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.
- ONA’s Membership Education and Events (MEE) Team, in conjunction with the Information Technology Team, is considering options for our e-Learning platform, which will ensure a robust environment for our adult learners into the future.
- Members continued to embrace video lecturettes, with 584 completions in 2018.
- 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 actively reviewing the delivery mechanism of all platforms to ensure members are receiving education in the most interesting, energizing and informative way.
- At our recent Local Coordinators/Treasurers Workshop, members shared experiences and learned about critical components of their roles to increase awareness of their accountabilities and how communications and collaboration between the positions make for a successful Local.
- Based on feedback from the last Joint Sector Meeting (JSM), the education sessions for this year’s JSM will be divided into two streams: Novice and Advanced.
- ONA signed an open letter to the federal government asking that it provides health-care coverage for migrants, noting that health care is a human right and migrants are no exception.
- ONA President Vicki McKenna held meetings with Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Christine Elliott and staff from the Premier’s office to discuss our ongoing concerns for our members and our health-care system.
- The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has set up an advisory committee for health workforce planning, which is mandated to develop a process and plan to build workforce capacity in all sectors. ONA President Vicki McKenna is a participant.

a good education, be healthy, and be proud of who they are.

After Canadian Plasma Resources opened two clinics in Canada that offer financial incentives in exchange for plasma donations, ONA joined with the CFNU in supporting Senator Pamela Wallin’s proposed bill for a national ban on paid blood and plasma donations.

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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.

The ONA Board of Directors has approved a new policy to support member participation in local celebrations and events consistent with our vision and mission, funding registration fees for Locals/Bargaining Units participating in Pride and Labour Day parades, and where there are more than 40 ONA member participants, we will also contribute funding towards the cost of an appropriate float/vehicle for use in the parade.

Health Sciences North (HSN) RN Bargaining Unit President Kelly Latimer and Paramedical Bargaining Unit President Michelle Beaudry spoke at an Ontario Health Coalition town hall in Sudbury about the cuts at the facility, which total approximately 75 RN positions, or 64 full-time equivalents, and 35 health-care professional positions.

Local 13 Paramedical Executive member Christine Spence also travelled from Sudbury to North Bay to attend a media conference outside Finance Minister Vic Fedeli’s constituency office, where she urged the public to speak out against the cuts, which affect patients across the north.

In the lead-up to their forced strike, members from the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit held an information picket to greet members of the Board of Health as they headed to their meeting, asking for a fair negotiated settlement. Once the strike commenced, the members held a Friends and Family rally, and diaper and blood drives, supported by ONA provincial and Local leaders, members, staff, other unions and community groups.
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.

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

ONA member Terri Widawski created a mural for her patients in the chemotherapy unit of Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre in Barrie, using plastic connectors and adapters from IV lines and other equipment that would normally end up in a landfill, to provide them with some comfort throughout their journey with cancer.

A call was issued for applicants for our very popular 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.

Marshall Gowland Manor Bargaining Unit President Julie Saxton and London Health Sciences Centre Bargaining Unit President James Murray spoke in support of the Ontario Health Coalition’s (OHC) long-term care report, which found shocking and intolerable levels of homicide and violence in homes, at two of the 30 media conferences on the OHC’s community tour, stating that health outcomes of residents suffer when fewer RNs are part of the staffing mix.

The ONA Board of Directors is undergoing a renewal based on the recommendations of Dr. Elaine Todres, who specializes in strategic and governance counsel and strategic facilitation to executive leadership teams, and is seeking member feedback on those proposals. While some of the proposed changes will need to be voted on by Local leaders at a Biennial Convention, work on other recommendations, such as the implementation of three committees, can commence.

ONA members continued to stand up for their patients and stand out from the crowd of health providers by embracing the Wear White on Wednesdays campaign.
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ONTARIO NURSES’ ASSOCIATION

Health and Safety/WSIB

- ONA reminded members to report all workplace violence incidents, which is their legal duty, so that employers are aware of all workplace hazards and can act on them and so the Ministries of Labour and Health and Long-Term Care understand how serious this issue is and fund and enforce prevention for worker protection and patient safety.

- In a significant victory for all nurses in the province, the Nurses’ Health Program (NHP), an initiative of ONA, the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario and the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, officially launched. This program provides needed support for nurses dealing with mental health and substance use disorders.

- The second phase of the provincial Violence Leadership Table, which is focusing on long-term care and the community sector, got underway with ONA President Vicki McKenna serving as ONA’s representative.

- Local leaders and staff are also sitting on working groups and advisory tables at the provincial level to ensure that our members’ voices are heard and to push for improvements that will make a difference.

- In an important first for our union, ONA successfully appealed the Medical Appeals Process under the hospital collective agreement, which is meant to be binding, resulting in a significant retroactive payment to the affected member.

- The horrific workplace attack of a member from Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket should never have happened, ONA told the media, adding that hospital officials failed to immediately report the incident to our union, their Joint Health and Safety Committee and the Ministry of Labour, as required by law.

- Thanks to a member’s clever use of props to demonstrate how her injured thumb is used in the various aspects of her duties, ONA was successful before the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeal Tribunal.

- ONA was once again a proud sponsor of the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers’ annual Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day webinar from Sudbury’s Cambrian College.

- A significant Workplace Safety and Insurance Board appeal confirmed that members’ entitlements to benefits during breaks is settled law after a member suffered a laceration when cutting a piece of fruit while on a break a work.

- In response to London Health Sciences Centre’s decision to give armbands to potentially violent patients, ONA issued a media statement, commenting that safe patient care and worker health and safety is our top priority.

- Members were encouraged to support a petition of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions asking the federal Minister of Health for national action to stop violence against health-care workers.

- In conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, ONA is working with the Public Services Health & Safety Association on the development of an Organizational Risk Assessment program framework for infectious disease threat exposure in health organizations, which is being developed first for hospitals and then will be adapted to other health-care 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 the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare in Windsor, and The Ottawa Hospital.

- ONA is endorsing a research project called, “The Impact of Organizational Programs and Supports on the Psychological Health Outcomes of Workers Exposed to Patient Violence in Long-Term Care and Home Care Organizations.”

- We are preparing for our 2019 Health and Safety Caucuses on the topic, “New Musculoskeletal Guidelines from the Centre for Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD),” 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.

- The most recent health and safety webinar provided an update on Health Quality Ontario’s Workplace Violence Prevention and Hospital Quality Improvement Plans, as violence prevention indicators were recently added.
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 (LEAP).

The results from ONA's recent Human Rights and Equity Caucus are in and they are impressive, with 97 per cent of participants rating their overall satisfaction as a four or five out of five, and 94 per cent giving the same rating for the helpfulness of the day in “increasing their knowledge.”

Members from across the province joined Women’s March rallies, which aim to inspire, unite and lead the charge for the advancement of women across Canada, to show they will not accept rollbacks and attacks on their communities, which have affected women and some of the most vulnerable people.

ONA joined the Ontario Federation of Labour’s call for action urging women to continue fighting for their rights.

Members spoke out in support of ONA’s decision to designate Black History Month as one of our key observances, noting that our union can play a big role in helping members promote this special event in their communities.

ONA acknowledged the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which aims to bring attention to the negative consequences of racial discrimination by encouraging members to remember their obligation to combat it.

Our first-ever teleconnect on Black History Month, presented by staff from our LEAP Team, received rave reviews from participants for its review of important historical events, struggles and victories, and experiences of members who have faced discrimination from a nursing and non-nursing perspective.

A contingent of ONA members and staff, led by Region 3 Vice-President Andy Summers, joined the International Women’s Day March in Toronto under the theme, #BalanceforBetter, a call to action to work together towards a more gender-balanced world.

During the Human Rights and Equity Team’s recent visit to the Scott Mission, members offered assistance to poor, homeless and vulnerable people in Toronto, expressing the importance of giving back to those in need.

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.

ONA hosted two teleconnects addressing medical and recreational use of marijuana to provide an overview of the legislative framework, and employee protections under the Human Rights Code, including the duty to accommodate an employee who needs to use medical marijuana because of a disability.
Professional Issues

- ONA made additional gains for our members in addressing their workload and professional practice complaints (PRCs) and has been able to reach settlements prior to having to advance to an Independent Assessment Committee.

- In fact, in 2018 alone, our PRC settlements resulted in an increase of 331 RN hours across the province for a 24-hour period, which totals 63,501.50 RN hours in one year.

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

- One such settlement addressed the serious workload issues of care coordinators on the community and chronic independence teams at the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network, which resulted in the employer agreeing to ensure that all vacant positions are filled and all new employees and internal transfers have received orientation, and to develop a process to bring overdue assessments up to date.

- A major amendment to ONA’s professional practice service delivery guidelines includes the introduction of a new tool – the workload tracking tool – for Bargaining Unit leaders to trace the workload forms submitted by members, which will help identify trends in practice issues within a unit, as well as the frequency and severity of these concerns.

- New Minutes of Settlement were reached for members on the medicine unit of the Kingston General site of Kingston Health Sciences over a lack of RN staff, members working short-staffed, changes to the model of care and a lack of adequate and working equipment, resulting in significant improvements, including that the current baseline staffing will increase by 56.25 hours per 24-hour period, Monday to Friday, and 52.50 hours per 24-hour period on weekends and statutory holidays.

- The 2019 Nursing Week Team met to begin planning for another exciting Nursing Week, choosing the theme, Healing Hands, Caring Hearts to express the skills nurses possess and the dedication they show.

- Because full resolution of the workload settlement reached on the labour and delivery unit at Toronto’s Mount Sinai Hospital had not been fully implemented by the employer one year later, further meetings took place, resulting in a final
binding settlement that calls for an increased RN baseline and an overall increase in permanent RN resources of 247.5 hours weekly.

- We are increasing our complement of professional practice and government relations staff to assist with members’ serious workload issues and to voice our key concerns at government tables.

- Under the theme, From everyday issues to complex needs: Social workers, it’s what we do, ONA celebrated alongside our social workers, an integral component of our health-care professionals group, during Social Work Week.

- 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 provides servicing Labour Relations Officers with advice.

- A significant workload settlement was achieved at the Grand River Community Health Centre, including 30 minutes of administration time daily to nurse practitioners (NP); a formal process for when an NP leaves, ensuring a full turnover of the clients is provided; and that all policies and procedures are current, allowing the NPs to provide quality safe patient care while meeting their professional standards.

- During our most recent Professional Practice webinar, the background and significance of the Grand River Community Health Centre PRC for NPs was highlighted, serving as a good example of our PRC process to other Bargaining Units.

- Because of the rising acuity and complexity of professional practice files and challenges facing the healthcare sector today, ONA’s Professional Practice Specialists have been undergoing education to enable them to identify labour relations issues outside of practice.

- Professional Practice became involved in the Sault Area Hospital Surgical Unit in May 2017, and since that time, the parties have been working to address our members’ serious issues, agreeing to a pilot project to assist with resolving the staffing issues, with a six-month evaluation to determine if it has been successful.

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

- A settlement has been reached for members who work at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre’s emergency department (ED) over issues relating to staffing levels and the most appropriate care provider, with the employer implementing a pilot project on permanent baseline staffing, providing clarification and education on when intensive care unit (ICU) nurses should be pulled to care for ICU patients admitted in the ED and awaiting an ICU bed, and maintaining an appropriate skill mix 24-7.

- The most recent NP teleconnect provided listeners with an update on the Nurses’ Health Program, the Ontario Health Coalition’s report on long-term care, the CNO’s regulation on nurse prescribing, Board renewal, and our upcoming member survey.

### Organizing

- ONA held several successful certification votes during this time period, welcoming new members from Chartwell Parkhill LTC Residence (seven RNs); Hillsdale Terrace Home for the Aged (24 RNs); Essex County Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic (five NPs, two RPNs, one social worker, one dietician, three medical assistants); Algonquin Nursing Home in Matttawa (eight RNs); Wyndham Manor LTC in Oakville (15 RNs); Park Lane Terrace Long-Term Care in Paris (7 RNs); and Edgewater Gardens Long-Term Care Home in Dunville (12 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 applications when necessary to protect our work.
Student Affiliation

Under the theme, *Strength in Solidarity: Advocating for Safe Learning Environments*, National Nursing Students’ Week put the focus on student strengths in clinical and community placements, including lateral and vertical violence in placements, at schools, and as future nurses.

The ONA Board of Directors matched the $2,950 raised by members and staff through a raffle at the November Provincial Coordinators Meeting to assist Danielle Kane, a nursing student who was shot while coming to the aid of a victim of the Danforth shooting last summer with her boyfriend Jerry Pinksen, an ONA member.

ONA was a proud gold sponsor of the Canadian Nursing Students’ Association’s (CNSA) national conference in Calgary, under the theme *Aspire to Inspire: Celebrating Student Leadership and Advocacy*, which was attended by more than 400 nursing students across the country, including approximately 100 ONA student affiliate members.

During the conference, Region 1 Vice-President Pam Mancuso led a roundtable discussion with ONA student affiliate members and staffed an ONA table at an exhibitors’ booth with staff to answer questions about our services.

ONA welcomed Jaclyn Sicard, the CNSA York University Official Delegate, into the role of Ontario Regional Director for the next year, expressing that we look forward to working with her on the issues students face.

The *ONA and Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions Student Scholarship* Policy was amended to include the new $2,000 Reese Fallon Memorial Scholarship and to specify that the additional ONA scholarships (up to nine) of $1,000 each will be open to not only nursing students, but regulated health professional students going forward.

The Nursing Games, a fun-filled weekend of competition for nursing students across the province, was hosted by York University and the University of Toronto, with more than 200 students attending.

Board members continued to participate in regular conference calls with CNSA leaders and campus delegates to learn about their issues firsthand so we can take them forward to the government and nursing stakeholders.