About RPNAO

Vision
Respected, knowledgeable professionals playing a vital role in Ontario’s health care community

Mission
Optimizing RPNs’ professional practice for a healthier Ontario

What is a Registered Practical Nurse?
RPNs are regulated, knowledge-based nurses. There are approximately 35,000 RPNs currently practicing in all health care sectors throughout Ontario, representing roughly one quarter of the province’s total nursing workforce.

RPNs combine nursing skills, knowledge and judgment to provide compassionate, informed and expert care in hospitals, long-term care centres, client homes, public health units, clinics and many other settings.

In recent years, important advancements in post-graduate and specialty education available to RPNs have allowed them to broaden their roles and take on a wider variety of responsibilities in their places of work. As a result, RPNs have more opportunities to provide their expert brand of care within Ontario’s health care system than ever before.

The vast majority of RPNs employed in Ontario provide direct care to patients, clients and residents on a daily basis. For many RPNs, caring for older adults is an important priority in their day-to-day practice. And as Ontario’s demographics continue to shift, there will be an even greater need for the services and skills of RPNs.

About RPNAO
Founded in 1958, RPNAO is the one unified voice for RPNs in Ontario. Our objectives are to:

- Advocate for quality health care in Ontario.
- Advocate for RPNs in diverse settings, resulting in optimum client health services through policy, legislation and regulation.
- Advocate for quality, respectful working environments for RPNs.
- Enhance the professional competencies of RPNs by ensuring the research, development and delivery of quality educational programs.
- Promote the benefits of RPNAO membership to RPNs in order to ensure a strong and unified professional voice.
- Promote a closer working relationship with other health and related organizations.
On behalf of the staff and board of RPNAO, we are delighted to present our association’s 2013-2014 Annual Report.

As anyone who has done the job knows, being an RPN and having the opportunity to provide knowledgeable, expert care to a patient, resident or client can be an incredibly rewarding and fulfilling experience. However, that doesn’t mean the job is easy or that the profession is without its challenges.

That’s where RPNAO comes in. Our association’s mission and mandate revolve around advancing practical nursing and identifying and addressing these issues for a healthier Ontario. Our ability to deliver on our mission and mandate are in direct correlation to the strength of our membership. And we’re pleased to report that RPNAO has reached another record high this past year, surpassing 13,000 members, an increase of 78% over the previous year. Thanks to the continued growth of our membership base, we have been able to keep full-year membership rates unchanged for a fifth consecutive year.

Throughout the past year, we continued to engage in projects and work that are in direct response to what RPNs are telling us are the biggest issues facing the profession. You will read about some of this work in the following pages, including our Role Clarity Project, helping RPNs achieve their career-related goals, enhancements to our Workplace Violence Prevention Program, our High-Functioning Teams project and many more.

Ontario’s health care landscape continues to evolve and demographic shifts are translating into increased reliance on the role of the RPN. We at RPNAO are extremely proud of the way Ontario’s RPNs represent this great profession. And we will continue to work to provide RPNs with the tools, programs, resources and supports they need to fulfill their important roles.

As we’ve done with the recent addition of group health benefits, we also remain committed to augmenting the list of benefits available to RPNAO members to provide you with maximum value for your membership dollars. And as many of you are already aware, our professional liability insurance is one of the best offerings in the industry, providing you with coverage that exceeds the requirements of the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO).

And finally, we would like to recognize and thank the amazing staff of RPNAO who works so hard to ensure we’re able to deliver on the mandate given to us by our members. Thank you for your incredible contributions to practical nursing in Ontario.

Brenda Mundy, RPN
President

Dianne Martin, RPN, RN, BScN, MA
Executive Director
RPNAO reached all-time highs in every membership category this past year.

RPNAO's sustained membership growth reflects an overall increase in RPNs in Ontario as well as a continuation of upward trends that we have seen over the past decade. In addition, new provincial regulations came into effect in the spring of 2014, requiring all RPNs to obtain liability insurance as a condition of maintaining their professional licence, a requirement that we believe is one of the contributing factors to an increase in membership in the latter part of the year.

The rise in nursing student membership also reflects continued outreach to educational institutions to promote the importance of RPNAO membership as a way of helping students to grow their professionalism and invest in their future careers.

RPNAO is your association. We are the one unified voice for practical nursing in Ontario. And every single membership adds to that strong and unified voice.

RPNAO reached all-time highs in every membership category this past year.

RPNAO membership figures over the past five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>RPNAO Membership</th>
<th>Student Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>5,424</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>6,398</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6,622</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>13,367</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working to Keep Membership Affordable

RPNAO is committed to providing this comprehensive suite of advocacy, benefits and protection at the lowest possible cost to RPNs. Thanks to the continued growth of our membership base, we are pleased to be able to hold full-year membership rates steady for the fifth consecutive year. RPNAO also continues to seek out new sources of revenue to continue to relieve as much of the financial burden from our members as possible.
Your RPNAO Membership

An Investment in Your Career and Your Profession

RPNAO members have access to the broadest, most comprehensive package of protection, tools, resources, supports, discounts and other benefits available to RPNs in the province. Here are some of the ways an RPNAO membership can benefit your career and your profession:

**Peace of Mind on the Job**
Nurses registered to work in Ontario must have professional liability insurance. As an RPNAO member, you automatically have the required professional liability insurance coverage. Our coverage also goes above and beyond and includes access to your own legal counsel, something that is not typically covered through employer insurance. Our insurance will also follow you in the event you change jobs, for a seamless, worry-free transition. You’re covered, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, regardless of the number of jobs you hold or how you spend your volunteer time.

**Nursing Advocacy**
For 56 years, RPNAO has been advocating for quality health care on behalf of RPNs to the government, health care organizations and the public.

**Professional Representation**
RPNAO continues to represent the profession and collaborate with key provincial and national committees.

**Fantastic Networking Opportunities**
Meet colleagues and health care leaders around the province. Take part in courses and events, including RPNAO’s AGM & Conference, Ontario’s largest networking and educational event for RPNs.

**Big Savings on Workshops, Seminars and Publications**
Save money on events, courses and publications to enhance your nursing career.

**Our Quarterly Magazine**
Four times each year, enjoy the news, stories, updates and more in your personal subscription to *The Registered Practical Nursing Journal.*

**Career Development Supports**
Take advantage of amazing career development tools and resources at every stage of your work life as a nurse.

**Access to Specialty Interest Groups (SIG)**
Take advantage of access to any of the RPNAO Specialty Interest Groups (SIGs), including Operating Room Nurses, Independent Business Nurses and Gerontological Nursing.

**Discounts on Home/Auto Insurance**
Save with special group rates on home and automobile insurance through our valued partner, Johnson Inc.

**Group Health Benefits**
This is the second year we’ve made this group health benefits program available to RPNAO members. This is an ideal solution if you don’t have health benefits at your job.
RPNAO remains committed to creating and supporting programs aimed at providing RPNs with the tools, resources and guidance they need to become more actively engaged in the profession, to enhance their professional competencies and to pursue professional development and leadership opportunities to help further their careers. The following are just a few examples of this commitment in action over the past year:

**Empowering Nurses**

RPNAO received positive feedback from a number of members who thanked us for making a proactive effort to inform and engage them in an unbiased manner.

**It’s All About Synergies: The Role Clarity Project**

Recent research commissioned by RPNAO revealed that the lack of clarity about the RPN role is one of the most pressing and urgent challenges Ontario RPNs are faced with in the workplace. Confusion about the role by nursing leaders, faculty and fellow nurses can contribute to a range of problems, including sub-optimal patient outcomes, workplace tension, job-related stress, under-utilization or over-utilization of RPNs and more. The RPNAO Role Clarity project was completed in early 2014 and the report, titled, "It’s All About Synergies", serves as a roadmap that nurses, nurse employers and nurse educators are using to improve their understanding of the scope and appropriate engagement of the RPN role in Ontario’s health care system. The report, which is available on the RPNAO website and which has been very well-received throughout Ontario and beyond, features detailed strategies and resources that leaders and educators can use to solve these problems in their own organizations, which will, in turn, contribute to better health care teams.

**Ontario Election 2014: Engaging Members in the Political Process**

In the lead-up to the 2014 provincial election, RPNAO made a concerted effort to help inform and engage RPNs in the political process. We encouraged RPNs to talk to their local candidates about the issues of most concern to nurses and their patients. Throughout the campaign period, RPNAO also worked to bring awareness to three main areas of concern, namely, the decreasing rate of full-time employment for nurses, the barriers impacting continuity of care and the ongoing lack of respect shown to Ontario’s RPNs, both in the workplace and in the media. We provided members with a handy backgrounder outlining these three key issues, as well as a brief, non-partisan overview of each party’s platform, accompanied by our assessment of what their proposed policies could mean for nurses and their patients. In the end, RPNAO received positive feedback from a number of members who thanked us for making a proactive effort to inform and engage them in an unbiased manner.
RPNAO’s Leadership Program: Helping RPNs Achieve their Career-Related Goals

As a growing number of RPNs continue to demonstrate interest in pursuing leadership roles in various aspects of the health care sector, RPNAO remains committed to helping support their career objectives. To assist with this, the association has established a specialized Leadership Program, aimed at helping RPNs to cultivate and hone their leadership skills. This past year, the program, which consists of a comprehensive series of web-based courses, was enhanced to reflect the continually evolving health care landscape in Ontario.

Helping Nurses Chart Successful Careers: Career Directions©

The Career Directions© program, which provides RPNs with valuable tools and strategies to help them achieve their career goals and plan their futures with confidence and purpose, continues to be one of our most popular programs with nearly 15,000 visitors over the past year. RPNAO engaged donnerwheeler to develop Career Directions© (which is available through the RPNAO website) in response to feedback from RPNs across the province interested in having access to this type of professional resource. This past year, RPNAO added four new self-learning modules to the program. These new modules are aimed at helping RPNs succeed in the all-important job interview process and include tips on interview preparation, the follow-up process and more.

The Nursing Education Initiative

RPNAO continues to administer The Nursing Education Initiative (NEI), funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, on behalf of Ontario’s RPNs. The initiative provides all nurses registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario with an opportunity to apply for grants for continuing education to increase their knowledge or professional skills to enhance the quality of care and services. The NEI is an essential component of the Ontario government’s ongoing strategy to recruit and retain nurses in the province.

“Recent research commissioned by RPNAO revealed that the lack of clarity about the RPN role is one of the most pressing and urgent challenges Ontario RPNs are faced with in the workplace.”
In delivering on its mission to optimize RPNs’ professional practice for a healthier Ontario, RPNAO continues to place high priority on the development of programs aimed at contributing to better health care outcomes throughout Ontario. The following are just a few examples of RPNAO’s work in this important area over the past year:

Promoting Safe, Healthy Workplaces: The Workplace Violence Prevention Program
RPNAO understands the challenges of workplace violence and is committed to developing strategies and tools to help nurses recognize and respond to these serious problems which can negatively impact the quality of patient care. RPNAO’s Workplace Violence Prevention Program has seven modules uniquely designed to help nurses deal with bullying, assault and other serious problems. As part of the commitment to workplace violence prevention, this year RPNAO revised our existing workplace violence prevention toolkit to include a broader focus on the inter-professional team. Approximately 2,200 people accessed the toolkit this past year and numerous health care organizations use the program as part of their approach to workplace violence prevention education.

Addressing Gaps in the Workplace: The Leadership/Clinical Practice Fellowship Program
Each year, RPNAO provides RPNs with the unique opportunity to complete a mentor-based fellowship internship at their workplace to help them address an identified gap in the workplace and improve patient care.

Enhancing Professional Competency: The Annual Research Review
For each of the past three years, RPNAO has completed an annual literature review of all current research pertaining to RPNs, or the equivalent role, both nationally and internationally. This annual research review is conducted by an independent researcher and is intended to provide an unbiased appraisal of current research pertaining to RPNs. These reviews provide valuable information about issues facing RPNs and help provide important insights regarding professional development, advocacy and policy developments, with the ultimate goal of contributing to improved health care outcomes. The Annual Research Review reports are available on the RPNAO website.

Unlocking the Secrets of the Healthiest Work Environments: The High-Functioning Teams Project
RPNAO is currently working on an initiative focused on studying the best-of-the-best work relationships and determining the factors that contribute to healthy collaboration. The ‘High-Functioning Teams’ project is examining attributes of workplaces in which RPNs and RNs work together in a collaborative and highly effective manner. The goal is to identify the common elements of these high-functioning teams in a variety of health care settings so they can be replicated in other workplaces. RPNAO partnered with the Nursing Health Services Research Unit (NHSRU) on this important initiative. The project, which was completed in June 2014, is being presented at the association’s Annual General Meeting & Conference and the final report will be available on the RPNAO website.
In the continuing process of empowering nurses and enhancing health care, RPNAO remains acutely aware of the need to forge positive, lasting and collaborative relationships with key stakeholders, not only within the health care sector, but also within government and the broader community. In a sector in which change does not always come quickly, we also recognize the importance of planning for and investing in the future by laying a strong foundation that will benefit nurses and their patients for many years to come. The following are just a few examples of this philosophy in action over the past year at RPNAO:

RPNs Visit Queen’s Park to Lead Positive Change for Health Care
Queen’s Park served as the backdrop on November 18, 2013 as a group of RPNs met and shared ideas with Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and other government officials to help strengthen Ontario’s health care system. The visit included a contingent of 70 RPNs being recognized in the legislature during Question Period, a luncheon reception for MPPs and meetings with a wide range of government leaders, including Ontario’s Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at the time, Deb Matthews. “RPNs play a vitally important role in our health care system,” said Minister Matthews. “Working on the frontlines, their experience, passion, skills and thoughtful advice are helping transform our health care system to one that is community-based and patient-focused.”

RPNAO’s visit to Queen’s Park was just one of the many government advocacy initiatives the association undertook in 2013-2014. Over the past year, RPNAO representatives also participated on various governmental committees and advisory panels and commented in the media on government health and nursing policy proposals and initiatives in order to engage government policy leaders about key issues facing health care in Ontario.

Providing Much-Needed Financing to Aspiring RPNs: The Education Trust Fund
RPNAO remains steadfastly committed to building the nursing profession in Ontario and helping individuals achieve their dreams of becoming a nurse. This is why we established the Education Trust Fund in 1990 to promote practical nursing programs at Ontario colleges and to provide financial assistance to students who want to pursue nursing as a profession. Each year, the fund awards bursaries to students who are currently enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a practical nursing program in Ontario. We are delighted to report that over the past year, $750 bursaries were awarded to six future RPNs.

“RPNs play a vitally important role in our health care system. Working on the frontlines, their experience, passion, skills and thoughtful advice are helping transform our health care system to one that is community-based and patient-focused.”
– Deb Matthews, Ontario’s Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Supporting RPNs’ Career Development: The Advancing Your Career Through Mentorship Program

Mentorship can be a powerful and rewarding way for nurses to realize their career goals and to help others who may just be getting started on their nursing journeys. RPNAO is proud to be an active supporter of mentorship in the nursing profession, helping to facilitate relationships between mentors and mentees. Our Advancing Your Career Through Mentorship Program, which was launched in the spring of 2013, includes a free online module available exclusively to RPNAO members through the association’s website. The program provides users with access to a Mentorship Directory that can help match RPNs with mentors across the province. Over the past year, more than 4,142 visits were made to this directory that helps to identify a suitable mentor to help support their professional development objectives.

Cultivating Open Lines of Communication: Communications and Outreach

Over the past year, RPNAO continued to live up to its commitment to clear, timely communications with RPNs and our many other stakeholder groups. Our primary communications channels in 2013-2014 were our quarterly magazine, The Registered Practical Nursing Journal, our electronic newsletter, Nightingale News and the RPNAO website and social media platforms. We also remained proactive with our other outreach activities this past year, including the hosting of town hall meetings in communities in which RPNs need our assistance on short notice. In the past year alone, RPNAO staff members met with nurses and nurse leaders in the communities of London, Belleville, Ottawa, Barrie, Markham, Woodstock, Thunder Bay, Orangeville, Toronto and Windsor. RPNAO also conducted outreach work on a number of key issues, including supporting nurses’ knowledge about addressing workplace violence and the importance of Professional Liability Protection Insurance and more.
• **Media Relations:** RPNAO continued to ensure external communications and media relations featured positive, empowering views of all nurses. Feedback we have received indicates this approach is preferred by RPNs and health care organizations and is the best way to build nursing into a respected, valued profession.

• **Nightingale News:** Our electronic newsletter is a way we provide RPNs and other stakeholders with timely updates about their profession and our activities at RPNAO. The *Nightingale News* reached more RPNs than ever in the past year, growing from 9,000 to over 15,000 subscribers. The overhauled format of *Nightingale News* continues to get positive feedback with its enhanced readability and quick access to articles.

• **RPNAO Website:** We’ve made numerous enhancements and additions to www.rpnao.org over the past year to help improve the user-friendliness of the site and to present relevant information in more accessible manner.

• **Facebook:** RPNAO’s Facebook page is a great way for the association and RPNs to engage with one another. The page’s following has grown significantly in the past, reaching more than 3,000 ‘Likes’. We engage with nearly 3,500 users through Facebook on a monthly basis and were able to reach 11,500 with a single post this year. We continue to look for opportunities to connect, engage and share with others on this popular social media platform.

• **Twitter:** We also continued to cultivate our social media presence with our Twitter feed @RPNAO. Twitter is a powerful platform to interact with nurses and other health professionals, health leaders, politicians, the media, and other key stakeholders. More than 3,400 Twitter users follow @RPNAO, a 42% jump since last year.

• **Town Hall Meetings:** When the situation warrants it, RPNAO’s staff will conduct town hall meetings in communities where RPNs need our assistance on short notice. Several times in the past year, we made visits to such communities to provide support for RPNs and to provide them with tools for coping with stress and working with health care leaders and educators to help improve the situations so that the entire team can provide the highest quality of care possible.
A Continued Emphasis on Collaboration

RPNAO maintained its longstanding commitment to collaboration with numerous partners in all of the nursing domains, including education, research and leadership and practice. These collaborative partnerships included supporting nine college advisory councils, providing multiple placements for PN, BScN and MN students, collaborating with 10 distinct research groups, including partnerships with NHSRU, creating professional development programs for RPNs with world-renowned leaders in nursing such as ‘donnerwheeler’ and engaging in partnerships with multiple organizations to support staff development.

Defending the Portrayal of Nurses in the Media

In October of 2013, RPNAO urged MTV to cancel a reality show called *Scrubbing In*, which depicted nurses engaged in unprofessional conduct both at home and in the workplace. The show’s portrayal of nurses was ignorant, demeaning and damaging to the profession. RPNAO’s Executive Director sent a letter to MTV to educate their executives about the ongoing struggle to end violence against nurses in the workplace. We also sent RPNAO’s members a link to an action alert on our website which was used by 900 nurses and supporters to submit messages directly to MTV’s network executives to voice opposition to this program. In response to the outcry from numerous organizations including RPNAO, MTV scaled back production of the program, re-edited some episodes, included information about the reality of nursing on its website and engaged nursing stakeholders in consultation about programing that featured nurses.
The President’s Award
This award recognizes an individual or organization that has made outstanding contributions and demonstrated ongoing dedication to the nursing profession in Ontario. In 2013, RPNAO was delighted to present this award to Mary Elizabeth Roth. As a faculty member with the Conestoga College Practical Nursing Program, Mary Elizabeth has made outstanding contributions to the future of practical nursing and has positively impacted the careers of many nurses as well as the people for whom they provide care.

The Preceptor Award of Excellence
This award is bestowed upon an RPN in recognition of outstanding contributions as a role model for a practical nursing student. The role of preceptor is to provide guidance to a student entering the practice by creating a positive learning environment in which the student can expand his/her knowledge and skills to successfully integrate nursing theory into practice. The 2013 winner of this award was Donna Hanley, a Hepatitis C Clinical Coordinator with Ontario Health Clinics.

The Employer Award of Excellence
This award recognizes and honours employers that have demonstrated outstanding achievement in: improving the utilization of RPNs in innovative and creative ways; creating a multi-disciplinary team environment for all health care workers; and maintaining a safe, respectful and empowering work environment where RPNs can work to the fullest of their knowledge, skill and judgment. The winner of the 2013 award was Niagara Health System, which demonstrates all of these characteristics in an environment that supports the leadership development of all nurses.

The RPN Award of Excellence and Innovation
This prestigious award is given to an RPN who has contributed in a significant way, on an ongoing basis, to RPNAO and/or practical nursing in Ontario and whose efforts have demonstrated exemplary nursing practices. The 2013 winner of this award was Diane Wood, a Wound Resource nurse at Brant Community Healthcare System and a nurse in its Complex Care Integrated Program.

2013 Awards
Pictured left to right:
RPNAO Board Member Lindsay Dracz, RPNAO Executive Director Dianne Martin, RPN Diane Wood and awards banquet master of ceremonies Beverley Elliott.
The Award for Excellence in the Care of Older Ontarians
This award, which is dedicated to the memory of Martha Thumlert, an older adult who died unnecessarily from a hospital acquired infection, celebrates the dedication of an RPN who provides exceptional care to our beloved older adults in a manner that is respectful, compassionate, professional and which exemplifies nursing excellence. The 2013 winner of this award was Desiree-Ann Prillo, an Acute Care Medicine Nurse at North York General Hospital.

The Excellence in Journalism Award
This award recognizes the best health reporting by print, online and broadcast journalists across Ontario, with special emphasis on stories that focus on nursing (particularly practical nursing) and the important work that nurses do. In 2013, the winners of this award were Theresa Boyle of The Toronto Star and Carly Weeks of The Globe and Mail.

Board of Directors

Brenda Mundy, RPN
President

Anne McKenzie, RPN
President-Elect

Linda Keirl, RPN
Region 1

Lindsay Dracz, RPN
Region 3

Yvonne Ramlall, RPN
Region 4

Maxwell Hamlyn, RPN, ORT, UT
Region 5

Sherry Shanahan, RPN
Region 6

David Gladun, RPN
Region 7

Scott Morrison, PN Student
Ex-Officio Student Board Member
RPNАО would like to express its gratitude to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for its support of many of the association’s Recruitment and Retention Projects.