

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

Policy and Political Action Executive Network Officer Position



Are you up for the challenge?

Why should you be politically active?

Introduction

When nurses speak out on nursing, health, social and economic issues, we do so for patients, our family, our friends and ourselves. Every day, Registered Nurses (RN), Nurse Practitioners (NP) and nursing students see the impact that health public policy can have on their lives of their patients. We express our frustration about inefficient or outdated policies and express our fears about a failing health care system, but what can we do about it? Who makes these policies in the first place? If these questions intrigue you, the position of an RNAO Policy and Political Action Executive Network Officer may be right for you.

Political action

Many people think political action means marches, protests, or running in an election campaign. It can be all of the above. It can also be sharing concerns about practice issues and finding solutions with colleagues; signing a petition about an environmental problem in the community; or attending a public meeting hosted by a local politician. We, RNs, NPs, and nursing students, should act to protect values or programs that are important to us or to change the rules, policies and laws we feel must become better. Political action can be big or small but its overall goal is to engage nurses, the public and politicians to defend what is right and to promote positive change.

Why should RNs, NPs, and nursing students take political action?

- Nurses have a very high level of credibility and trust with the public
- Nurses can become leaders in health matters in their communities where their point of view is listened to by policy makers and politicians
- Nurses use the same skills when advocating for patients as they do to change policy
- Nurses contribute a unique perspective on health care “core business” that’s holistic and knowledgeable about specific health, social, environmental and economic issues
- No one is more credible than a nurse who approaches a problem with an evidence-based solution

RNAO believes RNs, NPs, and nursing students are well-positioned to both protect and promote important health, social, environmental and economic values. It’s our job to defend programs and institutions that we value and our responsibility to promote positive change. That is why we engage in political action as an organization and encourage the same in the workplace and in the community.

Political action at RNAO

RNAO promotes political action and engagement through three annual signature events.

- 1) **Queen's Park Day**—In February, RNAO members go to Queen's Park to see their elected representatives in action. In the morning, we have breakfast meeting with MPPs, tour the legislative building, and attend Question Period. In the afternoon, we hear remarks and have question/answer period with party leaders, the health minister and health critics, and presentations from invited guests. This is a great opportunity to see the political process in action, meet your MPP, and network with other nurses from across the province.
- 2) **Take Your MPP to Work™**—During Nursing Week and the month of May and June, RNAO members take their MPPs to work to show them how RNs, NPs, and nursing students practice in diverse workplaces across Ontario. TYMTW gives politicians new insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners as they provide health care in nurse practitioner-led clinics, community health centers, family health teams, hospitals, long-term care homes, and public health units. Premiers, Health Minister, party leaders, cabinet ministers, MPPs, MPs and even local mayors, councilors and reeves, have participated in this event.
- 3) **Queen's Park on the Road**—Queen's Park on the Road occurs during the fall and allows RNAO members to meet with their own MPPs in their respective riding offices to share RNAO's platform brochure and exchange views on nursing, health, poverty and environmental issues. With this less formal approach, RNAO members gain greater confidence in their ability to use their nursing experience and expertise to influence policy decision-makers. It is an excellent event to "mentor" members who have never met with an MPP before.

Political action in the workplace and community

RNAO encourages nurses to be political active on a daily basis in their own workplace and community. We want our members to be involved in the decision-making that influences their environment / community, so we give them tools they need to advocate confidently about events and issues they feel passionate about. There are many strategies nurses can use to effectively engage co-workers, the public and politicians about events and issues that matter.

Low-profile strategies

- Discuss a pressing workplace issue with a co-worker or workplace team
- Communicate with a manager about a positive workplace change with a doable timeframe
- Write a letter-to-the editor using your experience and expertise to express your concerns
- Sign an RNAO Action Alert and make your views known to political leaders at the federal and provincial level

Medium-profile strategies

- Put out a press release and hold a press conference to highlight a growing local concern
- Make a public presentation at a Council meeting or at a Legislative committee meeting
- Hold a public meeting to gather support for an issue that's important to the community and determine next steps with new partners
- Arrange a meeting with workplace, government officials to try and resolve outstanding issues
- Meet with your local councilor, MPP or MP to express your concerns directly to decision-makers and provide reasonable alternatives to proposals

High-profile strategies

- Participate in a demonstration, march or protest
- Picket a government office
- Draft a petition and get it signed—take it to the MP or MPP to be presented in the House of Commons or Legislative Assembly
- Protest at City Hall, Queen's Park or Parliament Hill
- Work on an election campaign by putting up signs and handing out leaflets
- Be a candidate in a municipal, provincial or federal election

What are we trying to achieve together?

RNAO wants our members to feel confident about political action and engaging politicians at all levels. We want them to recognize that many of the skills they have gained as Registered Nurses in communication, assessment and planning, are all easily transferable to writing a letter-to-the editor, making a presentation before council or meeting with their MPP. We want members to understand that their experiences and expertise make them valuable resources to government and elected representatives alike. We want them to remember they are in a unique position to witness the impacts of health, social, environmental and economic change and have a responsibility to their patients, family, friends and themselves, to defend core values and to advocate for positive change.

As an RNAO Policy and Political Action Executive Network Officer, Home Office wants you to:

- Actively support RNAO initiatives by engaging your MPP, MP or municipal politician to participate in RNAO's annual Queen's Park Day, Take Your MPP to Work™ (TYMTW™) and Queen's Park on the Road (QPOR).
- Inform colleagues in your Chapter or Interest Group of RNAO's political action opportunities.
- Inform RNAO Home Office, through regular teleconferences, about challenges and opportunities related to nursing and health experienced in your local area / interest group.
- Work with us to coordinate information-sharing, finding participants for MPP meetings and organizing workplace visits for politicians.
- Expand your understanding of the political process in order to influence decision-making and mentor others interested in taking on a similar role.

RNAO's Home Office will support your efforts by:

- Sending out invitations to MPPs to participate in Queen's Park Day, Take Your MPP to Work™ (TYMTW™) and Queen's Park on the Road (QPOR).
- Creating the written materials for organizing a meeting and the documents to be shared with politicians.
- Coordinating the timing of meetings and site visits between MPPs and RNAO members.
- Undertaking required follow-up actions.
- Developing and sending out the thank you notes, certificates and online survey information.
- Responding as best we can to meet the needs of our members so they are prepared for political action and engagement.

We will also do what we can to support you and other RNAO colleagues if you decide to get involved in political action in your workplace or community.

This is an exciting time to be a member of RNAO and in particular, a Policy and Political Action Executive Network Officer. RNAO is well-respected and our members are well-positioned to offer concrete proposals for positive change. We want members to be confident in their ability to engage policy-makers and politicians and influence this change.

For further information, please contact Annie Ytterberg, Nursing and Health Policy Coordinator, at aytterberg@RNAO.ca or by phone at 1-800-268-7199 x 214 or 416-408-5613.

RNAO Political Action Events for 2017 at a Glance

January 27, 12:00-1:00 p.m.	Regular teleconference call between ENOs and Nursing & Health Policy department – update on planning for Queen’s Park Day
February 23-All day	17 th Annual Queen’s Park Day – ENOs participate
February 24-All day	Assembly meeting held at Eaton Chelsea – ENOs participate
April 4, 12:00-1:00p.m.	Regular teleconference call between ENOs and Nursing & Health Policy department – evaluation of Queen’s Park Day and update on planning on Take Your MPP to Work™ event
May-June	Take Your MPP to Work™ (TYMTW) site visits
June 1, 12:00-1:00p.m.	Regular teleconference call between ENOs and Nursing & Health Policy department – update on TYMTW
September 12, 12:00-1:00p.m.	Regular teleconference call between ENOs and Nursing & Health Policy department – evaluation of TYMTW and update on planning of Queen’s Park on the Road
October-November	QPOR meetings occurring across province
November 23, 12:00-1:00p.m.	Regular teleconference call between ENOs and Nursing & Health Policy department (update on QPOR meetings)