



To be part of the family

Dianne Martin has a renewed sense of hope that CNA's "family of nursing" will someday be more inclusive

In June, I attended CNA's annual meeting. Voting delegates were asked to vote on a series of proposed governance amendments that included proposals related to licensed practical nurses (registered practical nurses in Ontario) and registered psychiatric nurses. If passed, those specific amendments would have allowed LPNs and RPNs to be included in CNA through a new "family of nursing" membership category, afforded them representation on the CNA board of directors and given them voting rights at annual meetings.

Each one of these motions was defeated. You might think that as executive director of the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, and as a member of CNA myself, I was disheartened — and you would be correct.

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However, when all was said and done, something interesting happened. My disappointment gave way to feelings of incredible pride, thanks to the overwhelmingly positive statements made by the majority of those members who spoke during the debate, voicing their support for increased collaboration and teamwork among all nurses.

These RNs, representing many of the provinces and territories, spoke passionately about the need for inclusion and respect. I was delighted to hear them say that collaboration should be viewed not as a threat but as an opportunity for all of us to

strengthen our shared profession.

Then there were the nursing students. One of the most inspiring moments of the day was hearing how committed they are to working on integrated nursing teams, ones that recognize and value the contributions every nurse has to make. It was heartwarming and encouraging to hear them speak out so eloquently.

Throughout CNA's governance review process, association president Barb Mildon and her colleagues have demonstrated exemplary leadership. They have had the courage to declare that it's time to start having a real discussion about our relationships with the people who nurse beside us every day. Indeed, if we're truly committed to providing the best possible care for patients, clients and residents and to being the strongest profession we can be, we need to work together and respect the competencies that each regulated nursing group has to offer.

There was an opportunity at the annual meeting to vote for those ideals, but I refuse to see the defeat of the motions as a failure. In fact, I am more convinced than ever that our profession will thrive, thanks to a shift toward greater inclusion, cooperation and mutual respect.

Over the years, many of the positive changes made in nursing have been the result of incremental steps in a broader movement. I think achieving change in how we perceive the family of nursing will be no different. And to all those who spoke out in support of committing to a few small steps that would have moved us closer to that goal, thank you for reminding me how proud I am to be a member of this wonderful profession. ■

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