

Evolution

Mike Villeneuve, Executive Director
Academy of Canadian Executive Nurses

If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can totally transform a million realities.
– Maya Angelou

In February 2007, I began my first column for this journal on the theme, “Transitions.” As I sit down to write my last one, it seems that February 2008 finds us in a similar place. But thanks to the hard work of the many leaders who nourished the organization since the 1980s, and the work we did to build on that over the past year, ACEN came to its 25th anniversary, in November 2007, in its strongest position ever.

We celebrated “ACEN at 25” with a Policy Think Tank and Business Meeting in Ottawa, hosting the largest turnout ever for an ACEN Annual General Meeting. The policy day helped us think about possible partnerships, and consider issues that could affect ACEN’s new strategic directions (drafted during our planning session of April 2007 – see ACEN’s website at www.acen.ca).

The business session provided the opportunity to thank our outgoing president, Leslie Vincent, for her great leadership, wisdom and hard work on the executive, and to welcome our new president, Noreen Linton, and president-elect, Joy Richards. On all our behalves, Leslie thanked Wendy Hill, outgoing past-president, for her three years of amazing work in the senior leadership of ACEN. The members also collectively thanked Mary Ferguson-Paré, Mary Ellen Gurnham, Diane Larrivee, Patty O’Connor and Carol Ringer for their leadership on the executive team. Congratulations and thanks all around are important in organizations like ACEN, where members give so much of their personal time, hearts and souls to the effort.

In her president's report (posted on the ACEN website along with committee reports and AGM draft minutes), Leslie noted the strengths of ACEN in its 25th year, from the vantages of financial status and membership to the growing areas of collaboration and influence. I am happy to report that the past year continued the trend of rising membership and four years of steadily increasing revenue for the organization.

Throughout the past year, we have continued to position ACEN as a valued partner in initiatives such as the Canadian Health Leadership Network (CHLNet), the Quality Worklife, Quality Healthcare Collaborative (QWQHC) and the national dialogue that has been unfolding around the future of nursing and the healthcare system. Importantly, of course, this means we have striven to put forward the perspectives, values and concerns of nurse executive leaders in these various conversations and projects. Of course, we maintain our membership as an affiliate of the Canadian Nurses Association, and our partnership in planning and hosting the biannual National Nursing Leadership Conference, which attracted some 700 delegates to Ottawa in February 2007.

While we are noting accomplishments, I would be remiss if I did not draw attention to Jim Irving from Johnson & Johnson Medical Products Canada, whose personal interest in Canadian nursing leadership has mobilized the financial help of J&J so many times. We are grateful, Jim. We must also thank the teams at the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, the CNA and the Office of Nursing Policy at Health Canada – all of whom have given their personal time, advice and financial support. Finally, on behalf of all ACEN members, let me thank Dot Pringle, Anton Hart, Dianne Foster-Kent and the entire Longwoods team for their unfailing support of ACEN and their advice to me personally. All of these supports enhance our knowledge, and our revenues, to strengthen the work of ACEN.

ACEN embarks on its journey in 2008 to realize its new strategic directions and to expand membership more broadly across the country. The volume of work will always overwhelm the time and people available to do it, but the work done during the November think tank will help us choose priorities in the immediate and beyond.

As I leave ACEN to return full time to the CNA, I do so with a sense of loss mixed with satisfaction that the organization is strong and moving in a positive direction. On a purely personal level, I want to give my sincerest thanks to Leslie Vincent, Noreen Linton and the executive team for giving me the chance to work with ACEN – and for supporting and encouraging me in that busy role. Thanks as well to Marcia in the Association Strategy Group office for her support in all our operations.

I look forward to offering my continued support to Noreen, the executive team and the new executive director. There is a bright future ahead for ACEN, and more than ever we need the strong leadership of ACEN members helping to shape the future of Canadian nursing and healthcare. May the dream of ACEN's founders and members continue to grow and be fulfilled.

ACEN Appointments

Colleagues, as we announced at the AGM in November 2007, Michael Villeneuve has stepped down as executive director of ACEN and returned to his permanent position at the CNA. This was a difficult decision for Mike, and we at ACEN were sorry to lose his enthusiasm and leadership. Mike has continued to work with ACEN on a limited basis to assist with operations while we considered leadership options. Mike, we would like to thank you for the hard work you have done to promote and support ACEN over the past year. We wish you well and we'll miss you – but we know we can count on your ongoing support!

In the wake of Mike's decision, the ACEN executive decided to take the time to think through the governance and operational needs of the organization. We will continue to update you about our progress on this. Operations still need to go on in the interim and require strong leadership.

It is my privilege to announce that effective March 15, 2008, Heather Mass has agreed to serve as executive director of ACEN on an interim, part-time basis while we develop those longer-term plans. I know that Heather is well known to many of you from her long service to Canadians as a nurse executive, teacher, mentor, researcher and colleague. To honour her remarkable contributions to the people of Canada, Heather received a CNA Centennial Award this year. And in 2007, recognizing her instrumental contributions to the evolution of ACEN as a national force positioned to influence health policy, Heather was conferred honorary lifetime membership. We are delighted that Heather is able to join ACEN at this time of transition and I know you will join me in welcoming her. Heather may be reached at executivedirector@acen.ca after March 15, 2008.

Noreen Linton, president