

## Message from the Office of Nursing Policy

**Sandra MacDonald-Rencz, RN, MEd**  
Executive Director, Office of Nursing Policy  
Health Canada

**One could easily argue** that nurses are the backbone of the healthcare system. We take care of our aging parents when they can no longer live at home, we are in the community vaccinating our kids in school and we make a stay in the hospital more comfortable with our knowledge, care and support 24/7. Governments know how important this critical human resource is to sustain a high-quality Canadian healthcare system. One way that we have been doing this is with investments in the workplace – to improve and strengthen the health of the healthcare work environment. Research has shown that healthy workplaces have positive impacts not only on health professionals, but also on the effectiveness of healthcare organizations and outcomes for patients. Therefore, it is logical to invest in strategies to improve the healthcare workplace.

For this reason, Health Canada provided \$4.7 million to the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) over three years to support the *Research to Action: Applied Workplace Solutions for Nurses* (RTA) initiative, which chose evidence-based strategies to improve the work life of nurses and applied them to the practice environment.

The Office of Nursing Policy (ONP) is responsible for advising Health Canada on the nursing perspective on various policy issues and programs including health human resources, representing that perspective in various venues, contributing to health policy formulation and program development, and working closely with the nursing community in developing advice to the federal minister of health and the department. It is in that latter capacity that the ONP was pleased to be involved as an ex-officio member of the advisory committee for CFNU's multi-year initiative.

The most unique and largely challenging feature of this undertaking was the collaborative approach employed by CFNU. Each sub-project was a joint effort among the unions, employers and governments in each jurisdiction, led by a national partnership with the CFNU, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Healthcare Association and the Dietitians of Canada. I am confident that we will witness the positive impacts from the RTA on the relationships and cooperation among the various stakeholder groups for years to come.

The results of the RTA initiative are equally impressive: improved morale; decreased absenteeism, overtime and turnover; and improved job satisfaction and commitment to the profession. Also notable is the increased capacity of healthcare workplaces and the newly acquired skills and competencies of nurses across the country. All these factors are crucial to the overall objective of improving the retention and recruitment of nurses.

I offer my congratulations to CFNU and its partners on their efforts to optimize the contributions of nurses in improving the health of Canadians.