CNA remarks to the RNAO Assembly Meeting — Special Session
September 28, 2013
Toronto, Ont.

Barb Mildon
President, CNA

Introduction:

• Hello, my name is Barb Mildon and I am the president of CNA. I request that my remarks be included in the minutes or as part of the record of these proceedings.

• I have been an RNAO member since 1985, and it is through my RNAO membership that I have had the privilege to be a member of our national nursing association, the Canadian Nurses Association.

• I recognize that this meeting has been called to discuss ways to market RNAO’s new membership model, but we’re not there yet. At this stage, what we really need is to discuss the decision by RNAO’s board of directors to change a long-established membership model — a decision CNA does not agree with.

• RNAO has given three key reasons for the change being proposed: enabling choice, facilitating sustainability and financial risk for RNAO. There are three CNA officers here today, and each of us will speak to one of those three reasons. I will specifically address the concept of enabling choice.

Key Messages:

• RNAO has said that one of the reasons to eliminate universal membership is to give members a choice. I agree that each of us here today and the thousands of members you represent have indeed made the choice to belong to RNAO. But we made that choice knowing that our membership automatically made us CNA members. After all, RNAO recruitment materials clearly identify CNA membership as a key part of its program of services and supports. It is transparently clear to all that when they choose to be RNAO members they are also choosing to be CNA members. No secrets, no surprises — the choice is fully informed.

• Why is it important that we choose membership in RNAO and CNA? It is because the strength and success of our profession rests on three pillars: association, regulation and socioeconomic (or union). The work of each of these pillars, individually and collectively, keeps our profession strong and dynamic. I have observed that nurses do not have a choice in how they support the other two pillars. We must pay an annual fee to our regulatory body, the College of Nurses of Ontario in order to have the right to call ourselves a registered nurse and work. We must pay union dues, and in fact they are deducted from our pay cheque. Given this longstanding practice, enabling a choice
for membership in our national association will inevitably weaken the professional pillar of our profession.

- My last point is that RNAO’s decision to not give members a choice in Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS) membership results in a double standard — fine for members to choose or not choose CNA membership, but NO choice with CNPS. This is incongruent and inconsistent.

The Ask: I urge RNAO’s leadership to reverse this decision and reinstate universal membership.

Rachel Bard
Chief Executive Officer, CNA

Introduction:

- Hello, my name is Rachel Bard, CEO of CNA. I request that my remarks be included in the minutes or as part of the record of these proceedings.

- I have been an RNAO member since 2010, and it is through my RNAO membership that I have had the privilege to be a member of our national nursing association, the Canadian Nurses Association.

- I recognize that this meeting has been called to discuss ways to market RNAO’s new membership model, but we’re not there yet. At this stage, what we really need is to discuss the decision by RNAO’s board of directors to change a long-established membership model — a decision CNA does not agree with.

RNAO has given three key reasons for the change being proposed: enabling choice, facilitating sustainability and financial risk for RNAO. There are three of us are here from CNA’s executive office, and each of us will speak to one of those three reasons. I will specifically address how this new membership model actually poses a risk to the sustainability of RNAO and to CNA.

Key Messages:

- As member-based associations, it is vital that both RNAO and CNA invite and listen to the voices and views of members. In 2007, RNAO members reviewed the RNAO-CNA relationship and strongly directed that RNAO maintain the membership model and that both RNAO and CNA report to members on their activities and outcomes. This time, RNAO members have not been given a chance to provide input on this decision. Membership-based associations, particularly in this era of focus on the value proposition for membership will ONLY be sustainable if they listen and respond to their members.

- Moreover, RNAO’s sustainability is strengthened by a strong and sustainable CNA. Just look at the Council of the Federation — a federal table to which CNA was invited and was in turn able to showcase the best practice work of RNAO. Together, we are stronger and more sustainable. As well, it is through CNA that RNAO members become members of the International Council of
Nurses. This triad of RNAO, CNA and ICN brings unity and equality to our profession, strengthening and sustaining nursing provincially, nationally and internationally.

- We need RNAO members to support our national professional association. The provincial voice must be strong. It must be representative of our province’s large nursing population. If RNAO members no longer have the benefit of automatic membership in CNA, both associations stand to lose. It will weaken both of our organizations and our ability to advocate on behalf of the nursing profession and health. It destroys the unity and cohesion in our profession.

The Ask:
- I urge RNAO’s leadership to reverse this decision and reinstate universal membership.

Karima Velji
President-Elect, CNA

Introduction:
- Hello, my name is Karima Velji and I am the president-elect of CNA. I request that my remarks be included in the minutes or as part of the record of these proceedings.
- I have been an RNAO member since 1990, and it is through my RNAO membership that I have had the privilege to be a member of our national nursing association, the Canadian Nurses Association.
- I recognize that this meeting has been called to discuss ways to market RNAO’s new membership model, but we’re not there yet. At this stage, what we really need is to discuss the decision by RNAO’s board of directors to change a long-established membership model — a decision CNA does not agree with.
- RNAO has given three key reasons for the change being proposed: enabling choice, facilitating sustainability and financial risk for RNAO. There are three of us are here from CNA’s executive office, and each of us will speak to one of those three reasons. I will specifically address the misinformation that was provided related to CNA’s financial situation.

Key Messages:
- In my role as CNA’s president-elect, I am very much involved in and aware of CNA’s financial situation. Our board of directors is confident of CNA’s financial viability and ongoing sustainability. In fact, over the past five years, CNA has completed yearly operations with surplus income — ranging from $1.4 million to $2 million each year.
- Yes, it is a reality that CNA will no longer be providing the CRNE, and that will mean a loss of revenue. CNA is more than prepared for that: we have a new business plan with a balanced budget.
that will address the loss of CRNE revenue in 2015. This will have no adverse financial impact on RNAO. CNA has gone to great lengths to provide assurance that we will not use membership fee increases to offset the loss of CRNE revenue. There is no basis at all for RNAO to justify its new membership model on CNA’s financial status.

• One last point is important. If this change in membership model takes place, other jurisdictions in our country may also take this step. This would have grave implications for the sustainability of CNA and thus for our profession in Canada.

The Ask:

• I urge RNAO’s leadership to reverse this decision and reinstate universal membership.