

## **Karen McKay-Eden**

### **NOMINEE FOR VICE-PRESIDENT REGION 3**

My name is Karen McKay-Eden, also known as KME, and I am a proud Registered Nurse who has been an active ONA member since 1982.

It has been my honour to serve you, the members of ONA, as your Region 3 VP for the last two years.

My decision to pursue another term as the Region 3 VP has everything to do with the work we are currently doing. We are creating a new ONA, an ONA that acknowledges its short comings and challenges the status quo. An ONA that is transparent and member driven. An ONA whose members hold the board of directors accountable and where all members are respected and valued. If re-elected, that is my commitment to you.

In 2018 I decided to leave the bedside after 36 years and embark on a new journey, a leadership journey. I spent 4 years as the elected Bargaining Unit President of Mount Sinai Hospital and the Local Coordinator of ONA082.

I developed a leadership style that was transparent and approachable. I built a foundation of trust with my members by being consistent in my approach and ensuring my decisions were not arbitrary but grounded in policy. When a member called, I was there. I actively listened, I cared, and I acted. I understood very quickly that everything you do as a leader impacts the members you serve.

The members were growing increasingly disillusioned with the direction and focus of our Provincial body. I was convinced this was a time to unlearn and reimagine an ONA that was transparent, member focused, inclusive, and ready to fight for what our members deserved!

In the fall of 2022, the members of region 3 elected me as a VP for ONA. This presented an opportunity to gain experience as a leader and be part of the change that was necessary in our Union.

I was now a member of the Board of Directors of the largest Nurses Union in the country. I faced a steep learning curve. It was a challenge to shift my focus from the everyday minutia to the bigger picture. The view from 10,000 feet was more complex.

Members deserve and need clear direction. We need to talk about the bright future. I believe in and support the strategic plan ONA has set out. Having a plan builds trust because you have accountabilities. Once you have established trust, and see the adherence to the accountabilities, the discussion can then turn to one of hope.

I am proud of the work this Board of Directors has accomplished. Understanding the priorities laid out in the Strategic Plan guided us in our decision making. We established a transparent process for collective bargaining. The Board supported this decision to ensure all our members would be informed of both our proposals and those of the employer. We empowered our membership to have their voices heard. We ensured every member was included-the entire provincial membership- through a series of townhall meetings. We supported our members to achieve better working conditions. During bargaining we launched a media campaign to ensure Ontarians would hear the truth about the state of LTC. This action instilled confidence and trust in our members.

Being the portfolio holder for Human Rights and Equity has given me more opportunities to gain experience as a leader. Over the last year, ONA has made incredible strides. 2022 saw the launch of the ARAO (Anti Racism Anti Oppression) action plan. This working group included members who have direct, lived experience with intersectional forms of racial discrimination. The insight and expertise of these members was invaluable to the strides we have made in developing and implementing strategies to address all forms of racism faced by our members in the workplace.

At the Biennial convention in 2023 ONA's members voted to enshrine in our Constitution the commitment "to integrate anti-racism, anti-oppression practices and principles into every level of ONA". We did not stop there, ONA's members also voted to have a Land acknowledgement read at the beginning of all meetings of the Union.

ONA created Communities of support that provide a culturally safe environment for members impacted and harmed by intersectional forms or racism, discrimination, and exclusion. We have intentionally integrated ARAO practices into every level of ONA's operations, including the collective bargaining process. In September at our Leadership Summit, we developed a DEI stream. Representation matters and the focus of this stream will give leaders the confidence to integrate ARAO practices at the BU level. I am proud of our achievements. Members say they can "feel" the change in ONA. With member engagement and a commitment from the board of directors, I am confident we will succeed. If I am re-elected, I will continue to champion this work, this is a legacy of the new ONA. Being part of a union that is committed to providing a more diverse, equitable and inclusive space is where I want to be, how about you?

I hope I can count on your support to continue in this role. I will bring my passion, my leadership skills, and all that I have learned to continue to serve and advocate loudly and tirelessly for all the members of region 3.

It is time for healthcare workers in this province to stand together and demand what we deserve...are you ready to fight? Damn right I am!

In solidarity

Karen