

Are You Prepared to Serve Your Association ?

By Vija Hay, RN, CPN(C)

At the April ORNAC Board of Directors meeting, nominated candidates will stand for election to Executive positions. This prompted my thoughts to turn upon the issue of operating room nurses volunteering to become leaders at regional, provincial, and national levels.

In today's climate, volunteer time is becoming more limited, and the supply of volunteers who are willing to, and capable of, spending time on association business is decreasing. People are already overcommitted, and uncertain futures make it difficult to take on yet another commitment. We have been fortunate that so many operating room nurses have been willing to be actively involved. The success of ORNAC can be attributed to their knowledge, ability and commitment.

The pamphlet "Welcome To The Board" (which is given to all new board members) states: "being a board member is an honorable position which has obligations, expectations and responsibilities." What it does not refer to is the requirement of time and work associated with fulfilling this role. Depending on a member's level of involvement, this can be considerable. In the near future, association jobs will become even more difficult and challenging as we create greater awareness about the role of our association and perioperative practice, and the need to look for more partnerships in public debates regarding these issues.

The board of a volunteer association such as ORNAC represents the ownership of the organization, just as a business board represents its stockholders. The board governs on behalf of persons who are not seated at the table. Therefore, the power of the board of an association is not as individuals, but as a group.

To be an effective member in the creation of a productive board, a member should:

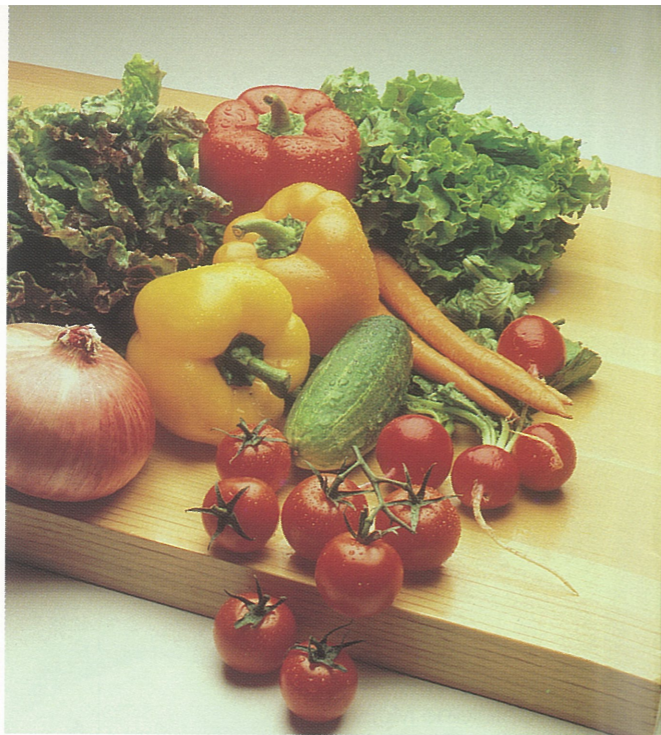
- Share the same vision - work on same priorities;
- Build consensus;
- Strive for accountability in the board's job;

- Participate in the productivity of the group;
- Carry individual responsibilities in the pursuit of quality;
- Cherish diversity and viewpoints;
- Be prepared to participate responsibly and do the homework;
- Be proactive - be an active participant; and
- Support the board's final choice

I know our membership is comprised of O.R. nurses with a wealth of knowledge, ability and commitment to fulfill the role on the board. Don't be intimidated or overwhelmed by the expectations of a board position. Get involved at the regional level of your Operating Room Group, let your name stand for office, and/or volunteer for a committee. This will provide the ground work and experience necessary to move to provincial and possibly national levels. We need creative thinkers who can bring a fresh perspective to the issues facing ORNAC and perioperative nursing, and to ensure that the work continues to enhance the future of perioperative practice and quality care of surgical patients.

Association work is not only fascinating, stimulating, and a great learning experience, but it allows board members to be truly successful strategic leaders. Take the challenge: become a leader in an O.R. nurses association. Our professional future could depend on the effective participation of operating room nurses across the country.

Vija Hay, Consultant, Surgical Services, Ottawa, is President of the Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada.



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