

What's Next for ACEN?

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Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.

– Robert Francis Kennedy

I began my term with ACEN thinking about transitions, and in my first column last winter, asked the question, “What’s next for ACEN?” In response, let me take this opportunity to update you on some of the activities we’ve been leading and supporting since then.

Most importantly, we held our *Strategic Directions* planning session in Toronto in April, during which we focused our full attention on ACEN, its successes, gaps needing to be filled, membership and what the organization should be doing in the future. Some 40 ACEN members – nearly a third of the membership – came to Toronto to take part in the exercise and share their thinking. As a result of that meeting, we have generated new strategic directions that build on ACEN’s history, its *raison d’être*, its strengths and the needs of its members. In their first iteration, the draft overarching directions are:

- *Strategic Direction 1: The Health of Canadians.* Through its strategic coalitions and partnerships, ACEN influences and participates in setting directions for nursing, health policy and healthcare delivery in Canada that improve the health of Canadians.
- *Strategic Direction 2: The Advancement of Nursing.* ACEN leads a community of practice to share, discuss and debate strategies and innovations that advance nursing clinical practice, education, research and management.
- *Strategic Direction 3: Leadership in Healthcare Delivery.* ACEN supports the development of current and emerging executive nurse leaders across Canada.

Of course, we also have generated goals, objectives, tactics and timelines under each strategic direction. ACEN President Leslie Vincent will lead a discussion of all this with members at our upcoming AGM to confirm that we captured the intent of participants in the April 2007 sessions and to ensure that these directions still align with pressures in the external environment and the needs of members.

Behind the scenes, we have been engaged in the *Quality Workplace – Quality Healthcare Collaborative (QWQHC)*, where ACEN is on the steering committee, actively participates in one of the working groups supporting the goals of the collaborative and has provided a small amount of funding to support the initiative. The initial report, *Within Our Grasp: A Healthy Workplace Action Strategy for Success and Sustainability in Canada's Healthcare System*, is available on ACEN's website (www.acen.ca).

At the same time, we continue to support development of the *Canadian Health Leadership Network (CHLNet)*, which is being developed “to identify, develop, support and celebrate leaders in health care in Canada” (www.rcls.ca). Network leaders (including ACEN) identify the focus of CHLNet as “succession planning and leadership development for a broad cross-section of the health community in Canada.” That focus, of course, is well aligned with our own strategic directions and links us with other health leaders facing similar challenges.

We continue to be engaged with the Office of Nursing Policy and other partners in the discussion of the *nursing futures* work. Outside partners and stakeholders expect leadership from ACEN; we need to think through what we are best positioned to lead, the areas in which we should be active participants and the initiatives that we should simply monitor.

And so we have a lot on our plate in 2007. Despite our smaller scale, we are pressed to respond to many of the same external forces as organizations having a thousand times our membership and full teams of operational staff. We have three vibrant, relevant strategic directions to discuss with members and then unfold

into the future – and we also feel the load of the QWQHC, CHLNet and nursing futures projects. None of this exciting work includes the new requests that come in, or operational work such as building a stronger Web presence. Because we can't lead all these initiatives, we face a hard internal dialogue about juggling volume while contributing quality to the projects in which we are involved. Just as all of you are doing in your organizations every day!

All this talk of leadership takes us to the captaincy of ACEN itself. The term of our president, Leslie Vincent, sadly soon will end. I say "sadly" because Leslie has been an enormous and patient support to me as I have tried to find my way and be helpful during my first months with ACEN. I will always be grateful for that. I also have appreciated the wise support of our president-elect, Carol Ringer. Unfortunately, Carol is unable to take on the role of president at this time. We very much appreciate the work that Carol led during her year as president-elect, as well as her committee work, and we hope that ACEN will have the benefit of her leadership as president in the future. On behalf of Leslie Vincent, our executive committee and the full membership, we offer our sincere thanks to Carol.

As we head into Fall 2007, we are planning an exciting AGM and the election of a president, president-elect and one committee chair (Editorial Advisory Committee). Those announcements have been sent to all ACEN members by e-mail, and we hope every member will take part in the election process.

We also hope to see many of you in person at the AGM, which will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Ottawa. We are finalizing the agenda for an exciting *Breakfast with Policy Makers and Think Tank* on Thursday, November 29, followed by our business session on Friday, November 30. The business session will conclude by 13:00 for those who want to return home to our far-flung coasts! Please join us at the AGM. We promise to stimulate and listen to your collective brains... and still leave plenty of private time for visits to Parliament, fine dining, walks in the park and pre-Christmas VISA exercises at Holt Renfrew just up the street!