



## Senior Leadership Report to the Board – October 2023

**Our Shared Purpose: People First**  
**Our Values: Integrity, Quality, Respect, Compassion and Teamwork**

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**Connected care close to home**

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### **New Integrated Stroke Unit opens at NHH**

Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is honouring its commitment to build connected care close to home with the opening of The Rose and Bob Avery Integrated Stroke Unit on Tuesday, September 19.

The new 6-bed Integrated Stroke Unit (or ISU), located within the existing Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit, on the hospital's first floor, will provide best practices in post-stroke patient care and minimize the time between a patient experiencing a stroke and beginning rehabilitation – which has been shown to result in better patient outcomes. With both acute and rehabilitation care offered within the same space, the creation of this unit will reduce the need for transfer between units for care and ensure patients are surrounded by those with expertise specific to their needs.

Support for the new ISU is one of the key projects identified within the Foundation's \$25 million Exceptional Community, Exceptional Care campaign. Additional projects include the replacement of both the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (CT) scanners, redevelopment of the Pharmacy, the building of a fourth operating room, expansion and centralization of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), redevelopment of the Medical Device Reprocessing Department (MDRD), and more.

For further details on the ISU, and the donor support that helped to enable it, please see the [joint NHH/NHH Foundation news release](#).

### **Celebrate NHH's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an open house and behind-the-scenes tour**

In celebration of NHH's upcoming anniversary, staff, physicians, midwives and volunteers are inviting the public to an afternoon and evening of special behind-the-scenes tours, information sharing and fun.

Join hospital staff, physicians, and volunteers from 3PM to 6:30PM on Wednesday, October 18, as they thank the community for their continued support, demonstrate the health care and volunteer

programs available today at NHH, and highlight services and supports expected to grow in the coming years as our community expands.

Hosted by hospital staff and physicians in collaboration with Foundation, Auxiliary and Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) partners, guided tours will depart at 15-minute intervals from the Main Street Bistro on the main floor of the hospital, just inside the front entrance.

The tours—each lasting approximately an hour in length—will take attendees to a variety of service areas throughout the hospital, including:

- Cancer and Supportive Care;
- Dialysis
- Diagnostic Imaging (including opportunities to see first-hand the Magnetic Resonance Imaging, Computed Tomography, Mammography and Fluoroscopy units);
- Laboratory;
- Learning Lab;
- Surgical Suites; and more.

Before and after the tour, visitors will be invited to visit with members of the NHH team in the Bistro while visiting information booths from hospital and area partners and enjoying music, refreshments and photo displays highlighting services past and present. In conjunction with the anniversary celebrations, NHH's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Working Group is also looking forward to releasing the results of NHH's recent brand refresh!

"We are very much looking forward to welcoming the community we serve in to celebrate this special occasion," said Susan Walsh, President and CEO. "When Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) opened on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2003, it did so with the support of an exceptionally generous and involved community. NHH has grown immensely in that time, both the services we offer and the team of staff, physicians, midwives and volunteers required to deliver them. We are hard at work to grow further in the coming years as local needs continue to rise. We would not be able to do any of this without the exceptional support and commitment of this community. Please come out and join us on October 18<sup>th</sup> to see first-hand all that NHH has to offer today and learn more about exciting plans for the future!"

**Tour space is limited, so kindly RSVP by October 16 to [aseymour@nhh.ca](mailto:aseymour@nhh.ca) or at 905-372-6811, ext. 4009**

## **Ontario announces plans to integrate home and community care into Ontario Health Teams**

In a *Connected Care* update issued September 11, 2023, the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Health, confirmed that it is building on the work done that has been done to date to better connect people to home and community through [Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care](#) by moving forward with the transition of home care to Ontario Health Teams.

To further modernize home care and advance Ontario Health Teams, the ministry is:

- creating a single, integrated service organization that will work closely with Ontario Health and support Ontario Health Teams as they deliver home care, through the consolidation of the province's 14 regional Home and Community Care Support Services organizations

- gradually transferring responsibility for providing home care to individual Ontario Health Teams to ensure continuity
- continuing to develop, implement and expand new innovative models of care with home care and health service providers that will support hospital to home transitions and better provide support for patients and their families
- updating the home care procurement and contracting process to improve quality and support new models of care, with a focus on introducing new performance standards, updating standardized contracts and protecting current service volumes
- maintaining system stability and continuity of care for patients and families who need home care, long-term care home placement or referral services

Over time, the Ontario government expects these changes to build a better, more connected model of homecare delivery by improving coordination and access, and strengthening support for those who coordinate and provide frontline care.

Components of this plan require further approvals. New legislation is anticipated in the coming weeks.

In communicating the announcement, the government confirmed that, during the transition of Home and Community Care Support Services, patients and caregivers will continue to have access to the services they need, through the caregivers they have come to know and trust. Also promised was a commitment to work closely with partners across the health sector towards the shared goal of providing high quality, connected, and convenient care for patients.

For additional context, please see the related links provided below:

[Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care](#)

[Ontario Connecting More People to Care at Home](#)

[Health System Integration Update: Filing of Regulations for Improved Home and Community Care Framework while Continuing to Maintain Stability of Services](#)

[Ontario Modernizing Delivery of Home and Community Care](#)

## **Ministry Announcement of Ontario Health Team Acceleration**

In a subsequent announcement shared via webinar and email to Ontario Health Teams across the province on September 27 and September 28, the Ontario government announced further details regarding [The Path Forward](#) for Ontario Health Teams.

Introduced by the government in December 2019, with the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) being among the first 24, the model has spread to over 57 teams across the province.

Previously funded on a short-term basis, starting April 2024, and following OHT advocacy, longer-term year-over-year funding will flow to existing and future OHTs to support sustainable growth going forward and better enable the work that is now transitioning to OHTs to oversee.

An initial twelve OHTs, representative of the province, have been selected by Ontario Health to advance rapidly towards maturity and be considered for designation under the Connecting Care Act, 2019.

In addition to implementing particular improvements to patient outcomes through standardized clinical pathways, the initial twelve OHTs will be expected to share lessons learned to support continuous

learning and readiness for the next phase of implementation for all OHTs. This work will help inform and spread the process, guidance, and templates that other teams, including the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland, will follow. Future cohorts will be identified and supported in future.

Starting in Q3, 2023/24, the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health will release guidance, resources and supports for OHTs on key elements of The Path Forward, including guidance regarding the creation of a not-for-profit corporation (an expectation of all OHTs), establishment or alignment with primary care networks, identification of an operational support provider and governance.

Finally, an OHT maturity framework” and performance evaluation framework is being developed to help OHTs in the journey from current state to mature state. OHTs will have the opportunity to inform the framework through various channels, including two Steering Committees.

Further information regarding the advancement of OHT priorities in Northumberland is expected in the coming weeks via the OHT-N.

## **Province also increasing funding to municipalities to connect people to paramedics and ambulance services faster**

In a [news release issued August 22, 2023](#), the Ontario government confirmed it is taking an important step forward to deliver on [Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care](#) by increasing provincial funding for public health agencies to build a robust public health sector that has the support and resources needed to connect people to faster, more convenient care in their communities.

Starting January 1, 2024, the province will restore \$47 million in provincial annual base funding for public health units, which is the level previously provided under the 75 per cent provincial / 25 per cent municipal cost-share ratio. The province is also providing local public health units an annual one per cent funding increase over the next three years so they can more effectively plan ahead and prepare. This will also allow time for the province to collaborate with municipalities on a longer-term sustainable funding agreement that will not put any additional financial burden on municipalities.

“Building a stronger public health system, with more convenient and consistent access to public health services, is one more way our government is connecting people in Ontario to health care closer to home,” said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “The pandemic showed that we need a stronger public health system and this increased funding will help to create a more connected public health system that will support Ontario communities for years to come.”

The province will also work with its partners to refine and clarify the roles of local public health units, to reduce overlap of services and focus resources on improving people’s access to programs and services close to home. One-time funding, resources and supports will be offered to local public health agencies that voluntarily merge to streamline and reinvest back into expanding programs and services.

NHH applauds the province’s investment in Public Health infrastructure and looks forward locally to continued collaboration with the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit both directly and through the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland beginning, in the coming weeks, with a joint local response to annual respiratory illness, including respiratory syncytial virus, influenza and COVID-19.

To connect people to emergency care faster and increase the availability of paramedics and ambulances in communities, Ontario announced in the same news release that it is increasing land

ambulance funding to municipalities by an average of six per cent, bringing the province's total investment this year to over \$811 million.

In addition, the province is also investing an additional \$51 million into the Dedicated Offload Nurses Program over the next three years which helps reduce delays paramedics encounter dropping off patients at a hospital and allows them to get back out into the community faster. This investment will help 30 municipalities cover around 800,000 dedicated hours to support offloading ambulance patients in the emergency department, ensuring paramedics can get back out in the community faster.

Here at NHH, ambulance offload times have seen steady improvement in recent years, with NHH ranking 3<sup>rd</sup> best overall in the province in the latest (July 2023) ranking of ambulance offload times within 74 hospital emergency departments, up from 19<sup>th</sup> in December 2022 and 53<sup>rd</sup> in December 2021. The presence of a temporary Dedicated Offload Nurse and related improvements in patient flow within the department contributed to this result.

## **East Region Virtual Care Clinic announced by Ontario Health East**

In a communication issued earlier this summer, Ontario Health East announced the launch of [The East Region Virtual Care Clinic](#).

Durham Community Health Centre will serve as the East Region Hub for this Ministry of Health-funded program designed to deliver a regional Nurse Practitioner-led Virtual Care Clinic that works with local health care providers and Ontario Health East to ensure patients can access more timely care. This virtual online clinic is available to all residents of [Ontario's](#) East Region (including west Northumberland).

The East Region Virtual Care Clinic is designed to improve timely access to care, reduce Emergency Department wait times and support patients in receiving care in the comfort of their home, whether it be by video or phone.

### **The clinic will serve:**

- Patients with new or persistent cough, fever, rash, or other similar symptoms
- Patients with imminent concerns but are not life or limb threatening
- Patients with or without a family doctor

### **How the Clinic will work**

Patients can access the East Region Virtual Care clinic **7 days a week** from **1:00 to 9:00 p.m.** by registering at [www.virtualcareontario.ca](http://www.virtualcareontario.ca) or 1-888-684-1999.

## **New Hospitalist and Emergency Physician joins NHH medical team—Welcome to Dr. Bryce Chen**

In an announcement issued in late August, NHH shared good news regarding the recent recruitment of Dr. Bryce Chen who has joined the Hospitalist team in addition to supporting the hospital's Emergency Department (ED) as an Emergency Physician.

"We are very happy to welcome Dr. Chen back to NHH as both a new member of our Hospitalist team and in the Emergency Department," said Susan Walsh, President and CEO. "Dr. Chen completed a portion of his medical training at NHH several years ago. We are thrilled that, after completing his

residency, he chose to return to NHH and share his skillset with the community of west Northumberland County.”

“Hospitalists were introduced to NHH’s medical model of care in 2012 and have become a critical part of our care team. Today, they oversee care for more than 60 per cent of all admitted patients with the balance being cared for by a mix of General Practitioners from the community and Nurse Practitioners. Recruiting Dr. Chen to our growing Hospitalist team, which also includes Drs. Knackstedt, McGarry, Rys, and, most recently, Everdell, further expands this critical team and builds much needed capacity into a pivotal part of our medical team,” said Dr. Mukesh Bhargava, Chief of Staff. “We are also grateful to add Dr. Chen to our Emergency Department physician roster to support the delivery of high-quality care for patients requiring emergency medical care.”

Dr. Chen completed a Doctor of Medicine at the University of Toronto and is a recent graduate of the Queen’s Family Medicine Program at Queen’s University, where he completed his Family Medicine Residency. Prior to his Doctor of Medicine, Dr. Chen received a Bachelor of Science with high distinction from the University of Toronto.

As a Hospitalist, Dr. Chen is responsible for providing care to inpatients throughout their hospital stay, while coordinating supports to ensure a safe and successful transition back home. As a member of NHH’s Emergency Department, he will diagnose and assist patients experiencing medical emergencies in addition to offering referrals to health specialists for further treatment as needed.

For further details, please see [the full release on nhh.ca](#)

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## Accountable care

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### **Northumberland Hills Hospital Gets More Beds & Increased Funding from the Government of Ontario**

On August 25, 2023, Member of Provincial Parliament, David Piccini was joined by the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health, Dawn Gallagher Murphy for a funding announcement outside the main front entrance of NHH. MPP Piccini confirmed at the event that the Ontario Government is investing over \$5.5 million in Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) through multiple streams of funding.

“The Ontario Government is building a stronger public health system, with care that is closer to home and more convenient for Ontarians” said MPP David Piccini. “This is another big increase in base funding for NHH that builds on historic investments we have made in this unbelievable hospital who boast such remarkable staff who do great work. They deserve it.”

The funding includes a net-new base funding increase of \$2.1 million to support 10 permanent new beds for 2023/24; support for expanded on-call service of over \$1.5 million; and an overall hospital increase in funding of \$1.8 million.

Prior to the announcement, MPP Piccini and PA Gallagher Murphy met with representatives from Northumberland Hills Hospital to hear how this funding supports better patient centered care and the hospital’s ability to sustain core services and adjust for growth.

This combined investment provides Northumberland Hills Hospital with support to address rising community needs and ensure people can continue to connect to world-class care, that includes:



emergency department services, trauma, acute and post-acute medical care, obstetrics, surgery, diagnostic imaging, cancer care, and community-based mental health services.

“Ensuring Ontarians have the care they need, when and where they need it, is a core promise of our government,” said Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health. Dawn Gallagher Murphy. “The more than \$5.5 million investment in the healthcare services provided by Northumberland Hills Hospital is a clear demonstration of this commitment.”

“The government’s ongoing commitment to NHH and the community we serve is greatly appreciated,” said NHH President and CEO, Susan Walsh. “Maintaining consistent revenue is critical to the smooth delivery of high-quality services today, and to future planning. Today’s funding announcement builds further on previous good news from the government and will help to strengthen our ability to meet the needs of a growing and aging population here in west Northumberland.”

Of particular note in the August 25, 2023 announcement was the news of \$2,190,000 in net new base funding for the current 2023/24 fiscal year.

Said Susan Walsh: “This is indeed welcome news. Notwithstanding additional pressures related to inflationary and other costs, the government’s commitment to this much needed funding will allow us to better match funded capacity to actual operations and be better prepared for growth.”

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## Responsive and healthy work environment

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### **2023 NHH Experience Survey now underway for all staff, physicians, and midwives**

Following on the Interim Patient Experience surveys introduced at NHH in December, 2022, on Monday, September 11, the 2023 NHH Experience Survey launched for all staff, physicians, and midwives to provide feedback on their experience as a member of the NHH team.

NHH collects feedback from staff, physicians and midwives in a number of ways. For many years the hospital participated in provincial engagement surveys through NRC Health, an independent third-party vendor previously used across Ontario to gather feedback across the hospitals in the province and from patients as well. NRC is no longer providing that service in Ontario for hospital experience surveys, and—together with other hospitals— we are migrating to a new vendor.

In the interim, for 2023, NHH will rely on this interim NHH Experience Survey tool developed by our own Decision Support team and Employee Experience Working Group to monitor progress. With only 11 questions in total, including an opportunity for free-form comment, this short on-line survey is currently awaiting feedback from all staff, physicians and midwives, to gather insight on how we are doing, and where additional work may be needed.

Names are not collected in the NHH Experience Survey. NHH will be tracking the total volume of responses received and the percentage of completion by “clinical” and “non-clinical” respondents. Individual answers will not be tracked, and the feedback provided will be shared only in combination with the answers of others in a final report which will be shared later this year.

## **September Town Hall meeting attracts record crowd**

Town Hall meetings (regular touch points for staff, physicians and midwives to learn about and discuss hospital priorities, upcoming events and regional developments) continued at NHH in virtual form through the pandemic. An important component of President and CEO Susan Walsh's annual communication and engagement commitments, the September Town Hall returned to its original in-person format, with a hybrid option for those who preferred to dial in remotely.

The combined approach proved popular and a record crowd participated in the event hosted on Wednesday, September 27.

With introductions to new hires and updates delivered from team members across the hospital on topics such as a reminder to all to complete the Experience Survey if not already completed, information on upcoming upgrades to NHH's shared clinical information system, infection prevention and control news, an update from the finance team, 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary planning, and more, the forum proved again the power of in-person gatherings and the energy that comes of many people aligned around common interests.

Held on a roughly monthly cadence, Town Halls are an important part of the internal communication channels at NHH and are complemented by regular updates shared via email and intranet posts, team huddles, walk-about by senior leadership team members and the monthly e-newsletter, The Hills Hub, the primary source for NHH news for staff, physicians, midwives and volunteers.

## **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee Activities – September 2023**

NHH's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (EDIAC) recognized the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation through month-long initiatives aimed at helping increase awareness, learning, and education about the harmful legacy of residential schools and their continued impact on Indigenous Peoples.

In addition to flying an Every Child Matters flag for the entire month, NHH staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers also wore orange shirts every Friday in September to help raise awareness and continue important conversations about truth and reconciliation.

On September 14, EDIAC had planned to host a hybrid in-person and virtual lunch and learn session, "What does it mean to be an Ally?" with guest speaker Professor Dean Smith, onsite in the Peter B. & Mary T. Smith Community Education Centre on the second floor of NHH (2F28).

Dean has worked in education for over thirty years and been involved in a wide range of multicultural events and initiatives with an emphasis on collaboration, anti-racism and trauma-informed training, and youth empowerment. He currently offers Indigenous Consultancy at Cornerstone Family Violence Prevention Centre and is a professor with Durham College.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Professor Smith had to cancel the initial session date, but has recently connected with EDIAC to reschedule. The anticipated timeline for this event is within the next two weeks with communication to follow once a date and time have been confirmed.

The aim of this session is to build an understanding of the context within which care is provided to Indigenous Peoples, while highlighting the tensions and barriers to Indigenous healthcare that we are



seeing today. In doing so, our hope is to examine the work that we are doing and how we, as healthcare workers and administrators, can do our part to truly support truth reconciliation.

On Saturday, September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, members of our NHH team were also in attendance at an annual Truth and Reconciliation Day ceremony in Alderville First Nation.

## **NHH's Caring for the Carers Committee (C4C) hosts second annual Staff and Family Appreciation BBQ**

On Thursday, August 24, NHH's Caring for the Carers Committee (C4C) hosted their second annual staff and family appreciation BBQ as thanks to the incredible individuals who work (and volunteer) tirelessly to keep our hospital safe and operational for all.

NHH team members and their loved ones enjoyed an outdoor evening of music, games, a variety of food from local vendors, and fun for all ages. Other summer activities supported by the C4C included June Pride Month celebrations and a Strawberry Social in July.

The Caring for the Carers Committee is already hard at work coordinating upcoming fall and winter activities, which will include several Kindness Carts filled with treats for all staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers, Halloween activities, and more. C4C also looks forward to the resumption of monthly meetings, rejuvenating the Hills Hub series, 'Check Up from the Neck Up,' a review and update to the Committee's Terms of Reference and identifying actions for the remainder of the year.

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**Exceptional care, every time, for every person**

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## **Report of the Minister's Patient and Family Advisory Council**

The Minister of Health's Patient and Family Advisory Council released its latest (2022-23) annual report this past summer (July 2023).

The report highlights the valuable role patients, families and caregivers will have as Ontario works toward more connected and accessible care throughout the province. The theme of this year's report is culture change within the health care system, and impact of patient, family and caregiver partnership and engagement.

See the full report linked here, including details on the Council members and Chair, Betty-Lou Kristy: [\*\*Embracing Change, Shifting Mindsets, Changing Culture: The Collective Impact of Patient, Family & Caregiver Partnership & Engagement.\*\*](#)

## **Beryl Institute membership established**

As a key step on the journey toward the development of NHH's first Experience Framework, NHH has established an organizational membership with [The Beryl Institute](#), a respected global community of practice committed to elevating the human experience in health care.

Like NHH, Beryl believes the path to experience excellence will grow best from a holistic approach, where the experiences of all—patients and families as well as members of the health care team and communities they serve—are considered.

In addition to a wealth of resources, from webinars to publications and active issue- and program-specific communities of practice, the Beryl Institute offers organizational members an assessment tool to monitor where we are on our journey against key benchmarks and—in our case—inform the priorities we need to focus on first as we build, together, our first NHH Experience framework.

Onboarding of NHH staff and leaders was kicked off this summer with more than 75 staff and leaders now having access to Beryl resources to support their individual patient and caregiver engagement work.

The next step is to invite a targeted sample of 100 staff, physicians, midwives and PFAC volunteers to complete the first Experience Assessment of our current state later this fall. Results will be combined with input gleaned from NHH PFAC partners directly to inform the Framework and related work plan for NHH Experience priorities later this fiscal year as we work to build on our strengths and address opportunities for improvement.

## **Auxiliary volunteer numbers on the rise, co-op students from local high schools returning**

As reported by NHH's Interim Manager, Volunteers at the recent Annual Meeting of the Board of the NHH Auxiliary, the recruitment campaign launched on July 24 to support the NHH Auxiliary has resulted in 32 applications to date, with 22 of those already matched with priority areas and the remaining in process pending paperwork. The campaign, which is ongoing, has been supported by the parallel launch by NHH Public Affairs of a new dedicated social media (Facebook) presence for the NHH Auxiliary.

A refreshed orientation session was held for new and existing Auxiliary volunteers on September 21 with over 30 members in attendance. Directed at the needs of Auxiliary volunteers it was also attended by several Patient and Family Advisory Council volunteers who are considering leveraging future sessions as a complement to their own growing orientation needs. Moving forward, the sessions will be held every two months on alternating days and times to accommodate volunteer schedules and will remain open to all new volunteers as well as long-standing members to ensure consistent information on key topics including safety, privacy, infection prevention and control and more.

The NHH Auxiliary's new recruits and, in some cases, former volunteers returning to the role, are being matched with almost every area of the NHH Auxiliary's active service areas, including the Inquiry Desk at the main hospital entrance, the Emergency Department, Palliative Care, Cancer and Supportive Care, the Little Treasure Shop, Women's Health, Day Surgery, Integrated Stroke Unit, Restorative/Rehab Hydration and retail (Little Treasure Shop and Petticoat Lane).

A new need has been raised regarding additional volunteers to support NHH's busy Hospital Elder Life Program. Several students volunteered actively with the program during the summer months however those spots require new volunteers now that the students have left to return to school.

Co-op students from local high schools are returning to NHH once again, a wonderful opportunity for the students and NHH alike. Five co-op students from local secondary schools have been matched to opportunities within NHH until January 2024.

Looking for a great way to get involved in your community? Volunteers play a critical role in supporting a positive experience for both patients and caregivers alike. Find details on [the related news release here](#) or reach out to a member of our team.