



## Senior Leadership Report to the Board – April 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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#### **Diagnostic Imaging now offering electronic referrals to providers through Ocean eReferral Network**

The Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) Diagnostic Imaging Department is now live on the Ocean eReferral Network.

Ocean eReferral digitizes the traditionally paper-based fax referral process between healthcare providers and NHH's Diagnostic Imaging department, enabling smoother transitions in care and improved provider and patient experience.

Providers currently using Ocean are now able to locate the listing by searching for "NHH – Northumberland Hills Diagnostic Imaging," or by viewing the Ocean Healthmap listing.

Providers who are not currently utilizing Ocean to send referrals are encouraged to consider taking advantage of this Ministry of Health-funded initiative which has been implemented at other Central East hospitals with positive results. Supporting information on how to participate has been shared by NHH with area providers by direct email and through the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland partner agencies.

The Ocean eReferral Network is free for both senders and receivers. For providers it simplifies and streamlines the referral management process as it provides a more effective means to submit, process and track diagnostic imaging referrals over the traditionally paper-based fax referral process. Referrals received through this mechanism will be consistently clearer and comprehensive and will provide an improved ability to communicate more effectively and efficiently with the referring providers. Direct patient communication/scheduling via email is another functionality offered by Ocean and we look forward to adding this functionality for NHH in the coming months.

#### **Next virtual Northumberland PACE talk, coming up April 26: "Get your ducks in a row before you die!"**

The latest talk in the Northumberland PACE speakers' series will take place on Wednesday, April 26. Guest speakers Scott MacCoubrey and Beth Selby will speak to advice we will all be wise to heed: ***Get your ducks in a row before you die!***

A collaboration between community health-care providers and local residents interested in learning more and promoting health and wellness, PACE (which stands for Personalized Assessment and Change Education) has been offering free public education sessions on a broad range of crowd-sourced topics since 2018. Lasting an hour in length, each PACE event consists of a 30-minute talk or panel discussion, a 20-minute question-and-answer period with the guest speaker(s) and a 10-minute moderator summary.

The event, which is hosted on Zoom, is free but pre-registration is required. Find the registration link at [pacetalks.com](https://pacetalks.com). Questions? Please reach out to the organizing partners care of Jennifer Gillard, Senior Director, Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships at 905-377-7757.

## **New opportunity to become an Experience Partner with the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland**

Have you or someone you support received care from Northumberland County health and/or community care services in the past three years? Do you have an interest in working together with service provider partners to improve the delivery of health and community care in Northumberland County? If you answered yes to both of those questions, the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) may have an interesting new volunteer opportunity for you!

Launched in 2021, the OHT-N Experience Partner Council (EPC) is working to ensure patients, families and caregivers have a clear and equal voice in advancing local OHT-N priorities for health and community care services. As community volunteers, Experience Partners are active within all OHT-N governance, planning and project team structures.

"As a patient, there is nothing more important to me than receiving high quality health services in my own community," said Lisa van der Vinne, who serves as both an Experience Partner with the OHT-N Experience Partner Council, and an NHH Patient and Family Advisory Council Partner. "To have the opportunity to help plan and improve these services so that others in my community can benefit too, is exciting."

### ***A variety of opportunities available to suit different interests, experiences and availability***

With its first open call for interest, the OHT-N hopes to expand from a small core Experience Partner Council drawn from OHT-N members to a larger team offering different ways to join the conversation.

In addition to the original Experience Partner Council, which will grow in number, a new Experience Partner Project Pool, better suited to those interested in bringing their lived experience to particular projects, will also be formed. Finally, a virtual *Engage OHT-N* experience partner community is planned, to enable smaller, faster issue-by-issue engagement on specific questions or issues before the OHT-N. The size of the OHT-N's Experience Partner team will fluctuate and be dependent on local interest and OHT-N and Experience Partner priorities.

### ***Anticipated time commitment***

Like the opportunities for participation, time commitment will vary. The Experience Partner Council currently meets virtually as a group for monthly meetings, lasting two hours each. In addition to the monthly meetings, most of which are held in the day time, members of the Experience Partner Council also participate—as their experience and interest directs—on OHT-N committees and/or projects. The monthly time commitment and method of engagement for the Experience Partner Project Pool and the *Engage OHT-N* experience partner community will vary. Activities will be matched with committee/project needs and member input.

## **How to express interest**

Patients, families and caregivers of Northumberland County with an interest in volunteering as Experience Partners are invited to review the Terms of Reference and supporting recruitment documents and complete the Expression of Interest Form available on the OHT-N website at: <https://www.ohtnorthumberland.ca/en/ohtn/oht-n-experience-partner-council.aspx>. Questions? Please reach out to NHH's Jennifer Gillard, Senior Director, Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships at [jgillard@nhh.ca](mailto:jgillard@nhh.ca) or contact the OHT-N care of Executive Director Marley Budreau at [info@ohtnorthumberland.ca](mailto:info@ohtnorthumberland.ca) or phone 905-396-6486.

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## **Accountable care**

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### **Federal and provincial budget highlights**

On Tuesday, March 28, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland delivered the [2023 Federal Budget](#).

As announced earlier in the year, the federal government has committed to spending \$198.3 billion over 10 years to strengthen the public health care system. The budget laid out the federal government's plan to provide an additional \$195.8 billion over 10 years in health transfers to provinces and territories, including \$46.2 billion in new funding through new Canada Health Transfer measures. The Ontario Hospital Association welcomed these investments to strengthen Ontario's health care system.

Later the same week, on Friday, March 24, 2023, the Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance, tabled the 2023 [Ontario Budget](#), ***Building a Strong Ontario***. Highlights of the latest provincial budget include:

- An expected increase of 4 per cent for hospitals (details on how that will be allocated among hospitals will be further understood in the coming weeks and months).
- Investments to strengthen health human resources, including \$80 million over three years to further expand nursing education, \$200 million for the Enhanced Extern Program and Supervised Practice Experience Partnership Program, \$100.8 million over three years to expand and accelerate the rollout of medical training seats, and \$22 million to hire up to 200 hospital preceptors to provide mentorship, supervision and training to newly graduated nurses.
- Accelerating home care funding in 2023-24 to \$569 million, including nearly \$300 million to support contract rate increases.
- A commitment to allocate additional funding and to work with frontline paediatric health partners to identify more ways to connect children and youth to the care they need

Anthony Dale, President and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association, issued the following media statement on behalf of Ontario hospitals shortly after the Ontario Budget's release.

*"On behalf of Ontario's hospitals, the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) welcomes the investments announced today for hospitals and the wider health care system in the 2023 Ontario Budget. These*

*investments will play an important role in continued stabilization of hospitals as the province migrates out of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*Over the past three years, hospitals and other health care providers have done everything they can to maintain access to care in the face of COVID-19 – a challenge that is without parallel in Ontario’s history. Ontario’s hospitals have played a key role in the provincial pandemic response, providing lifesaving care to patients under extraordinary circumstances, while also supporting system partners, assessment centres, the vaccination effort, and much more. Hospitals are grateful to have had a strong financial partner in the Ontario government throughout this period and appreciate the continued investments in the health of Ontarians.*

*Hospitals continue to experience serious pressures caused by the combination of high demand for care, health human resources shortages, and insufficient capacity in other parts of the system. The hospital sector welcomes investments made to strengthen health human resources and immediate health care staffing shortages through the Enhanced Extern Program, Supervised Practice Experience Partnership, Preceptorship Program, and investments in nursing education enrolment, physician assistant training seats, and medical training seats.*

*Investments made across the continuum of care, particularly in home care, will play a key role in alleviating capacity pressure on the hospital sector in a timely manner and in ensuring patients and their families or caregivers have access to care right at home.*

*Finally, longstanding capacity challenges in paediatric care have worsened over the pandemic, and the OHA welcomes the Budget’s commitment to working with frontline paediatric health partners to identify more ways to connect children and youth to the care they need”.*

NHH looks forward to continuing to work closely with the Ontario Hospital Association, the Government of Ontario, Ministry of Health, and Ontario Health to collectively maintain stability, preserve access to all hospital services, and ensure that patients and families will have continued access to the highest quality of care, close to home.

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## Responsive and healthy work environment

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### **2023 People Plan**

An enabler to the achievement of NHH’s strategic priorities and shared purpose of People First, NHH’s 2023 People Plan has been finalized and is now being rolled out internally, most recently at our March Virtual Forum for staff, physicians and midwives.

Developed with input from our employee experience surveys, physician/midwife surveys and a 2022 ‘sticky note’ forum, the new People Plan pillars are four-fold: Performance & Talent Management, Service Excellence, Wellbeing and Culture. Activities related to each, including the work of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, highlighted below, are now being implemented across the hospital. Further updates will be shared in future reports as this work moves forward.

## **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee Updates**

NHH's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee has continued this month to spotlight a range of significant dates for the purpose of awareness and education. In March, information was shared on internal and external channels regarding International Women's Day and Week (March 1-8), Ramadan (beginning March 22), and International Trans Day of Visibility (March 31).

In connection with World Autism Day (April 2), the NHH EDIAC is preparing to facilitate an April lunch and learn session for staff, physicians and midwives regarding autism. Representatives from the Geneva Centre for Autism will share information regarding myths and misconceptions, spectrum, acceptance, and evidence-based data to further our knowledge and understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Enhancing knowledge regarding the diversity of the communities we serve, our own team and the patients and families who receive care at NHH is something we are firmly committed to as we work, one step at a time, to build mutual understanding and respect for all.

## **Nursing Week celebrations planned for May 8<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup>**

NHH's Nursing Week Planning Committee is busy preparing a week of fun activities, lunch and learn opportunities and social events for May 8 through 14 around the 2023 theme: **Our Nurses. Our Future**. Celebrated annually on the week surrounding Florence Nightingale's birthday, National Nursing Week is a time to recognize the year-round dedication and achievements of Registered Nurses (RNs), Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) and Nurse Practitioners (NPs), and to increase awareness of their contributions to the well-being of Canadians. NHH benefits from the contributions of all of the above, as well as nursing leaders throughout our management team. The pandemic served to further highlight the courage and commitment that nurses bring to work every day and demonstrated, without question, the critical role that nurses play throughout our communities.

## **2023 Health Professions Scholarship Winners to be announced June 2023**

Applications are closed on Friday, March 31 for NHH's 2023 Health Professions Scholarships. Introduced in 2003, the purpose of the scholarship program is to provide financial assistance to students from west Northumberland who are pursuing a career in the health care sector. Applicants are evaluated on the basis of their academic achievements, extra-curricular activities, a testimonial explaining their interest in a health-care field and written references.

The 2023 scholarships (\$1,500 for each student selected) will be presented at the June meeting of the Board of Directors. Winners will be advised in May. NHH thanks all the applicants and the individuals and schools who supported them in their applications. Northumberland has a wealth of talent and this was again very apparent in the caliber of the many impressive applications received.

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## Exceptional care, every time, for every person

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### **Cough, Cold and COVID Assessment Centre winds down after more than three years**

With the volume of COVID-19 cases and respiratory-focused illnesses decreasing in the community, the Cough, Cold and COVID-19 Assessment Centre at Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) wound down its services on Friday, March 31, 2023.

The symbolism of the closure was not lost on the large team of NHH staff, physicians and Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) partners who came together just over three years ago to open the service. The final day of operation marked a turning point in the local response to COVID-19 and an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the collaborative spirit between NHH and its community partners to sustain and adapt the service for over three years.

As shared in a [March 23 media release](#), the Centre opened its doors to the public on March 14, 2020, less than 24-hours after the first positive case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Northumberland County and three days after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

Initially, the Centre offered COVID-19 assessment and testing only and was housed within the hospital proper, inside a cordoned off area within NHH's Ambulatory Care Clinic, before moving to a trailer located outside of the hospital's Emergency Department as regular services within the Ambulatory Care Clinic resumed.

With support from Northumberland Paramedics and the Municipality of Port Hope a satellite location was temporarily added at the Port Hope Community Hub in the village of Canton, before [winding down in June 2021](#). When COVID-19 treatment options became available this service was added as well, first through an initial partnership between NHH and the COVID-19 team at Lakeridge Health before the Centre assumed the ability to administer treatment independently with support from the NHH Pharmacy and area primary care physicians.

In December 2022, the Centre, by then consolidated to only one location at NHH, rebranded to the Cough, Cold, and COVID Assessment Centre. On the urging of area care providers and the NHH Emergency Department the Centre expanded services once again to provide testing, assessment, and treatment options for both COVID-19 and respiratory-focused illnesses, preserving capacity for local Emergency Departments and primary care providers alike.

To date, through the course of the pandemic, the Centre has logged more than 55,000 visits, including individual visits to the Centres at NHH, the satellite site in Canton and the outreach testing deployed by the team in collaboration with OHT-N partners and the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit to area retirement and other congregate settings.

"The COVID-19 pandemic had an immense impact on the health care landscape. Our teams were called on to reimagine how we could deliver safe, efficient care while sustaining and protecting our existing resources for the community's most vulnerable populations," said NHH President and CEO Susan Walsh in the March 23<sup>rd</sup> media release.

"The Cough, Cold and COVID Assessment Centre is a very powerful example of the strength and value of community partnerships and teamwork. During a time of uncertainty, we were able to join together and create a one-stop shop to support individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and respiratory-focused illnesses who were in need of fast, effective care. There were many hands involved in this work. Please join us in thanking every member of the Assessment Centre team, including the critical teams such as the Pharmacy, Laboratory, Health Records, IT and Environmental

Services staff who supported the Centre's operations, the area primary care partners who devoted countless hours and all of the many partners involved who stepped up during very difficult circumstances to serve their community for over three years through the many challenges presented by this pandemic."

### **Options for future care**

COVID numbers have dropped but the virus remains in circulation. Steps to minimize risk, including vaccination and masking when appropriate, continue to be recommended.

Members of the general public with mild symptoms of COVID-19 generally do not require PCR testing to confirm the diagnosis. Rapid antigen test (RAT) kits are available for personal use at no cost through select [grocery stores and pharmacies](#).

Beyond March 31, individuals seeking testing, assessment, and treatment options for COVID-19 or respiratory-focused illnesses will have several options, including their primary care provider and [participating pharmacies](#) in Northumberland County and surrounding areas.

Individuals must meet [Ontario COVID-10 PCR testing eligibility requirements](#) to access testing at local pharmacies. Travel testing is not included. It is recommended to call the pharmacy ahead of time to arrange the test as service times may vary.

Pharmacists can now prescribe anti-viral treatment, Paxlovid, to eligible individuals in person or by phone at no cost. Eligible individuals should contact their local pharmacy to confirm if they prescribe Paxlovid, and how to get a prescription. Treatment must begin within 5 days of symptom onset. A positive RAT is sufficient to access Paxlovid, a positive PCR test is no longer required.

For additional information regarding COVID-19, including PCR and Rapid Antigen testing guidelines, vaccine clinics and eligibility, please visit the Haliburton, Kawartha Pine Ridge District Health Unit [website](#).

### **Dr. Emma Smith welcomed as NHH's first Integrated Quality & Safety Physician Lead**

In a March 20, 2023 memo to staff, physicians and midwives, President and CEO Susan Walsh and Chief of Staff Dr. Mukesh Bhargava welcomed Dr. Emma Smith as NHH's inaugural Integrated Quality and Safety physician lead.

In this role, Dr Smith will support the Quality, Risk and Patient Safety team, led by Lola Obomighie, NHH's Vice President People, Culture and Organizational Effectiveness, in matters pertaining to quality-of-care reviews. Together with Lola Obomighie, Dr. Smith will also co-chair the hospital's newly formed Integrated Quality, Practice, and Risk Committee (IQPRC).

Dr. Smith brings a wealth of medical and community experience to the new role. She achieved her Bachelor of Science at the University of Ottawa and Doctor of Medicine at McMaster University. She has been part of the NHH family for several years now in various capacities. She was instrumental in the establishment of the COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign in 2021 and awarded the NHH Outstanding Leadership Award for her tremendous efforts. Dr. Smith is also an attending physician, inpatient care, and low-risk obstetrics at NHH. In addition to being an active member of the General Medical Staff Association (GMSA) and member of NHH Medical Advisory Committee, she is also a family physician at the Cobourg Medical Centre and current Board member of the Northumberland Family Health Team.

A key priority pillar of NHH's new Strategic Plan is to continuously improve experiences, efficiency and outcomes including quality and safety. The Integrated Quality, Practice and Risk Committee (IQPRC) will guide these improvements and ensure the continued high quality care patients and families expect at NHH.

NHH is delighted to have Dr. Smith's expertise supporting the Quality, Risk and Patient Safety team.