NHH
Northumberland
Hills Hospital

Senior Leadership Report to the Board

Our Shared Purpose: People First

Our Values: Integrity, Quality, Respect, Compassion and Teamwork

February 2026

Connected care close to home

Unprecedented Surge Tests Hospital Capacity and Flow

On January 6, 2026 NHH announced the conclusion of a COVID-19 outbreak that had impacted patients and staff on the hospital's first floor 1B (Restorative Care and Palliative Care) units. The COVID-19 outbreak was confirmed by Lakelands Public Health on December 17, 2025.

While limited to the first floor units, the outbreak challenged the hospital team—already operating at above capacity in both inpatient units and Emergency Department—to maintain necessary patient flow.

Due to the hospital's sustained surge activity and the need for immediate strategies to support increased patient volumes, the Senior Leadership Team approved a temporary overtime incentive program, effective Friday, January 16 through Sunday, February 8, 2026. Modelled on similar strategies, the temporary incentive was applicable to all unionized staff as well as non-union, non-leadership roles throughout the organization. Gratitude goes out to all who took on additional shifts to support our community's needs.

Despite the presence (since October, 2025) of a specially-funded ambulance offload nurse embedded within the NHH Emergency Department, patient flow for admitted patients from the NHH ED on to inpatient units was particularly challenged in December and January, due to high occupancy (125-130%) and lack of physical space. NHH thanks all partners for their understanding and, particularly, patients and families for their patience as we work to meet the needs of our community.

NHH Launches Newborn Perinatal, Reproductive Care Clinic

NHH announced the launch of a new Newborn, Perinatal, and Reproductive Care Clinic (NPR) on January 19. The Clinic provides in-hospital, non-urgent ambulatory services to support women's wellness and newborn health in the antenatal and postpartum phases of care for patients across Northumberland County.

Located on the 2nd floor, adjacent to the Maternal/Child Inpatient Unit, the clinic offers a coordinated approach to antenatal, postpartum, and newborn care

Key features of the clinic include two exam rooms and a dedicated waiting area on 2A. Important to note: the clinic accepts booked appointments only (no walk-ins). The hours of operation are currently Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 7:30 AM – 3:30 PM.

The clinic is accepting obstetrical patients attached to a delivering care provider at NHH, newborns (birth to 6 weeks), including newborns recently discharged from NHH, postpartum follow-up for wound assessment and hypertension. Also supported at the clinic are expectant patients requiring RhoGAM, Non-Stress Test (NST), bloodwork, or blood pressure monitoring as well as those who require early pregnancy complication follow-up. Education and navigation to community and specialty resources is also provided. Special thanks to the Maternal/Childcare team for their work to introduce this importance service, and Dr. Erin Pepper, NHH's Medical Chief, Maternal/Childcare, for her leadership. Dr. Pepper and Kate Zimmerman, NHH's VP, Integrated Care and Chief Nursing Executive, had the opportunity to highlight the new service on Consider This, a dual Northumberland 89.7 FM and web-based blog hosted by Rob Washburn. Their full interview is expected online in the coming days here: Consider This - Politics, Life and Journalism in Northumberland County

ROMP Week at NHH

Northumberland Hills Hospital once again collaborated with the Rural Ontario Medical Program (ROMP) for their January 2026 ROMP Week. The ROMP Week program is an elective opportunity that gives first-year medical students a chance to meet and shadow local family physicians, while spending time working in multiple hospital departments over the course of one week.

This valuable hands-on clinical experience is also meant to highlight the medical and geographical benefits of practicing medicine in rural communities.

For ROMP's January 2026 event, NHH was very pleased to welcome four first-year medical students-Ravni Bomra, Morgan McKeown, Sierra Stokes-Heck and Karina Wilk-who are all currently enrolled in the Queen's-Lakeridge Health MD Family Medicine Program.

The students began their ROMP Week experience on January 72 at Northumberland Hills Hospital with a welcome reception organized by Dr. Fraser Cameron, local family physician and the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland's Primary Care Network Physician Lead. In addition to support from NHH staff and Dr. Cameron, as their ROMP Medical Education Lead, the students were then paired with local family physicians-Dr. Kathy Barnard-Thompson, Dr. Marcus Cunningham, Dr. Mohamed Lebbe and Dr. Michelle Long-who acted as the students' preceptors for the week.

Thanks to Dr. Cameron, NHH medical and administrative staff and our 2026 preceptors, for taking time from their own busy work weeks to educate and inspire the next generation of family physicians.

Echocardiography Services Enhanced at NHH

NHH transitioned from outsourced echocardiography (Echo) service to a fully hospital-managed program. This phased approach ensured a smooth and seamless transition for patients, staff and referring providers.

This change allows NHH to:

- Offer Echo services five days a week (excluding statutory holidays), improving access and reducing wait times.
- Enhance continuity of care by having our hospital team provide and manage all echocardiograms.
- Give patients timely access to their test results through MyChart.
- Improve operational efficiency to ensure sustainable, high-quality care for the future.

NHH is grateful to a generous donor whose support, coordinated through the NHH Foundation, made possible the purchase of necessary equipment to support timely echocardiography for outpatients.

By bringing Echo services in-house, NHH is building the foundation to expand cardiac diagnostic care in the years ahead, continuing our commitment to putting patients first and improving access to essential services close to home

Accountable Care

Master Planning update

Work on NHH's next Master Plan continues with progress moving very well.

Internally, the second round of user group meetings have concluded. These meetings reviewed input received from our current program and support service teams and offered an opportunity for refinement of themes raised by internal interest holders across all clinical and support teams. Thank you to all who participated in these important group meetings, while also juggling our ongoing surge pressures and construction activities.
Externally our community engagement efforts are also showing results.

As of January 16 our survey had received 133 responses with more coming in daily. Generative discussions with a wide variety of volunteer and community groups have been held, including the NHH Board (Nov. l3), the NHH Auxiliary General Meeting (Nov. 26), PFAC (Dec. 12), the NHH Foundation Board (Dec. 17) and area youth, via local high school civics classes (Jan. 14) have been very informative. Most recently, NHH and area physicians and primary care providers had an opportunity to provide input through an early morning generative discussion and senior leadership teams at both PRHC and Lakeridge health have been engaged directly and shared valuable input as well.

The third **Growing Care for the Future** public forum in NHH's Master Planning engagement was held via Zoom on January 28. In total, over 150 individuals have engaged in group generative discussions to date with the following coming up in February and March, including:

- A presentation and generative discussion with representatives from Ontario Power Generation and the Municipality of Port Hope at NHH's next public Board meeting (Feb. 12)
- A meeting with representatives from Alderville First Nation
- A meeting with representatives of the New Canadians Centre
- A municipal and Northumberland County council generative discussion (Feb. 9)

For more on NHH’s Master Planning project, including a link to the survey, please see our website: https://nhh.ca/AboutNHH/master-planning

Accreditation 2026 – Safety in the Spotlight!

Accreditation Canada's next visit to NHH is fast approaching and the organization is preparing to put Safety in the Spotlight! This coming March, NHH will again welcome Accreditation Canada surveyors to celebrate excellent work in patient care and services and to identify opportunities where we may be able to improve.

While voluntary, Accreditation Canada surveyors are regularly welcomed to the hospital to evaluate the extent to which NHH is meeting Accreditation Canada standards, share expertise and make recommendations. Examples of key quality and safety topics include hand hygiene, client identification, falls prevention, infection prevention, and client flow. In preparation, teams have been participating in weekly huddles, mock tracers, and Required Organizational Practice (ROP) spotlights using a newly created ROP Handbook.

NHH has received their survey schedule, which convenes on March 23rd and will conclude on March 26th. A pre-survey call is also scheduled for this month. During our on-site survey, surveyors will be touring the organization, including NHH's community mental health service, to speak with teams, department leaders, physicians, patients and families. Please join us in extending a warm welcome! We look forward to meeting our surveyors and advancing our culture of continuous quality improvement through this respected program.

Emergency Preparedness

On January 28, NHH, in collaboration with the Town of Cobourg Fire Prevention Officer, conducted a Code Red (fire simulation} exercise on Unit lA (In-patient Rehabilitation). The mock simulation included testing of the second-stage alarm system, which is not typically activated during regular fire drills.

With volunteers and staff acting as patients, the care team performed exceptionally well-evacuating patients safely and well within required timelines.

One of the key learnings from the simulation was the importance of smoke containment, particularly regarding the "E" in the REACT acronym:

R -Remove persons in immediate danger
E - Ensure doors are closed to confine fire and smoke
A-Activate the fire alarm/pull station
C-Call switchboard
T -Try to extinguish the fire if safe to do so

NHH welcomes a new security provider, Paladin Security

On Monday, February 2, NHH transitioned its contracted security services from the previous vendor, Allied Security, to a new provider, Paladin Security.

The changing of the guard comes with a new look. Paladin guards are wearing blue uniforms instead of the previous black-on-black attire.

Responsive and healthy work environment

2026 PACE Speakers Series launch

The **Northumberland PACE Speakers Series** kicks off its 2026 season with

Mood, Metabolism, Immunity: Meet the Microbes Behind It All with guest speaker Dr. Barbara Weiss, Naturopathic Doctor, and facilitated by Dr. Mukesh Bhargava, Internal Medicine Specialist on behalf of the PACE partners.

The virtual conversation will take place on Zoom on **Thursday, February 26, 2026, starting at 5:30 PM**. The session is free and open to the public. Register at pacetalks.com.

During this PACE talk Dr. Weiss ND will bring her practical, evidence-informed approach to patient care and education to explore how the trillions of microbes that are living in, and on, our bodies play a powerful role in digestion, immunity, mood, and long-term health.

Dr. Weiss is a Naturopathic Doctor, speaker, and health educator with twenty years of clinical experience. Her clinical focus includes gastrointestinal health, hormonal health, and healthy aging. She also serves as Chair of the Community Health Centers of Northumberland and is a member of the Governance Advisory Council for the Ontario Health Team - Northumberland.

The PACE Speaker Series is presented by partners Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH), the NHH Foundation, internal medicine specialists IMCare, the Northumberland Family Health Team, The Community Health Centers of Northumberland, Community Care Northumberland, the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N), as well as local patients and caregivers.

NHH team preparing for Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser

NHH will once again support Canada's Coldest Night of the Year fundraising event in support of Green Wood Coalition. This event will take place locally on Saturday, February 28, 2026. NHH has a goal of raising $1,500 this year and already we are 57% of the way to meeting that goal!

This family-friendly walk brings people together to support Canadians experiencing hunger, homelessness, and hardship. 2026 will mark NHH's 10th year of supporting this walk, the local work of Green Wood Coalition and awareness of neighbours in our community in need. To donate or join the team please click this link: PLEASE SPONSOR Northumberland Hills Hospital.

Caring for the Carers (C4C Committee)

NHH's Caring for the Carers Committee had a very active December but still found the energy to support the surge with several kindness carts and offerings of coffee, tea and baked goods. Family Day offerings are next on their list and feedback continues to be strong for these small but important acts of kindness.

In addition, the NHH Foundation is supporting the annual Family Day movie on February 16 at the Rainbow Cinemas in Cobourg and a free candy bar for staff on February 12. Special thanks to the Foundation for the continued commitment to these popular events for staff and their families.

EDIAC Committee plans events for Black History Month

NHH's EDIAC Committee has planned several events and activities to celebrate Black History Month, starting with the raising of the Black History Month flag through February and a hybrid fireside chat on **Tuesday, February 17, from 12:30-1:30 PM** featuring Dr. Mojola Omole, General Surgeon at Scarborough Health Network and Tanya Sinclair Deputy Chief People Officer, North America for Save the Children.

Moderated by Ackeisha Hamilton, NHH's Manager of Quality, Patient Safety and Risk, the fireside chat will explore the Federal Minister of Heritage and Culture's

official theme that marks the 30th anniversary of Black History Month in Canada *Black Brilliance Across Generations to Tomorrow's Visionaries*.

Staff, physicians, midwives and volunteers are invited to join the talk and luncheon themed lunch in the Peter B. and Mary T. Smith Community Education Centre on the 2nd floor.

Exceptional care, every time, for every person

Global Workforce Survey Offers Insight into Staff/Physician Experience

NHH's pre-Accreditation Global Workforce Survey and second (annual) Volunteer Experience Survey are complete.

Presentations of these two important survey results are making their way throughout the hospital and to volunteer partner tables in the coming weeks.

A combined total of 465 staff, physicians and midwives completed the anonymous Global Workforce Survey for a 53% completion rate, exceeding our required participation rate.

The 2025 Global Workforce Survey questions included, but were not limited to, people's sentiment towards their work team, wellbeing and engagement, leadership, and patient safety.

Some highlights include:

- 86.3 % of respondents felt positive about their work team. (Defined as having open and honest communication with colleagues, feeling supported and treated respectfully and fairly).

- 82.9 % of respondents felt positive about NHH's commitment to people-centred care. (Defined as treating patients with respect and dignity; using input and feedback from patients, their families, and caregivers to improve the quality of care/services NHH provides, and making sure that patients, their families, and caregivers actively participate in making care decisions).

Staffing, workload and scheduling as well as leadership communication and resources, equipment and technology ranked among the top opportunities identified for improvement.

Volunteer experience was gathered via NHH's second annual Volunteer Experience Survey and, as shared below, participation remained high.

Volunteer Experience Survey highlights

The second annual Volunteer Experience survey opened at NHH on November 28, 2025, and closed on January 11, 2026, and achieved a 54% completion rate. As in year one, it was conducted anonymously and included thirteen questions in total, including demographic questions and an opportunity for free-form comments. Surveys were distributed electronically, with an opportunity for volunteers to complete surveys at NHH and volunteer retail operations using iPads.

All volunteers at NHH were invited to participate including: NHH Auxiliary, NHH Board of Directors and Community Committee representatives, NHH Foundation Board volunteers, Patient and Family Advisory Council, Spiritual Care, St. John's Therapy Dog volunteers, Transplant Ambassador volunteers, and NHH's Integrated Stroke Peer Support visitors.

- 70% of respondents strongly agree/agree that they are involved in decisions that impact their volunteer efforts at NHH.
- 93% strongly agree/agree that NHH provides them with the training, resources and environment to enable them to be successful volunteers and 99% of respondents said they would recommend NHH as a place to volunteer.
- 96% of respondents strongly agree/agree that they feel valued for their volunteer contributions at NHH.

Full results will be released to all volunteer teams in the coming weeks with action plans developed to address opportunities.

NHH's Essential Care Partner pilot project with Ontario Health Team of Northumberland Earns Invitation to Present at Toronto Event

NHH has been invited to participate in the Caregivers as Partners Knowledge Mobilization Day 2026 on February 26.

A unique full-day, by-invitation event, hosted by the Ontario Caregiver

Organization in collaboration with Trillium Health Partners' Institute for Better Health, will share the growing momentum for integrating caregivers as essential care partners and advance the adoption of practices that support caregivers in healthcare settings across Ontario.

As shared in previous Reports, NHH—in collaboration with the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland—is piloting an Essential Caregiver Program in its first-floor inpatient units. The aim is to ultimately spread the program beyond the first floor to other units in the hospital and out into the Northumberland community.

Representing NHH will be Jennifer Gillard, VP, Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, and Courtney Shields, Director, Health Information, Patient Experience and Privacy with Northumberland caregiver representative Howard Goodfellow and OHT-N Project Manager Lindsay Henderson.

NHH's unique pilot was featured earlier this month in the OCO's Partners in Care Winter Bulletin. In recent months it has been featured by local and provincial media outlets, including CBC's Ontario Morning. See links below.

- **CBC Ontario Morning**: https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-112-ontario-morning/clip/16182356-giving-caregivers-extra-attention
- **93.3 myFM**: Northumberland Hills Hospital launches county's first essential care partner pilot program
- **KawarthaNow**: New pilot program at Northumberland Hills Hospital recognizes essential role of caregivers in patient care