



NHH

Northumberland
Hills Hospital

Senior Leadership Report to the Board

Our Shared Purpose: People First

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

June 2025

Connected care close to home

Fourth Edition of OHA Guide to Good Governance Now Available

The Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) continues to recognize that the proven leadership of locally governed, skills-based hospital boards is critical to building a better, more connected and high-performing health care system.

As part of this commitment, the OHA empowers, informs, and educates hospital board members on their role in driving system change through relevant tools, resources and learning opportunities.

Widely considered the definitive guide on governance, the OHA recently released the **Guide to Good Governance, Fourth Edition**. A touch-stone resource for hospitals, it is now available online and provides critical insights and updates to support hospital boards in navigating the complex demands of effective governance within the changing needs of Ontario's health care system. The Guide is available free of charge on the OHA website [here](#).

NHH joins OHT-N and Community Health Centres of Northumberland at Women's Health Event

Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) is excited to participate in an upcoming Women's Health Event, being held on Saturday, June 14 from 9:00 AM-2:00 PM at the Community Health Centres of Northumberland (CHCN).

Hosted by the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) in collaboration with CHCN, this event will feature health talks, educational information and support, and cervical cancer screening.

Jennifer Fudge, Senior Mammography Technologist and Breast Health Clinical Navigator with NHH's Diagnostic Imaging Department will be on-site at the event to share more information about recent changes to the province's mammography eligibility, including how to book an appointment.

[Click here](#) to visit the OHT-N's website for a related news release and more information.

NHH and OHT-N recognize National Caregiver Day with the launch of Essential Care Partner pilot project

In recognition of National Caregiver Day—observed annually on the first Tuesday in April—NHH and the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) are pleased to announce the recent launch of the Essential Care Partner (ECP) Program Pilot Project.

A joint initiative between NHH, the OHT-N—which is providing project management and coordination—and the Ontario Caregiver Organization, the Essential Care Partner (ECP) Program Pilot Project will focus on the unique needs of caregivers supporting patients in the hospital's Post Acute Specialty Services (PASS) unit (including Palliative Care and Integrated Stroke).

In time, pending evaluation of the PASS pilot, the vision is that the ECP Program will be rolled out hospital wide and to other health care and social service organizations within Northumberland County to enhance supports for caregivers throughout the region.

By formally recognizing the vital role of caregivers in patient well-being, this project aims to use new resources developed by the Ontario Caregiver Association (OCO) to improve patient outcomes, reduce caregiver burnout, and optimize hospital resources.

The new ECP Working Group includes members of the OHT-N and NHH teams, with representation from a broad mix of clinical and support services including: nursing, allied health, social work, Most Responsible Provider (in this instance, Nurse Practitioners), Ontario Health atHome, clinical information, leadership, volunteers and—most important—people with lived experience through patient and caregiver partners from both NHH's Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC) and their counterparts within the OHT-N.

Working group members will meet monthly moving forward, with an estimated rollout of the first phase of the project in late summer/early fall.

"A key priority identified in NHH's strategic plan is "exceptional patient care, for every person, every time," said Susan Walsh, NHH President and CEO and co-chair of the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (with Taryn Rennicks, Executive Director, Community Health Centre of Northumberland). "The ECP project is another enabler toward NHH's Shared Purpose of **People First** and our work to provide the best human experience for all."

"We are grateful for this important collaborative opportunity because it shines a light on the critical role that caregivers bring to a patient's care journey," said Andrea Groff, OHT-N Executive Lead. "Most importantly, it connects caregivers to a network of resources, ensuring they are receiving the support needed to perform caretaking duties. We look forward to sharing updates as this important work progresses."

"Statistics from the Ontario Caregiver Organization show that 4 million caregivers across Ontario provide an estimated 75% of care in the system," said Suzanne Lawson, Chair, OHT-N Experience Partner Council. "Their contributions to care cannot be understated and therefore it is critical that we continue to raise visibility about the importance of their role, not only in the lives of a patient, but across the broader healthcare system."

To learn more about the Ontario Caregiver Organization and its many resources, which include a 24/7 Helpline, webinars, e-learning and group and peer supports, visit OntarioCaregiver.ca

For more about the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland visit OHTNorthumberland.ca

For more about Northumberland Hills Hospital, visit NHH.ca

Cobourg Police Service and Northumberland Hills Hospital Expand Mental Health Support

The Cobourg Police Service (CPS) and NHH are pleased to announce the enhancement of the Mental Health Engagement and Response Team (M-HEART) services. Thanks to generous funding from the Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) Enhancement Grant, a second M-HEART has been deployed for afternoon and evening coverage.

Since its inception in 2017, the M-HEART partnership has provided urgent mobile support to individuals and families in Northumberland County who are experiencing a mental health crisis. The expansion of this service will address growing community needs and ensure that mental health support is available outside of regular hours. A second M-HEART team is deployed during afternoons and evenings to offer vital assistance during the times when it is most needed.

“As health care providers, it’s critical for us to continue finding innovative ways to make care accessible for everyone, not only in our community, but surrounding catchment areas,” said NHH President and CEO Susan Walsh. “The expansion of M-HEART services will help us break down barriers to care and deliver support to those in need during a crisis situation.”

“M-HEART has already been a critical service in Cobourg and surrounding communities,” added Kate Zimmerman, Vice President, Integrated Care and Chief Nursing Executive. “By expanding this service, we are making mental health care more accessible and ensuring residents receive the support they need in their time of crisis.”

The M-HEART team improves police interactions by fostering an integrated and proactive approach to mental health crises. This approach focuses on engagement, risk reduction, and connecting individuals with services right when they need it. The team is comprised of one officer from CPS and one mental health clinician from NHH Community Mental Health Services. Together, they engage directly with individuals experiencing mental health issues or substance use concerns. This mobile outreach provides immediate intervention, helping to avoid escalation or involvement with the justice system. In addition, M-HEART works closely with partner organizations to provide comprehensive assessment, intervention, and referrals. This collaboration reduces the strain on emergency services and helps individuals navigate available resources.

By deploying a second team in the afternoon and evening hours, M-HEART will be able to offer continuous support throughout the day and into the evening, ensuring that help is available when it's most needed.

"M-HEART is a unique and essential service that strengthens the mental health support network in Northumberland," said Chief Paul VandeGraaf, Cobourg Police Service. "This expansion is a direct response to the increasing demand for mental health services, and it ensures that no one in our community falls through the cracks."

The M-HEART program exemplifies the collaborative spirit that has been instrumental in improving mental health support in Northumberland County. This expansion will help better address community wellness and safety priorities, offering immediate support to individuals in crisis and mitigating barriers, such as transportation and system navigation.

This partnership reaffirms the commitment of CPS and NHH to enhancing the mental health and safety of residents, helping reduce crisis situations, and improving overall community well-being.

Accountable Care

Northumberland Hills Hospital's Acceptance into the WSIB Excellence Program

In May 2025, NHH was accepted into the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) Excellence Program. This program supports organizations in enhancing workplace safety through structured, evidence-based improvements in health and safety practices.

The program spans one year, during which participating organizations are required to select and implement a new health and safety topic annually. For its first year in the program, NHH has chosen to focus on *Psychological Health and Safety*.

An action plan is being developed and implemented to assess current psychological safety levels and identify potential risks within the organization. This initiative reflects NHH's ongoing commitment to fostering a safe, supportive, and healthy work environment all.

Hugs Infant Tracking and Protection System updated

A system update to NHH's Hugs Infant Tracking and Protection System has been successfully completed. An important part of the hospital's overall patient safety program, the Hugs system offers advanced protection for infants and pediatric patients from a single department to the entire hospital.

Over the course of several days, staff from NHH's Maintenance, IT, and Maternal Child Care Departments, together with the Hugs Patient Project Team, worked collaboratively with a third-party vendor to ensure that the new Hugs environment had been successfully activated. Clinical training and additional educational materials were also made available to hospital staff to support the safe and efficient implementation of the new Hugs system.

NHH President and CEO Susan Walsh receives Fellowship designation from the Canadian College of Health Leaders (FCCHL)

NHH President and CEO Susan Walsh was recently awarded a Fellowship Designation from the Canadian College of Health Leaders (CCHL), the highest professional designation awarded by the College.

Fellowship designations—which requires a career impact paper, a 360-review process, a knowledge translation seminar, among other pre-requisites and requirements—are bestowed upon individuals described as ‘experienced leaders who have gained a wide breadth of knowledge and experience at various leadership levels in the Canadian health system over their career.’

Thought leadership on Hospital-acquired Pressure Injuries

NHH's Kate Zimmerman, VP, Integrated Care and Chief Nursing Executive, has co-written and published an article on hospital-acquire pressure injuries (HAPI). A collaboration with nine nursing thought leaders, it was published in the April 2025 edition (Volume 21, Number 3, April 2025) of the *Journal of Patient Safety*, a prominent peer-reviewed publication produced by Wolters Kluwer Health.

“Decreasing Hospital-acquired Pressure Injuries During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A 5-step Quality Improvement Approach” details the “quality aim”—a multi-disciplinary quality improvement HAPI prevention program—that was developed by the co-authors in 2020 with knowledge gleaned during the pandemic. NHH has been a direct beneficiary of this academic collaboration and research. Under Kate's leadership a Quality Aim improvement approach has also been established for patient falls and HAPI at NHH. Informed by evidence-based practices and supported by a multi-disciplinary team, inclusive of the patient/caregiver perspective, NHH's Falls Quality Aim is already seeing positive results for NHH patients and care teams with detail to follow in future Reports.

Northumberland Hills Hospital patient experience surveys shifting to new platform, beginning with the hospital's Emergency Department

NHH has begun its transition to a new provincial patient experience measurement program using an online survey platform, Qualtrics.

The new survey platform replaces NHH's Interim Patient and Caregiver Experience Measurement survey, the temporary experience measurement tool unique to NHH and introduced in December 2022.

The Qualtrics surveys are short, electronic and specific to the area in which patients last received care. To enhance survey participation, the new Qualtrics survey is available to patients in two ways:

- through a QR code provided directly on patients' After Visit Summary and
- via email, with reminders, to patients who have consented to receiving email from NHH for this purpose

On the recommendation of NHH's Experience Measurement Working Group—an interdisciplinary working group made up of staff and leadership from Patient Experience, Performance and Analytics, Health Records, PFAC and clinical programs—the new surveys will be rolled out in phases, by program area, starting with the Emergency Department, which was launched in earlier April.

This transition is in step with NHH's own [Experience Framework](#) and its eight strategic lenses—one of which is "Policy and Measurement"—and it is also aligned with provincial direction regarding experience measurement and related requirements with regard to funding, specifically, new Ministry of Health Pay for Results (P4R) program requirements.

"NHH's shared purpose of *People First* drives the hospital's commitment to provide the best human experience," said Jennifer Gillard, Vice President, Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships. "In combination with experience measures for staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers, the new patient experience measurement program is a positive step forward in enabling a culture of trust, belonging and compassion where everyone feels valued, heard and supported."

Feedback will continue to be received through all our other channels (see the [Compliments and Concerns](#) section of NHH's website for details).

Relocation of the Finance Payment Desk for Patients – June 2nd

To enhance accessibility and ease of service, and improve the experience of patients, caregivers, and visitors, the finance payment desk will be relocating from the 2nd floor of the hospital to the hospital's Main Entrance Registration Area at Desk 4, effective Monday, June 2nd.

Patients, caregivers, and visitors will now be able to complete payments for hospital bills and purchase weekly or monthly parking passes at the first-floor payment station.

The finance payment desk will be available Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 3:30 pm. To reach the payment staff by phone call 905-372-6811, ext. 3025.

Responsive and healthy work environment

NHH celebrates National Nursing Week 2025!

From May 12-18, NHH celebrated National Nursing Week 2025.

Keeping with tradition, we hosted our annual NHH's Nursing Awards Ceremony, which has become a highlight of NHH's celebration of National Nursing Week.

A peer-nominated recognition, the Nursing Practice Awards celebrated nurses who embody NHH's core values: integrity, quality, respect, collaboration, and compassion in their practice.

We also highlighted Professional Development Achievements, which recognized nurses who have completed advanced education above and beyond the requirements of their role over the last year.

Please join us in congratulating this year's recipients:

Nursing Practice Awards, Frances MacDonald, Acute Care, Sara Aubin, Ambulatory Care, Shawna Peddar, BSO, Tracy Bagshaw, Cancer Care, Jenna Wilson, Dialysis, Amanda McKissock, Emergency Department, Natalie Campbell, Intensive Care Unit, Bailey Bevan, Medical Float, Jessica Bell, Post-Acute Specialty Services, Carrie Bowman, Surgical Services, Stephanie Devitt, Maternal Child, Denise Pyke, Mental Health, and Carolyn Wilson, Professional Practice.

Professional Development Achievements

LEAP Facilitator Certification – Colleen MacDonald
Master of Nursing – Dawn Rosnak

NHH also hosted a variety of interactive activities, including a lunch and learn and unit 'team theme' competition. This year's winners were Maternal Child Care, for their theme, 'Tired Moms.' Staff, physicians, midwives, and volunteers were also gifted many delicious treats throughout the week thanks to the generosity of local community businesses.

A special thank you to our Nursing Week Planning Committee who helped make this year's celebrations another success.

NHH hosts Volunteer Appreciation Event

In celebration of National Volunteer Week—held annually during the last week of April—Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) hosted an appreciation luncheon for all hospital volunteers.

Held at the Best Western in Cobourg on May 1, the event welcomed over 170 guests and saw a diverse representation of volunteers from NHH's Board of Directors, the NHH Foundation, Spiritual Care, Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC), and NHH Auxiliary.

The festivities commenced with the reading of NHH's territorial land acknowledgement by Graeme Bakker, Interim Manager, Volunteers.

Jennifer Gillard, Vice President of Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships—who served as the event's master of ceremonies—then opened the festivities by sharing highlights from the hospital's inaugural volunteer experience survey, conducted at the end of 2024.

"While NHH has long surveyed staff, physicians, midwives, and of course patients on the quality of their experience, we had never, until this past year, surveyed volunteers to see why they choose to bring their time and talents to NHH," explained Gillard.

Key findings from the volunteer survey, which was recently [highlighted by the Ontario Hospital Association](#), showed that **94 per cent** of NHH volunteers 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they felt valued for their contributions at NHH. Additionally, **98 per cent** 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they would recommend NHH as a place to volunteer, a sentiment reflected in volunteer teams' positive recruitment efforts over the past year.

Highlights of each volunteer team's unique contributions to the hospital were shared, beginning with the largest volunteer group: the NHH Auxiliary.

Gillard shared that combined—inclusive of their two retail operations—NHH Auxiliary volunteers contributed, in the last calendar year, over **30,000** hours of volunteer service.

"Auxiliary volunteers are everywhere," said Gillard, emphasizing how much their presence contributes to a positive experience for patients and caregivers as well as the hospital team. "They manage Petticoat Lane—a thrift shop run by the Auxiliary on Munroe Street in Cobourg—and the Little Treasure Shop, the Auxiliary's retail operation within the hospital—where all proceeds over \$200,000 a year—also go to support NHH patient services. They greet people with a smile and help them find their way when they walk in the front door – or as they enter Cancer and Supportive Care or Women's Health. They support triage and communication to patients and

families within our extremely busy Emergency Department. They support the Post-Acute Care Program's Hospital Elder Life Program. They operate an extremely important hydration program delivering fresh cold water to every inpatient room."

Also recognized were the tremendous contributions and support from the Northumberland Hills Hospital Foundation, which currently has more than 75 active volunteers supporting its critical work.

In September, the NHH Foundation celebrated the successful conclusion of the largest fundraising campaign in Northumberland County's history. Through the *Exceptional Community, Exceptional Care* campaign, led by Campaign Chair Hank Vandermeer and a dedicated volunteer Cabinet, an incredible **\$26.3** million was raised.

Another dedicated group of volunteers recognized at the celebration was NHH's volunteer Board of Directors. The Board, and its community committee volunteers, dedicate hundreds of hours of service to the governance of the organization each year, monitoring strategic priorities, quality and fiscal health.

NHH's Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) also received a special shoutout for their contributions to many operational tables and working groups throughout NHH. PFAC plays a critical role in bringing the lived experience of patients and their caregivers into the hospital's service planning and process improvement. In the last 12 months, they contributed over **800 hours** of volunteer service.

Many other generous individuals support NHH beyond the larger groups of the Foundation, PFAC, Auxiliary and Board volunteers and all were recognized at yesterday's event, including student volunteers, volunteers with NHH's growing network of spiritual care volunteers and the dedicated volunteers with the local St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog program who visit NHH weekly with their pets.

Following lunch, Cheryl Athersych from the Ontario Age-Friendly Communities Outreach Program and the Centre for Studies in Aging & Health at Providence Care, in Kingston, delivered a powerful speech about 'The Power of Volunteerism.'

Drawing on recent research, Cheryl highlighted the positive impacts of being a volunteer, including the many personal and community-wide benefits, such as:

- Increased social capital that builds trust and networks in communities
- Enabling intergenerational bonds
- Delayed progression of memory issues, such as early onset Alzheimer Disease, and
- Reduction of stress, depression, and anxiety for those who volunteer

Cheryl congratulated the community and NHH for its strong culture of active volunteerism, stating, while many communities are seeing a decline in volunteers, "your community is a great outlier in this regard. Your volunteer engagement at NHH is actually increasing over the last few years and those additional volunteers are

having profound impacts on the community. It's a testament to all of you in the room, and to your goal of being a **People First** environment for not only clients, but staff, physicians and volunteers. I tip my hat to those who really focused on fostering an environment where that could happen."

"It is our hope that the experience of volunteering enriches your lives as much as it enriches the experience of care at NHH," said Gillard in concluding the event. "Your community is grateful for you. NHH is grateful for you. On behalf of every member of our team, thank you for all you do!"

Exceptional care, every time, for every person

Do you know someone who wants to make a difference in hospital care? Point them to our growing Patient and Family Advisory Council

Have you or your loved ones received care from Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH) in the past three years? Do you have an interest in bringing your lived experience of care to future hospital decision-making? If so, the Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) has volunteer opportunities you may want to consider!

Established at NHH in 2016, this Council is now in its ninth year. Through PFAC, patient and caregiver partners are actively engaged in all core patient care areas of the hospital, working as partners with NHH staff, managers, physicians, midwives and community partners on a wide variety of local and regional hospital activities, special projects and program-focused quality and practice committees with one aim: to make the hospital experience as good as it can be.

"We have an extremely committed PFAC team here at NHH, and like the hospital itself—our PFAC is growing," said Jennifer Gillard, Vice President, Patient Experience, Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships. "A number of PFAC partners are active in three, four, even more working groups. With over 800 volunteer hours contributed by PFAC in 2024 alone, they would like to expand their capacity. At the same time, we're also keen to continue increasing the diversity of voices bringing lived experience to our discussions and service planning."

Interest in NHH's PFAC is invited at any time, for any program area, though PFAC currently aims to increase representation in the following priority opportunities:

- Cancer and Supportive Care
- Surgical Services/Ambulatory Care
- Communication and Community Engagement

Time commitment

PFAC partners meet as a group for bi-monthly meetings, lasting two hours, six times per year. They also participate—based on their experience, interest, and schedules—on the specific committee and/or project to which they are assigned, requiring additional background reading and meetings ranging between 6-10 times a year. Meeting times vary according to area of service. Most are held in the daytime or early evening and are currently occurring in a mix of in-person and virtual settings. In-person attendance is encouraged where possible.

How to express interest?

Residents of west Northumberland with an interest in volunteering on NHH's PFAC are invited to review the Terms of Reference and Role Description and complete the Expression of Interest Form. All documents will be found on the [Patient and Family Advisory Council page](#) under the Patients tab of the hospital website at nhh.ca.

These documents are available in alternate formats on request. Successful candidates will be expected to complete the necessary confidentiality, vaccination, and police checks prior to commencing volunteer activities.

Questions? Contact Jennifer Gillard at jgillard@nhh.ca or 905-377-7757 or reach out to NHH's PFAC Chair, Bonnie McKee, at bkmckee@tds.net. Join us and share your voice!

NHH adds mandatory EDI training for credentialed professionals

Following an endorsement from NHH's Equity, Diversity and Advisory Inclusion Committee (EDIAC), three new EDI e-training modules were recently added to the hospital's catalog of mandatory training courses for all staff remaining voluntary for our volunteers and credentialed professionals.

The new modules—Introduction to Gender Diversity, Introduction to Anti-Black Racism and Introduction to Indigenous Awareness—are endorsed by Ontario Health and align with the hospital's ongoing EDI efforts.

Trending demographic information from the hospital's interim patient and caregiver experience survey showed that the recipients of care at NHH are becoming more diverse. Similarly, the "face" of NHH is changing – in addition to non-visible diversity, more observably different looks can be seen, as also confirmed in 2023's demographic information collated during the Engagement Survey completed by physicians, staff and midwives.

The introduction of these mandatory training modules marks an important step in NHH's EDI journey of awareness and knowledge gaining and, by extension, the strengthening of the hospital's People First care environment where all feel welcome.