

CEO's Blog

March 23, 2021



Thunder Bay Regional
Health Sciences
Centre

Dear Staff, Professional Staff, Learners, Volunteers, Researchers, and Board members

Greetings, Boozhoo and Bonjour,

The theme of this month's blog is change. I have heard from many who are embracing the changes at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC), and from some who have questions. I thank each one of you for your feedback. All perspectives are understandable and valuable. So, let me dig into it a bit deeper.

As you know, change is notoriously difficult in health care, especially with the regional demographic and geographic challenges we face. It's like having to rebuild a plane while it's flying at 30,000 feet. The fact is, in health care there is no good time to effect change. But let me be clear: change is necessary.

When I took on the role of President & CEO four months ago, it was apparent the organization needed to recognize the opportunities and challenges required to best position itself for life after COVID-19. The ground beneath our feet is shifting fast. Even before the pandemic, the health care system was facing challenges. We had high levels of occupancy with an aging population, pre-existing health challenges, and serving a region larger than multiple European countries combined. In addition, we identified a need to improve our engagement and levels of service with Indigenous communities.

As an academic health sciences centre, we were managing fairly well – but even pre-pandemic, we had room to improve, as identified by Accreditation Canada during our last review.

- Accredited with Exemplary Standing $\geq 95\%$ on-site survey
- Accredited with Commendation 85-94%
- Not Accredited $\leq 84\%$

The pandemic brought with it a need to engage with all partners across our health care community and in our region. We made changes to our Incident Management Team (IMT) to include a broader range of medical specialists. This team approach reinforces that a health sciences centre is measured by a sum of its parts, and that

we work together in the spirit of engagement during these challenging times. I am truly impressed by the team and the dyad structure that brings us back to the commitment of the organization to work in collaborative partnership as we advance clinical care. There are also changes happening with the Senior Leadership Team that will lead to incredible opportunities for the organization.

Early in my time as President & CEO, the Senior Leadership Team came together to start our strategic planning process – a critical part of making progress for the betterment of patients, staff, and the communities we serve. We don't know when the pandemic will end, and we cannot put off moving forward. Our strategic planning process is proceeding, and you'll be seeing and hearing a lot more about it in the coming months. You will all have the opportunity to provide valuable input during the strategic planning process, and I hope that you will watch for information in the coming weeks and months and choose to get involved.

I want to end by addressing a question I received a few times the past week – and that is, “why now – why make change during a pandemic?” It's a fair question and the simple answer is that it is time to move forward. We have spent the past year focused and 100% committed to our stable, safe, and methodical COVID-19 response. I believe that we can continue with these efforts while planning for the future of TBRHSC and the Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute (TBRHRI). While change can be difficult, health care is a field with a proven track record when it comes to change, whether it is demographic change, technological change, change brought on by research advancements, or political and policy changes – we are in the change business! Now is no different. Please know, as we advance changes across the organization, we will never sacrifice patient care nor patient/staff safety in the process. That is our reason for being. However, we cannot put progress on hold any longer.

I want to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has provided feedback up to this point and let you know that, as always, I am available should you want to reach out. You can reach me at: crockerelr@tbh.net.



Dr. Rhonda Crocker Ellacott

President & Chief Executive Officer,
Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre
Chief Executive Officer,
Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute