

# CEO's Blog

August 25, 2021



Thunder Bay Regional  
Health Sciences  
Centre

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

Greetings, Boozhoo and Bonjour,

I wanted to touch base quickly and keep you up to speed on what's been happening at the Hospital over the summer and what is happening in the coming weeks.

## **Staffing**

I would like to begin by recognizing all the hard work being done to address the shortage of health care workers. As I have engaged in walkabouts at various times with the kindness cart and otherwise, I have heard the concerns regarding staffing, scheduling, and vacancy management. Please understand this is a sector-wide problem globally and not unique to TBRHSC as noted in this recent Globe article:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canadian-nurses-are-leaving-in-droves-worn-down-by-16-merciless-months/>

Let me be blunt in saying there is no simple fix or solution. We are however, working to make improvements that are responsive to your feedback and we recognize the need to support a more comprehensive staff HR strategy – an area of focus identified in our updated strategic plan. To say this is a major area of critical need and focus for us would be a massive understatement.

## **Vaccinations**

As I am sure you are aware of by now, the province is moving forward with Directive 6:

[https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/directives/vaccination\\_policy\\_in\\_health\\_settings.pdf](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/directives/vaccination_policy_in_health_settings.pdf)

Simply put, the directive says we must have strict vaccination and testing policies in place by Sept. 7 for all employees, staff, contractors, students, and volunteers. The directive doesn't make vaccination compulsory, but anyone who declines vaccination must complete an education program and undergo regular antigen testing.

For now, staff will be asked to complete a disclosure form to support the organization in determining who is vaccinated and who will require education, regular antigen testing, and may require enhanced PPE moving forward. I continue to urge anyone who hasn't received vaccinations to strongly reconsider if medically possible for you.

## **Premier and Minister Visit**

Premier Doug Ford and Minister Greg Rickford visited the Hospital yesterday. We had the opportunity to highlight the excellent work of our teams during the height of the pandemic in the third wave, and showcase some of our innovations and exceptional programs that support our patients and their families both locally and regionally. We also took the opportunity to advance several proposals that are currently before government, including our Indigenous Specific Racism Comprehensive Organizational Assessments and Education Proposal, Regional Surgical Program Development, Cardiovascular Surgery (CVS) capital program, and many others.

The focus of the visit was the provincial government's announcement of \$5.2 million to support the planning and design of our CVS program. As you may know, we are closing in on our stage 2 submission to the Ministry of Health in early September. Our one program/two-site model – working in partnership with University Health Network – is continuing to progress through to full implementation of the program at stage 5. This funding will support the full program development, project management, and functional design of the Cardiac and Vascular program – while supporting the current vascular surgical needs and the developing cardiac program. At full implementation, the capital project supports 14 additional surgical beds, 6 additional cardiac care unit beds, and the associated surgical, recovery, ambulatory, and support requirements. Stay tuned for more updates.

## **Strategic Plan**

Work on the Strategic Plan continues, and come September, we will be back to engaging in the strategic areas of focus with the goal of advancing our full plan within the next few months. As we identify our strategic areas of focus, we will be reviewing the opportunity to align Strategy and Structure for success in the future. It is critical that we align our organization to ensure we successfully accomplish our key priorities. As a first shift, you may have noticed the Communications role has been posted with a broadened scope including government relations, which is an identified area of needed attention through our strategic planning engagement, given government is our major funding partner. This shift has been accomplished at an operational savings while simultaneously streamlining the organizational structure. This is a small step for now, with more to come as we finalize the Strategic Plan.

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## Final Thoughts

I want to end where I began – and that is firstly thanking and acknowledging all the hard work you continue to put in for the good of our patients, families, and communities. I certainly know it hasn't been easy on you. And while progress has been made overall, we are very aware of the challenges associated with the Delta variant and the fourth wave that is upon us. Please take care of yourselves physically and mentally. If you are struggling, please remember that there are resources available to help you.

I will be hosting a Town Hall next month where we can have a more thorough discussion. In the meantime, as always, I welcome comments on this blog or any other matter. You can reach me at: [crockerelr@tbh.net](mailto:crockerelr@tbh.net).



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