**Report from Matt Simeoni**

**Chair, Board of Directors – May 6, 2020**

In so many ways, COVID-19 has changed the way we live and act. Here in Northwestern Ontario, people are heeding the advice of medical professionals, and it is working. Thank you for staying home, practicing physical distancing and washing your hands. Your efforts keep the entire community safe, and ensure resources are available should they be needed in case of an influx of COVID-19 infected patients at our Hospital.

Our Hospital continuously refines its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The dedication of Hospital leaders, staff and professional staff is extraordinary. When I reflect back on conversations held in March, I think about my use of the word ‘confidence’. At that time, I never imagined the extent of our Hospital’s response. Now, I realize that ‘confidence’ does not adequately describe the high level of conviction our Board feels. On behalf of all the Board Directors, thank you for everything you have done for the people of Northwestern Ontario.

People and organizations in our community have come forward to donate personal protective equipment (PPE) to support our Hospital’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a tremendous effort led by Lakehead University and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine to collect hundreds of boxes of PPE. Items have been arriving at our Hospital and St. Joseph’s Care Group, who work with the Northern Supply Chain to ensure this essential PPE is distributed to the acute-care hospitals, long-term care homes, and health care providers in our region who need it most. The efforts are greatly appreciated and enhance the health and safety of staff, professional staff, patients, and the community. To donate these items or to share information about others who may be able to provide a donation, please contact Tanya Niederer at [niederet@tbh.net](mailto:niederet@tbh.net).

The pandemic has forced the postponement of events associated with National Volunteer Week, celebrated annually during the last week of April. While our volunteers are safely at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to thank them for everything they do for patient care at our Hospital. Over 1,000 volunteers are normally hard at work welcoming people at the Information Desk, fundraising, taking patients where they need to go, participating on committees, and doing so many jobs in between. Volunteers are greatly missed at the Hospital and I hope they’re safe and healthy. I look forward to being in a better space soon to give our volunteers the recognition they deserve.

Our Health care staff are on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic; they work tirelessly to keep our community healthy and safe during this pandemic. This is a challenging and uncertain time for them, and it's great to see countless examples of the community coming forward to show their appreciation. I welcome all of Northwestern Ontario to please continue to share your creative displays of gratitutde and thanks, whether it's a sign on your front lawn or window, a photo or message on our Hospital's social media, or by doing your part to flatten the curve. Stay safe, and we will get through this together.