**Report from Matt Simeoni**

**Chair, Board of Directors – October 7, 2020**

My first report of the 2020/21 Board Meeting season highlights the start of a new era of leadership for our Hospital and Health Research Institute, as well as the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic response.

Last month I proudly announced that Dr. Rhonda Crocker Ellacott has been appointed as the new President & Chief Executive Officer of Thunder Bay Regional Health Science Centre and Chief Executive Officer of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute, effective November 23, 2020. Rhonda will lead our Hospital through the development of a new strategic plan and health system transformation. She is a highly respected and proven leader, as well as a champion of patients and families, as demonstrated by her three decades of growth and success. Rhonda’s comprehensive background in the health care system and specific knowledge of and passion for Northwestern Ontario make her the ideal person to inspire and guide ongoing innovation in health research at our Health Research Institute.

I am grateful that Jean Bartkowiak will continue to provide outstanding leadership as President & Chief Executive Officer of our Hospital and Chief Executive Officer of the Health Research Institute until his retirement November 20, 2020.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my appreciation to all Hospital staff and professional staff for an extraordinary response and sacrifice during this pandemic. It cannot be overstated that your dedication is nothing short of remarkable. Despite intense pressure, long hours and frequent modifications, our team proves itself – over and over again – to be exceptional. You are valued. The Board is aware of the challenges and is extremely proud of your efforts and dedication.

The resilency of Hospital staff and professional staff is remarkable and humbling. Through strong leadership, creativity and sheer determination, you found ways to function effectively and maintain safe, quality care. Some of the countless examples of this include: The Purchasing Department navigated shortages and delays to get the critical supplies health care providers needed; The Virtual Care team connected patients with family and loved ones, despite the necessary visitor restrictions that keep them physically apart; The Screening team adapted to constantly changing guidelines while providing a solid line of defense to keep COVID-19 from spreading within our Hospital and endangering our vulnerable patient population. To those teams, and the many others throughout our Hospital, we are grateful and indebted.

I also want to thank community members for minimizing the spread of COVID-19 across Northwest Ontario. Your sacrifices – closing businesses, accepting to wear masks, cancelling gatherings and trips outside the region as well as practicing physical distancing from those you love – are not in vain.

It’s important that we maintain our vigilance. I implore everyone to continue to treat this threat to our health and safety seriously. Practice physical distancing. If you’re sick, or experience consistent flu or COVID-19 symptoms, stay home and self-isolate until your condition improves. If you’ve recently travelled outside of Canada, follow the guidelines on self-quarantine for 14 days. Practice proper hand hygiene. If you’re out in public, or coming to our Hospital, wear a mask. Together, we will keep everyone healthy and safe.