



Report from Matt Simeoni Chair, Board of Directors – February 3, 2021

I begin my first report of 2021 by wishing a happy new year to the residents of Northwestern Ontario. I hope that despite the unprecedented circumstances, you were able to enjoy the holiday season and are now looking forward to a healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous 2021.

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge us, there is reason to have a positive outlook for the year ahead. The arrival of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine has ushered in a hopeful new phase of this pandemic and represents a turning point in our ongoing battle. I am proud of our Hospital's role in this exciting effort. This vaccination roll-out is the largest in our country's history and it will take time to complete. Thank you for your patience, and remember to continue following public health guidelines. Each of us needs to do our part to prevent the spread of the virus and to keep ourselves and the community safe. This means wearing a mask when you're out, limiting your contacts to those living in your household, and washing your hands frequently.

Another positive development is the recent launch of our Hospital's Virtual Emergency Department, which provides patients with safe, quality emergency care from the comfort of their homes. The program is available to people living in Thunder Bay and the surrounding area who are older than 17 years of age, have a non-life-threatening medical issue, and either don't have a primary care provider or are unable to obtain timely access to one. Virtual assessments can be booked by visiting www.tbrhsc.net/VirtualED.

The holiday season is a time for giving and showing generosity to others. In December, nurses, clerks, support workers, physicians, and staff from the Emergency Department, the Northwestern Ontario Regional Stroke Network and the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit once again participated in the Children's Aid Society's Holiday Hamper program. Each group raised money, provided gifts, and donated food and essential items to local families and individuals in need. The Renal Dialysis Department, who collects and distributes food hampers for their dialysis patients every December, also donated excess items to the Dew Drop Inn. When Southbridge Roseview struggled with a COVID-19 outbreak, the Intensive Care Unit team showed their support for staff and residents by providing them with treats. I'm very proud but never surprised to hear about these acts of kindness from our staff. Thank you to all for your warmth and tremendous generosity.

As Chair of the Board, I am grateful for the outpouring of support that hospital staff receive from the community, in all its forms. Students from Holy Family School and St. Pius X School showed their appreciation for our staff with hand-made artwork with uplifting messages. Local businesses donated to the Hospital as a way of saying 'thank you' to our dedicated staff and health care providers who are working tirelessly to keep the community healthy and safe. Thoughtful gestures like those are especially meaningful during these extraordinary times.

I'm excited to be moving ahead with the development of our next Strategic Plan. We have made some excellent progress, including the creation of a Strategic Plan Working Group consisting of senior leadership, staff, and Board members from both our Hospital and Health Research Institute. Thank you to the Board members on the Steering Committee, specifically Pat Lang and Gord Wickam from our Hospital's Board and Dr. Andrew Dean and Dr. Sheldon Tobe from the Health Research Institute Board for their efforts in getting us started. I look forward to sharing more information as our activities progress.

To everyone throughout all of Northwestern Ontario, thank you for your trust, perseverance, and patience during this pandemic; we will get through this, together.