

Reflecting on 2015

Dear Northerners,

A new year is a time to look back before we spring ahead. I have to say, reflecting on 2015, it was a busy year – one that built on past successes and partnerships with our health care providers and focused on improving the transition and coordination of health care services for Northerners.

In looking back over our North East LHIN year, there were many highlights:

- We held a first ever ***Building for the Future Forum*** in October, bringing together close to 150 Northerners, from various sectors -- health, housing, provincial and municipal levels of government, and private sector. This first-ever housing forum was dedicated to fostering partnerships, identifying barriers and opportunities, as well as exploring creative solutions to meet the future housing needs of Northeastern Ontario community members. Why? Because housing is part of health care and a key social determinant of health. People need stable and safe housing to be and stay healthy.
- **Speaking of creating community housing**, we worked with providers in the North Bay area including the hospital, Nipissing Mental Health Housing and Support Services, and People for Equal Partnership in Mental Health, to move 11 former long-stay patients from the hospital to Percy Place Transitional Residence, where they can stay for up to a year acquiring skills to move toward independent living in the community. In addition, three more patients moved to permanent housing for people living with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI).
- We invested in more **assisted living** for high risk seniors across the region. This means that 34 more seniors in Sault Ste. Marie, 26 in Sudbury, 24 in the North Shore/Elliott Lake, eight in Temiskaming, and 12 in Nipissing are now being supported at home with both scheduled and unscheduled visits by providers. In Sault Ste. Marie, pressures were also eased at the hospital and in community with the addition of **50 new interim long-term care beds** at the newly renovated Cedarwood Lodge.
- Five **North East LHIN Joint Assessments Centres (JACs)** continued to provide people with a streamlined approach to regaining control of their hip and knee joint pain. Since 2010, JACs have completed more than 19,000 assessments, finding that 67% of patients do not require a surgeon's consultation, as their symptoms can be well managed without surgery, helping people best suited to get to surgery as quickly as possible. Currently, 82% of hip replacements are completed in our regional hospitals, compared to 56% in 2009. That's care that's closer to home, and with shorter wait-times!



Myself (far right), chatting with our North East LHIN Board Chair Danielle Bélanger-Corbin and John Wilson, Manager, Strategy & Advocacy, Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association at our October 2015 Housing Forum.

- In November we celebrated the **400th anniversary of the Francophone** presence in Ontario and the designation of 41 of our health care providers under the **French Language Services Act** (as well as two more expected shortly -- Vale Maison Hospice and North Bay Regional Health Centre). Did you know the North East LHIN has the most designated providers to serve Francophone clients, patients and families in their mother tongue of all 14 LHINs?
- In November we also launched a public awareness campaign with the help of our five Public Health Units called **Stay on Your Feet** to prevent falls in seniors. Falls are the leading cause of injury in seniors, that's why we have invested in more than 300 exercise and falls prevention classes held across the region. You can find out where the classes are held on our website, www.nelhin.on.ca.
- I co-chaired, with David McNeil, a Rural Task Force with the Registered Nurses Association which authored a report called, **Coming Together, Moving Forward: Building the Next Chapter of Ontario's Rural, Remote and Northern Nursing Workforce**. It shed light on why it's difficult to retain and recruit nurses, and proposed 23 recommendations to help stem a shortage of nurses working in these communities.
- The North East LHIN continued to play a leadership role in 2015 in improving care for **elders living along the James Bay coastal communities**. We provided additional funding to coordinate geriatric clinics in Moosonee/Moose Factory and to support the roll out and sustainability of the clinics, along with a geriatric nurse.
- We made many investments in **Mental Health Care** including funding a new crisis model of care in North Bay; a home for people with severe mental illness in Sault Ste. Marie where clients receive support 24 hours a day; as well as investments across the region in transitional housing for people with mental illnesses leaving hospital; case management to support people with living in community; and the creation of a **Harm Reduction Model** in Sudbury. Our partnership with the Canadian Association of Mental Health has also led to a new **Telepsychiatry program** that is connecting Family Health Teams to psychiatrists.
- It's also been a year for recognition and awards on many fronts ... In the spring, the Ontario Telemedicine Network presented me with a **Telemedicine Champion Award** for all the work our LHIN does to promote the use of telemedicine by our health care providers.

Then our North East Virtual Critical Care Unit won the Health **Minister's Medal**. Under the leadership of our LHIN Critical Care Lead, Dr. Derek Manchuk at Health Sciences North, the unit provides critical care support to other hospitals throughout the region using telemedicine technology so that patients can stay closer home and receive quality care.

Linda Rankin, Project Director of the Northern Ontario Postpartum Mood Disorder Strategy, was on the honour roll for the same medal program for her work in designing and implementing the strategy, which the LHIN has supported through various ways including funding a film featuring Northern voices and stories.

And finally, Temiskaming District care providers won an **IDEAS Award** for a project called, **Falls Prevention in Primary Care -- Assessment to Intervention**.

We have plenty of new endeavours you'll be hearing about soon, particularly when it comes to better coordinating home and community care and primary care too.

Happy 2016!

Louise