

# INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

May 2023

## Putting Patients First in Health Care

Nova Scotia Health continues to make steady progress in furthering the Action for Health strategy, with a tremendous amount of internal activity from the end of January through the end of April. We continue working collaboratively with government, unions, and other partners to foster ready, reliable, and responsive care and care services for Nova Scotians.

## Emergency Department Issues and Solutions

Following the release of the Improving Emergency Care in late January, we continue to see improvements in patient care through further implementation of the Waiting Room Care Provider roles and the use of Virtual Emergency Departments at Colchester East Hants, Strait Richmond, and Yarmouth Regional hospitals/health centres.

## Action for Health Plan

### Health Human Resources

In March, government announced a recruitment and retention bonus for all nurses working in public funded health care. Frontline nurses working for publicly funded employers will soon get a bonus of up to \$10,000. They will be eligible for another \$10,000 retention incentive next year if they stay in the system and sign a two-year return of service agreement by the end of March 2024. The province will also pay a \$10,000 incentive to nurses who have left the publicly funded system if they agree to come back and sign a two-year return of service agreement.

Nova Scotia Health continues major recruitment efforts for nurses and physicians, with events being held on a regularly basis in Nova Scotia and the recruitment team attending events around the world.

Recruitment data from September 2022 through the beginning of March 2023 says 644 (167 LPNs, 14 NPs, 463 RNs) nurses were recruited, 326 as on a casual basis. In addition, over the 2022/23 fiscal year 157 physicians were recruited to Nova Scotia Health.

### Access to Primary Care

Nova Scotia Health continues working diligently to improve access to primary care; we have seen much success through Mobile Primary Care clinics, Urgent Treatment Centres and VirtualCareNS (VCNS). Visits to VCNS are up over 48 per cent over last quarter - October to December 2022: 12,744 vs. January to March 2023: 18,854. Other primary care statistics include:

- Nearly 3,000 visits to Community Pharmacy Primary Care clinics since their launch February 1 through March 1, 2023
- Over 3,500 visits to Mobile Primary Care clinics from October through March 2023.

In addition, government has invested \$25 million in the 2023/24 health care budget to fund/strengthen more than 60 primary care teams across the province.

The Nova Scotia Sisterhood, the health and wellness program for African Nova Scotian woman, is now operating province-wide and offers community health care and services to improve overall health and wellbeing. The program receiving funding last year and leadership spent 2022 identifying the needs of the communities, hiring staff, and establishing programs.

## Surgical Strategy

At fiscal year end, we pulled the data to analyze performance data from the past 12 months. The results were encouraging:

Across all sites, Nova Scotia Health completed:

- 1,873 more surgeries than fiscal 19/20 (excluding endoscopy/cystoscopy)
  - Slightly short of the 2,500 target
- 4,863 more endoscopy/cystoscopy procedures than fiscal 19/20

Waitlist:

- The number of people on the surgery wait list has reduced by 4,012 or 16% between April 1/22 and March 31/23 (excluding endoscopy/cystoscopy)
- The surgical growth rate has been below 1 since August (currently at 0.93 in March) - we are removing more people from the waitlist than are being added

Outpatient procedures:

- The number of outpatient hip and knee arthroplasty (reconstruction or replacement) has increased from 85 in fiscal 19/20 to 1,193 in fiscal 22/23

## Shared Decision-Making Module

A Shared Decision-Making learning module: *Shared Decision Making in Cardiac Interventions* has been developed by Nova Scotia Health in collaboration with the Queens University Online Learning Group. The module is now available for use by providers in Nova Scotia. The module and others in development, are part of Nova Scotia Health's multi-year Surgical Access and Quality Improvement Strategy. The strategy has quality improvement initiatives among its key areas of focus, including efforts to assure the appropriateness of surgical care.

## Healthcare Infrastructure

Public interest and engagement remain steady as our local leadership teams continue to celebrate the project milestones with announcements and events and when and where possible, community open-house events.

## QEII New Generation Project

In December, Government announced *More, faster: The Action for Health Build* that includes more beds, more operating rooms, more Emergency Departments and new Transition to Care Facilities. It breaks the QEII New Generation Project into smaller pieces, to deliver the overdue results sooner. In addition, renovations to the QEII Halifax Infirmary Summer St. lobby renovations are underway, including washroom upgrades and staircase renovations during the first phase of work. A new vestibule connection to the new parkade will resume construction



in summer 2023. Construction of the new Community Outpatient Clinic in Bayers Lake is nearly complete and on track to open in late November 2023.

### CBRM Redevelopment Project

At Cape Breton Regional Hospital, construction on the Clinical Services Building started on March 13, and P8 and P4 parking lots opened on March 12. At the end of April, concrete was poured for the bunkers for the new linear accelerators as part of the new Cape Breton Cancer Centre. At Northside General Hospital, construction of the new laundry facility, health centre and long-term care home is underway and structural steel is expected to begin later this month. Finally, at Glace Bay Hospital, design continues for surgical services and ophthalmology clinic.

### North Cumberland Memorial Hospital Redevelopment Project - Pugwash

The new North Cumberland Health Care Centre in Pugwash is in the final stages of construction and is scheduled to open in Summer 2023.

### Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre Redevelopment Project - Amherst

The request for proposal for the design closed on April 21 will be awarded by Government of Nova Scotia procurement services soon in the coming weeks.

### Yarmouth Regional Hospital Emergency Department Redevelopment

Yarmouth Regional Hospital Emergency Department Redevelopment Project design phase is complete and being reviewed. Once its approved and the budget finalized, it will go to Treasury Board for final decision making.

### South Shore Regional Hospital Redevelopment

Melanie Nauss has assumed the role of Clinical Coordinator with the retirement of Gina Phinney in December. There has been steady progress in the excavation to support the new additions for the Emergency Department and mechanical services. There are significant interior moves being planned, including the moving of Health Records to support the new MRI, but steady progress is being made.

## Annual General Meeting

Planning is well underway for Nova Scotia Health's seventh annual general meeting, with the proposed theme: Healthier Together: Ready, Responsive and Reliable and tentative date of June 22 for sharing with our partners, employees, physicians, researchers, and learners. This past year has seen Nova Scotia Health make huge strides in patient care and health care services. The AGM and Annual Report will highlight our successes.

## Engagement and Accountability

Nova Scotia Health appeared at Standing Committee on Health with the Department of Health and Wellness and Dalhousie University to discuss [Public Health funding](#) in Nova Scotia.

In February, Nova Scotia Health and IWK released the [Accessibility Plan and Engagement Report](#), sharing the result from the November survey and at the end of March, the joint 2023-2026 [Accessibility Plan](#) was posted on the Nova Scotia Health website.



In addition, over the winter months, both Nova Scotia Health and the Department of Health and Wellness supported engagement for the *Health Equity Framework for Nova Scotia*. The framework will call for actions across Nova Scotia's health system to make it more appropriate, accessible, and effective for all who need it and for those who work within it. It is also a requirement in NS Bill 96, The "*Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*." In April, the [Engagement Findings and Emerging Action](#) was published. Further, Nova Scotia Health also facilitated internal engagement for the Health Equity Framework from February 10 through 17 for team members belonging to one or more equity groups. The results of this internal engagement were shared with both the internal participants and Department of Health and Wellness in March. The first draft of the Health Equity Framework is expected in late May.

## Our People

### Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Professor David Divine submitted his recommendations to me and Vice President of People, Culture and Belonging, Anna Marenick, in February. His report will form the basis of forthcoming Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Reconciliation and Accessibility policy at Nova Scotia Health.

### Healthcare Transformation Office

The Health Transformation Hub website is currently in its soft launch phase (<https://library.nshealth.ca/Health-Transformation-Hub>) and hosts the latest information about the priority transformation initiatives underway as part of Action for Health. Each initiative has its own page that provides an overview, along with some key highlights of progress being made.

Also, the HTO has heard direct feedback, which also aligns with best practice in change management, that staff want to hear about changes from their managers instead of by e-mail. As a result, the HTO has shared its first of four in a series of key messages about the Action for Health priorities to support managers in discussion with their teams. The HTO received positive feedback about this approach.

### Community Healthcare Conversations

Also in February, Minister Thompson, Deputy Legassé, and I completed the final Community Conversation on Healthcare that began in October. More than 1,000 Nova Scotians participated in 20 sessions that covered 5,300 kilometres. Staff working in primary care, public health, continuing care, addictions and mental health and emergency care were also on hand at each community conversation to provide information and speak with participants.