

## INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

January 2023

### Putting Patients First in Health Care

As we head into a new year, our commitment to patients remains genuine and unwavering. Reflecting on the Nova Scotia Health values of respect, integrity, courage, innovation, and accountability, together with our government, and health sector partners, we will work to accelerate the initiatives in the Action for Health Plan. We are embracing the opportunity – and challenges – facing us as we move towards collaborative solution development and engaging Nova Scotians in health and health care.

### Emergency Department Issues and Solutions

Ongoing public and media interest following the recent death of a patient in one of our emergency departments has resonated with Nova Scotians, resulting in ripple effects across our communities and organization as more patients and families come forward to share their experiences. The sense of urgency is felt by all, and we are working to accelerate our strategic actions from the Action for Health Plan. Nova Scotia Health has the necessary support of government, and leadership to catalyze that transformation and implement key operational changes for the improvement of access and delivery to health care services.

Enabling the work of our patient flow managers through innovative approaches will allow them to replace the current (primarily) manual process currently across health units. The Care Coordination Centre (C3) combines a new clinical operations centre that is located at the QEII Health Sciences Centre. A new software platform, and new policies and procedures will provide needed bed flow alleviating pressures in our emergency departments, and drastically improve the coordination and integration of a patient's health care journey.

### Action for Health Plan

#### Health Human Resources

Work continues with our campaign to recruit and onboard registered nurses (RNs) offering signing and relocation bonuses. We have expanded the interprofessional care team to include advanced care paramedics, licensed practical nurses, care team assistants and pharmacists, drawing on all health care professional resources.

Nurse practitioners were recently added to the emergency department team, on a limited basis, to provide care to those patients who were not seriously sick and reduce wait times for patients. This initiative has been successful, and we plan to expand coverage.

#### Access to Primary Care

We continue to look for new and innovative ways for people to access the primary care they need. People who do not have a primary care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) and are registered on the Need a Family Practice Registry can access **VirtualCareNS** as an option. In addition, our mobile primary health clinics continue to be well received in our communities.



The mobile primary health clinics continue to adapt to patient needs and health teams have added an unattached newborn clinic to their services, seeing babies shortly after birth who are without a dedicated primary care provider. The clinics cover patient needs for those living in Halifax, Eastern Shore, Windsor, and West Hants and nurses are being added to the services as demand increases. In one weekend, a clinic in Halifax saw 28 babies and that number could increase to 300 babies in Central Zone by the end of this fiscal year alone. With about 21 mobile primary health clinics in operation around the province, this is another great example of health innovation and team capacity for meeting patient needs.

## 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**

The new hybrid OR initiated operations in early October. A new administrative office and meeting space, staff change rooms and respite space opened at the HI ED on December 15. The Summer St. parkade opened to staff and public on January 3rd. Exterior driveway renovations at the Summer St. entrance of the Halifax Infirmary are complete. In late January, Summer St. lobby renovations will begin, 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 over 80% complete and is on track to open in late November 2023.

### **CBRM Redevelopment Project**

Construction of the new Cape Breton Cancer Centre and Energy Centre is underway at Cape Breton Regional Hospital (CBRH) in Sydney. In the spring or early summer of 2023, construction of the clinical services building (CSB) is expected to begin. In New Waterford, construction of the new Community Hub is underway beginning with Breton Education Centre (BEC) school and a community wellness centre. Once the former BEC is demolished, construction of the new health centre and 60 bed long-term care home can begin. Construction began on the Northside Health Complex in November and this site includes a new, modern health centre, 60 bed long-term care home and laundry centre. The design for expansions and renovations to Glace Bay Hospital's emergency department and surgical services area is nearly complete. Construction is expected to start on that project in the spring or summer of 2023.

### **North Cumberland Memorial Hospital Redevelopment Project - Pugwash**

The new North Cumberland Health Care Centre in Pugwash, now under construction, is on schedule to open this spring. All services in the current North Cumberland Memorial Hospital will move to the new building as will the local collaborative practice. The clinical planning team is starting to transition from construction to operations and looks forward to welcoming patients and families later this year. Northern Zone communications continues to provide project updates to the community and is part of the operations readiness team to plan for the move to and official opening of the new hospital. The redevelopment project team, including communications, is working with the North Cumberland Community Health Foundation to preserve the history of North Cumberland Memorial Hospital through displays of artifacts and celebration of the hospital's role in the community.

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

In December 2020, government announced funding for improvements to Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre. The province invested \$2.7 million to complete feasibility assessments, site investigations, schematic design and design development work, with extensive input from hospital staff and physicians, for the redevelopment of the emergency



department and the addition of a 12-station dialysis unit. The next stage of the redevelopment project is hiring an architectural firm to design the new dialysis unit and emergency department. The request for proposal for the design is expected to be issued by Government of Nova Scotia procurement services soon. Northern Zone communications will begin planning, with Nova Scotia Health's public engagement team, the development of a public engagement strategy to be implemented this year.

### **Yarmouth Regional Hospital Emergency Department Redevelopment**

Yarmouth Regional Hospital Emergency Department Redevelopment Project progressing with the design phase to be completed Spring 2023. If required approvals are obtained, the construction phase could potentially begin 2024 (tentative). Positive engagement with staff and physicians on redevelopment planning has been ongoing.

### Accreditation

On December 13, 2022, I received notice from Accreditation Canada that Nova Scotia Health is *Accredited with Commendation* under the Qmentum accreditation program. This designation is used to indicate that an organization that went above and beyond the already high standards Accreditation Canada sets, demonstrating an exemplary commitment to deliver quality care. This reflects our health and administration teams' extraordinary efforts to achieve the highest standard we were eligible to receive, a success shared by all Nova Scotia Health staff, physicians, volunteers, researchers and learners.

### Engagement and Accountability

Nova Scotia Health made two appearances to legislative committees. On October 26<sup>th</sup>, Nova Scotia Health leaders from Public Health were invited to meet with the Public Accounts Committee on the subject of the Report of the [Auditor General – Healthy Eating in Schools](#). On November 23, 2022, Nova Scotia Health again met with the Public Accounts Committee to speak to the [Impact of Government Expenses and on ER Understaffing](#). Finally, on December 13, 2022, the Nova Scotia Health met with the Standing Committee and health partners (IWK and the Department of Health and Wellness, among others) to speak to the [Surgical Backlogs and Extension of Operating Room Hours](#). Our teams were well prepared as subject matter experts representing Nova Scotia Health and we welcomed the opportunity to speak with the respective committee members of the Nova Scotia Legislature on these important matters which impact all Nova Scotians.

On November 22, 2022, I was invited to join leaders from across the province for the Halifax Chamber of Commerce Annual Fall Dinner, the subject of which was supporting the growth of the province. Population retention, immigration, business development and workforce expansion were among the topics covered.

## Our People

### Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Since his arrival, Professor Divine has held extensive meetings with Nova Scotia Health employees, the four zone diversity committees and their chairs, as well as the provincial diversity committee. He also has interviewed employees who identify as members of equity seeking groups in clinical and operational roles across the organization. Based on this thorough research, and in conjunction with his work with the Department of Health and Wellness's Equity and Engagement team, Professor Divine is expected to present a detailed analysis of equity and inclusion within Nova Scotia Health in February. Finally, engagement with community representatives of all the priority group representatives identified in the emerging Provincial Health Equity Framework will launch in July 2023



### Healthcare Transformation Office

We continue to work with our Health Transformation Office partners to create a health system that is **ready** when patients need it, **responsive** to their needs, and provides **reliable** care that Nova Scotians can count on. Collaboration with our partners is foundation to the work in achieving our shared goals. This was noted at the January 17<sup>th</sup> health care partners summit hosted by the premier of Nova Scotia. Favourable feedback from union leaders and the CEO of Doctors Nova Scotia demonstrates the level of engagement and support from our stakeholders and colleagues.

### Community healthcare conversations

Hearing from Nova Scotians about their healthcare concerns leads to better-informed policy and program decisions. Between October 19 and December, Health and Wellness Minister Thompson, Deputy Minister Legassé hosted in-person conversations across all four health zones in the province.

A full report on the learnings from the community conversations will be submitted at the conclusion of the tour.

Emerging themes for discussion collected on the sessions so far have been noted:

- Recruitment of nurses and physicians;
- Supports for Emergency Departments;
- Supporting nurse education and workload;
- Work-life balance for health care workers;
- Primary care access, specifically walk-in/after-hours clinics
- Collaborative care and the role of pharmacists
- Mental health
- Maternal health
- VON services.