

# Chair's Report

News and Insights for  
Board Chairs



From: **Sarah Downey**, Board Chair,  
Ontario Hospital Association

## January 2021 Board of Directors' Meeting

February 2021

Your Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) Board of Directors and management team continue to focus on supporting members in these unprecedented times.

At our regular meeting on January 20, we focused discussion on the following topics.

### Pandemic Response

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the OHA's management team has focused on advocacy on your behalf, specifically related to labour relations, legal and policy issues. Management provided a comprehensive report on these activities and sought direction from the Board to guide their efforts. To ensure that we stay connected to the important and varied issues across the Province, regional engagement efforts are planned for February and March.

### Vaccines

The board discussed the provincial approach to vaccine distribution and inoculation and the roles of hospitals in the delivery and administration of vaccines.

While hospitals have been provided with the Pfizer vaccine (and in some areas Moderna) to administer to priority groups, the role that hospitals will play over the medium to longer-term is unclear. It is anticipated that public health units will be responsible for mass vaccination of the general population and remains uncertain to what extent hospitals will be expected to assist in

this broader inoculation effort.

Throughout December and January, the OHA has reached out to the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Taskforce to outline several considerations to guide the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine across Ontario. Guidance was provided to address vaccine hesitancy and the need for a broad and comprehensive communications strategy to maximize voluntary vaccination of health care workers. Through this engagement, it became evident that several hospitals were turning their attention to this matter and arriving at approaches similar to existing protocols for influenza vaccination.

In early January, the OHA began meeting with the COVID-19 Vaccination Action Council, a coalition of primary care organizations working to advocate to public health and the COVID Task Force on the engagement of primary care in the vaccination rollout. Discussions have focused on assessing the numbers of primary care providers within each public health unit available to assist, and the extent to which the experiences of hospitals can inform distribution in the community.

The OHA continues to work with its member hospitals and the Government to address legal issues related to vaccine administration, including the need for a consistent consent process/documentation. Dr. David Williams signed a province-wide COVID-19 mRNA Vaccination Order (Medical Directive) on December 29, 2020 that was released the week of January 4 through limited communication to hospitals. [This Order](#), made under the *Nursing Act, 1991*, permits a Registered Nurse (RN) or a Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) to initiate a COVID-19 vaccine for active immunization on certain terms and conditions. The OHA also has been working with hospitals, government, legal counsel, and HIROC to address legal/operational impediments related to consent, detailed user agreements, and future use of data for research purposes.

#### *Pandemic Response Recap*

Management provided the board with a summary of activities since its November meeting, including:

- monitoring hospital support to long-term care, including management orders;
- legislative changes that provide additional legal protection to hospitals related to an individual being or potentially being infected with or exposed to COVID-19;
- specific indemnification for hospitals for the assistance they provide to long-term homes (hospitals must request indemnity from the Hospital's Branch at the Ministry of Health);
- efforts to ensure responsible stewardship of PPE supplies and to minimize disruption to hospital operations;
- arbitration that resulted in a letter outside the ONA collective agreement that established an

expedited process to resolve disputes relating to accessing PPE under Directive #5;

- monitoring PPE issues and assisting hospitals in navigating disputes;
- encouraging government and Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission to consider immediate staffing interventions to better mobilize existing health human resources in long-term care, such as revisiting the universal applicability of the "single employer policy", where safe and appropriate, as well as the need to increase funding to facilitate more hours for existing health care workers;
- urging government to remove barriers to ensure adequate health human resources to staff temporary hospital units and field hospitals;
- advocacy for stronger public health measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19;
- active engagement with Ontario Health and co-sponsorship of forums connecting OH leaders with Hospital CEOs;
- media interviews at the regional, provincial and national levels which resulted in coverage in almost every notable outlet in the province via television, radio, print, and online;
- the launch of an updated social media campaign, *Take the Pledge to #StopTheSpread*, which focused on looking ahead to 2021 and asked Ontarians to recommit their efforts and share with others how they planned to do their part to help make 2021 a better year.

### **Hospital Sector Financial Position 2020/2021**

The OHA recognizes that many hospitals continue to face significant cashflow issues related to the pandemic. If relief is not available on an ongoing basis, hospitals' ability to invest in the preparation and human resource requirements for Wave 2 and beyond could be compromised significantly. The OHA will engage with Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy and his advisors on the upcoming provincial budget plan to ensure he is aware of the current state of hospital finances and work with them on their plans for the spring Budget.

The very substantial impact of the pandemic on hospital operations and finances is well understood by the OHA. We know that hospital response to the pandemic has been very costly in terms of added expense and loss of key revenue streams that are critical to supporting the core work of hospitals. Despite Ministry of Health efforts, hospitals continue to face additional financial and cashflow pressures which could prevent hospitals from meeting their financial obligations.

At the December Hospital Advisory Committee (HAC) meeting, the OHA continued to advocate for the elimination of volume-based funding year-end reconciliation and claw back. In discussion of lost revenue, the OHA was clear that, regardless of source, hospitals used all revenues for core services and lost revenues have a direct impact on the financial bottom line. At this meeting, the OHA also provided feedback on the Ministry's proposed Integrated COVID-19 Impact Framework and reiterated the need for swift approvals and immediate release of further cashflow to hospitals.

There have been ongoing discussions with the Ministry and Ontario Health on Balanced Budget Waivers related to Hospital Service Accountability Agreements. The recommendation from the OHA has been to keep reporting and process simple in this environment and that Hospital Improvement Plans (HIPs) should only be required in extraordinary circumstances.

### **OHA Strategic Planning**

As previously reported, the Board has launched a renewal of the OHA's strategic plan and appointed [Helen Hayward](#), OHA Vice Chair, to chair a Special Committee in this work. The Committee members are:

- Dominic Giroux, President & CEO, Health Sciences North (Vice Chair)
- Roger Boyer II, Trustee, Grey Bruce Health Services
- Melissa Ferrell, President, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton
- Julia Hanigsberg, President & CEO, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital
- Alex Munter, President & CEO, CHEO
- Carol Lambie, President & CEO, Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care
- Sarah Downey, President & CEO, Michael Garron Hospital Toronto East Health Network (ex officio, Board Chair)
- Anthony Dale (ex officio, OHA President & CEO)

The Committee will look for opportunities throughout the planning process to engage with member hospitals and advisors for guidance on specific priorities. The regional consultation sessions underway in February and March will provide the chance to identify key strategic topics for this plan.

### **OHA Board Recruiting**

The Board will seek to fill four positions this year and at least one nominee will be a sitting hospital (voting) Trustee. Recruiting efforts will also seek:

- Clinical leaders (e.g., Chief of Staff, Chief Nursing Executive, MD-CEO, RN-CEO, community MD/NP with governance experience);
- Hospital-based health research leaders; and
- Experienced leaders with expertise in Information Technology (including governance of cyber security) and/or Data Analytics to support system decision-making.

The OHA is committed to cultural and gender diversity among board members and will consider geography and hospital size to ensure that the Board, collectively, includes members with experience in the diversity of our hospital membership.

## Other Business

The Board also:

- approved the bargaining mandate for central collective bargaining with the Ontario Nurses' Association;
- received reports from Committees and from management about on-going initiatives; and
- admitted as Members of the OHA: *Canadian Mental Health Association of York and South Simcoe Region, The Ottawa Hospital Academic Family Medicine Associates, Atlohsa Family Healing Services Inc., and Arthur Health Corporation* (subject to reference checks).

## President's Report

The [President's Report to the Board](#) provides information on activities related to the OHA's Operating Plan. The report includes updates from provincial leadership councils, the provincial benefits strategy, and other initiatives.

The Board was very heartened to learn that, with a participation rate of 90%, the OHA's Employee Engagement score remains very strong at 99%, representing a 1% increase from the last survey in March 2020. The all-staff survey was conducted in December, after nine months of remote working. Anthony Dale expressed his pride in the committed and resilient Association staff who—every day—demonstrate their passion for supporting our members.

## Next Board Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Board will be held on March 10, 2021.

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me at [sdowney@oha.com](mailto:sdowney@oha.com) or Anthony Dale, President and CEO, OHA at [adale@oha.com](mailto:adale@oha.com).

Sarah Downey

Ontario Hospital Association, 200 Front St W, Suite 2800, Toronto, ON  
M5V 3L1

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