

# Community Connection



## Pembroke Regional Hospital Fall 2022 Edition



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### A Fond Farewell As President and CEO Pierre Noel Transitions Into Retirement



Pierre Noel

A lot can happen in 16 years. While on most days it doesn't seem like all that long ago, it's really incredible just how much has happened since I returned to the community in 2006 to take on the role of President and CEO at our local hospital.

For me, my first days were rooted in a deep sense of homecoming and nostalgia as I remembered my father, Gerry, a great dad and local chartered accountant, who had strong ties to the hospital as its auditor, as a long-time volunteer Board member, and as the hospital's Board Chair during the early 1980s. In fact, it was my father who encouraged me to pursue a career in health care administration and I must say that it's been an extremely rewarding and interesting career with many challenges and a fair degree of success along the way.

When I look back on the many milestones over the past 16 years, I do so with pride in the people who made such great things happen. The staff and physicians at the hospital and my management team who dug deep to make improvements every day and helped shape our region's hospital into the state-of-the-art facility and progressive organization that it is today.

While the specific improvements and advancements are too many to mention, there are a few key highlights that spring to mind, including significant investments in technology that brought us to the next generation of CT scanning and the acquisition of Renfrew County's first and only MRI. Construction and renovation projects have been plentiful over the years, including the creation of new birthing suites and state-of-the-art surgical suites.

Our team worked hard to bring much-needed health care services closer to home which resulted in the establishment of an array of local cancer care services and the launch of a new full-service orthopaedic program. The creation of Zone B in our Emergency Department helped reduce wait times and provides more timely care for people with less urgent medical needs. And, the establishment of our Family Medicine Teaching Unit in collaboration with the University of Ottawa became a key component of our local recruitment efforts for family physicians and expanded our teaching role in training future medical professionals.

Health care delivery also changed significantly over the course of my time at PRH, with a greater shift towards automation in many areas and the expanded use of electronic information storage and dissemination. Our use of Lean management strategies, the imbedding of patient and family advisors, and stronger partnerships amongst our region's health care partners has also helped to improve efficiency and integration which ultimately means an improved patient experience for those in our care.

While a lot has happened in the past 16 years and health care is ever-changing; I also know in my heart that high-quality compassionate care is deeply rooted in our local hospital, as it has been since its founding by the Grey Sisters in 1878. As I transition to retirement and welcome Sabine Mersmann into the hospital's lead role, I want to thank everyone who has supported PRH in so many ways, and I especially want to thank each and every member of our health care team for doing what they do so well, every day, and with such dedication, grace and kindness. *Pierre*

### Pembroke Regional Hospital Announces Board Appointment Of New President/CEO



Sabine Mersmann

The Pembroke Regional Hospital's Board of Directors is very pleased to announce the appointment of Sabine Mersmann as the hospital's new President and CEO effective November 1st.

Mrs. Mersmann will replace Pierre Noel who is set to retire at the end of this year after 16 years in the role. Mr. Noel will continue in an advisory capacity during the months of November and December.

Mrs. Mersmann was educated as an Occupational Therapist in Germany, and moved to Canada in 1986. For 13 years she worked in various clinical roles as part of the team at Renfrew County's Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) before being hired by PRH in 1999 as Director of the hospital's new Rehabilitation program.

The next 13 years were spent in Clinical Director roles at PRH for a wide variety of programs. In addition, she helped to lead the major capital expansion in the early 2000s, while helping bring much-needed services closer to home such as cardiac rehab, systemic therapy and new programs serving our geriatric population.

In July 2012, Mrs. Mersmann moved into the position of Vice-President of Patient Services, Seniors, and Community Care where she has been a leader in quality and patient safety and was pivotal in the organization-wide implementation of Lean management. She also helped bring MRI technology to our region, developed ways in which to embed patient and family advisors into our care processes and continued to find ways to form community partnerships through initiatives like Health Links and the early development work for our area's Ontario Health Team.

Since January 2021, Mrs. Mersmann has served as Senior Vice-President of Clinical and Support Services, Partnerships and Integration.

In addition to participating in, and chairing several regional and local committees, Mrs. Mersmann has led the COVID-19 response for the Pembroke Regional Hospital and served in regional roles on the Champlain incident command structure. She continues to support the development of the Ottawa Valley Ontario Health Team (OHT) as a member of the steering committee.

Married, with two adult children, Mrs. Mersmann is deeply committed to her community. She enjoys a variety of sports like running, cycling and skiing and enjoys the fun and community experience these sports provide.

"After holding a series of progressive leadership roles over the past 23 years, I feel privileged to have been selected as the next President and CEO of the Pembroke Regional Hospital," Mrs. Mersmann said, adding that she cares deeply for people and the community she lives in.

"Over the years, our hospital has experienced great advancements in technology, significant improvements in the patient experience, continuous growth and many upgrades. I could not be more proud of our team and the work they have done collectively to ensure our community has the health care it needs and deserves," she said.

Continued on page 2

### PRH Launches Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Recently, the Pembroke Regional Hospital held its first Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee meeting, representing a significant step forward in our hospital's journey to ensure that we are offering a welcoming, inclusive and accessible space for everyone.

Scheduled to meet quarterly, our EDI Committee is comprised of 13 members who represent a diverse cross-section of employee groups, person groups and departments. The

Committee's mandate is to advise and assist the Senior Leadership Team in the identification, development and implementation of measures and initiatives to ensure there are no groups excluded from the employee and patient experience at Pembroke Regional Hospital. Specific areas where improvements can be made



include policy, communication, celebration and education.

Recommendations from the first meeting include the integration of gender and pronoun preference into the registration process, plans to standardize non-gender-based greetings across the organization and improved wayfinding for all-gender washrooms. We look forward to sharing more about the work this group is doing on an ongoing basis so stay tuned!

## PRH Announces Appointment Of New President and CEO...Continued From Front

Mrs. Mersmann added that while all of this progress has not come without challenges, particularly during the last several years, she is enthusiastic about the future of local health care and is excited to continue to be part of the hospital's growth and the opportunities for greater local and regional collaboration and health system improvement through Ontario Health Teams.

Mrs. Mersmann's professional skillset includes planning and results-oriented leadership, human resource and financial management, quality improvement and risk management, policy and contract development, program and project management, and partnership building.

Mrs. Mersmann's appointment follows a robust search conducted by a CEO Selection Committee comprised of David Unrau (Board Chair), Richard Wilson (Past Board Chair), Sheila Clarke (Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario Designate), Dean Sauriol (Board Vice-Chair), Mitchell Stillman (Board Director), Daniel Burke (Board Director) and Dr. Jack Kitts (Former



**Board Chair  
David Unrau**

CEO of The Ottawa Hospital who assisted with the second round of candidate interviews).

Board Chair David Unrau said the hospital had a strong response to the CEO opportunity with a total of 55 candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds and profiles expressing interest in the role.

"As part of the lengthy process for recruiting a new CEO, our Selection Committee had a long list of qualifications, skillsets and attributes that we were looking for in a candidate who would be able to lead our hospital into the future," Mr. Unrau said.

"Sabine brings all of these to the table in addition to her expansive knowledge of the hospital and its needs as well as her involvement in the local, regional and provincial health system improvements."

Mr. Unrau said that as the Board thanks Mr. Noel for his contributions, they look forward to working with Mrs. Mersmann in her new capacity.

## CONSTRUCTION CORNER

If you've been to the hospital lately, it's likely that you've seen a lot of construction activity in many parts of the facility. While some of the work is on a smaller scale, we are excited to share that the initial phases of several large projects are now in progress including significant work being done on our *Cancer Care* and *Surgical Redevelopment* projects.

Phase 1 of the *Cancer Care Project* has involved extensive renovations on the fifth floor of Tower A within our Pharmacy department where chemotherapy medications for local cancer patients are prepared and other medications requiring sterile preparation are handled. As part of the \$2.5 million investment, two state-of-the-art preparation rooms have been built to the latest specifications and the Pharmacy department has also purchased additional equipment required for the production of sterile products which will enable them to handle expanding demand.

As a result of the renovations, these new rooms will be fully compliant with the latest standards of the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) and the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP).

Work on our *Surgical Redevelopment Project* is also being conducted in a number of phases with one of the key early pieces being the relocation of our Chapel from the third floor of Tower A to the first floor. This will free up space on the third floor to accommodate the expanded surgical footprint.

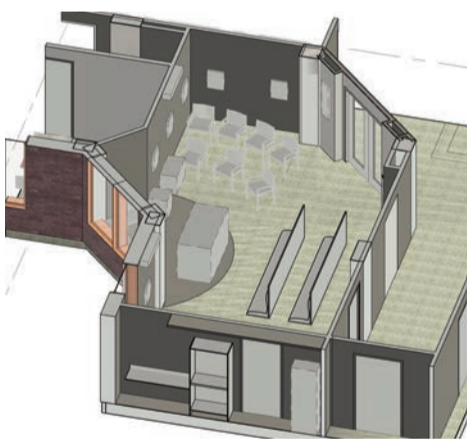
On October 5th, a poignant final Mass was held in the hospital's current Chapel during which its long history was recalled.

Spiritual Care Coordinator Reverend Garry Engler said many people who he has spoken with have fond memories of the Chapel which was part of the original hospital building constructed in the 1950s. Some have spoken about attending services there in earlier days with their parents and grandparents, while former students from the Lorrain School of Nursing remember sitting in the old balcony for special religious celebrations.

"Ecclesiastes reminds us that for everything there is a time and a season. In this season of change, we are excited to celebrate this milestone in our hospital's history as we transition to a new Chapel facility which will represent a refreshed worship space, albeit smaller, with a more centralized and easy-to-find location," Rev. Engler said.



**The existing 3rd floor Chapel**



**A rendering of the new 1st floor Chapel**

This relocation will make room for our new endoscopy suite, scope cleaning room and minor procedure room as part of the \$18 million *Surgical Redevelopment Project* which will result in the co-location of all surgical services and surgical patient space on the third floor of Tower A and D which are linked by an enclosed walkway.

Approximately 90% of the project's \$18 million cost will be funded by the province while the remaining 10% and equipment costs will be covered by the close to \$3 million that was raised through the PRH Foundation's Cutting Edge Campaign and the many generous donors in our region.

**Please note - the following hospital services have recently relocated:**

- Our Geriatric Day Hospital is now located on the 1st floor of Tower C
- The Community Stroke Rehabilitation Program has moved to 1st floor, Tower C
- Our Finance office / Cashier window is now located on the 2nd floor of Tower C, room C215
- Our Release of Information office is now on the 5th Floor of Tower A

Follow us on our socials

Pembroke Regional Hospital

# LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

## Wayfinding

**LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS**  
Wayfinding volunteers will be located at building entrances, and will greet and help patients find their way around the Hospital.

Scheduled based on your availability

**If interested: Contact Micayla** → | **micayla.sewell@pemreghos.org (613) 732-3675 ext 6504**

## For The Protection Of Patients And Staff, Masking And Other COVID-19 Safety Measures Remain In Place At PRH

While the majority of COVID-19 safety measures within the broader community have now been lifted and life, for many, is "back to normal", community transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses continues.

For this reason, the Pembroke Regional Hospital and other "highest risk" settings continue to require masking for all who enter the facility as well as strict adherence to all COVID-19 safety measures.

"Nothing has changed in terms of COVID-19 safety measures for those facilities caring for our community's vulnerable populations," said PRH President and CEO Pierre Noel.

"We rely on the safety measures we have in place to not only protect those who are at higher risk of severe illness and death, but also to protect the members of our health care team so that they are able to provide the care and services our community needs," Mr. Noel said.

Masking, in particular, not only protects patients, visitors and staff from COVID-19 but also from all other respiratory and contagious illnesses which is why it's extremely important that masks be worn, not only while travelling through the hospital but when at a patient's bedside as well.

Failure to adhere to hospital policies could result in further restrictions and puts PRH at risk of internal outbreaks, something we have already experienced a number of in the past couple of months.

Those coming to the hospital for appointments who feel unwell are asked to ensure that their health care provider is aware of their symptoms.

**For visitors, guidelines remain as follows:**

- Return home if you feel unwell or have symptoms of any illness that may be contagious.
- Wear all appropriate personal protective equipment (including masks) at all times and strictly adhere to all health and safety guidelines.
- Do not eat or drink inside patient rooms or in other areas which are not designated for food or drink consumption.

**WASH YOUR HANDS**

**WEAR A MASK**

**KEEP YOUR DISTANCE**

## PRH Finds Innovative Ways To Address Unprecedented Staffing Challenges



**Beth Brownlee**

While staffing challenges in the health care sector are nothing new, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic two-and-a-half years ago coupled with high staff infection rates has now shed light on a broader, acute labour challenge, not only within our own organization, but across the province and beyond.

In recent weeks, hospitals across the country have had to take drastic measures to cope with staff shortages, including temporarily closing emergency departments and other services. While the Pembroke Regional Hospital has not had to make such a critical decision, the work going on behind the scenes to ensure appropriate staffing is in place each day is unprecedented, said Beth Brownlee, Vice-President of Clinical and Support Services.

“We have been asking our workforce to do a lot in order to fill in the gaps and ensure that the uninterrupted, high quality care that our patients deserve remains in place. However, with everyone stepping up, including our management team, our health care team is fatigued,” Ms. Brownlee said.

One of the ways in which hospitals, including ours, are now addressing this situation in the short term is to work with our health care teams to trial a number of innovative staffing models and

alternative models of care including a team-based approach that ensures all health care professionals are working at their skill level and within their scope of practice, while contributing their knowledge and skills in the best way possible.

“This team-based staffing model has long been a goal in our organization and requires a new way of thinking but ultimately it is about working together to support one another and ensure safe, uninterrupted care of our patients,” Ms. Brownlee said.

Another aspect of the innovative staffing model involves the expansion of health care teams to include new roles and welcome in other health care professionals.

This is not entirely new to PRH. We have experienced workforce issues in various staffing categories over the years. As an example, Rehabilitation Assistants were introduced into the hospital and teams and we have also worked to expand the scope of practice of our Pharmacy technicians. “More recently though, we have integrated Health Care Aides who are supporting clinical operations on our Rehabilitation, Acute Mental Health and Intensive Care units, with further expansion of this model planned for other clinical units,” Ms. Brownlee said. “We have also added Unit Support Workers to our Medical program to assist with non-clinical duties. Furthermore, we have welcomed an International Nursing Graduate to our Rehabilitation program

and hope that we will be able to expand this initiative in the future.”

Other pilot initiatives underway to help support staffing and optimal patient care include Physician Assistants supporting our hospitalist team, increased Respiratory Therapy support in our ICU and the addition of Advance Care Paramedics in our Emergency Department as part of the team.

While these trials are helping to decrease the number of unfilled shifts, they alone aren’t enough to guarantee a long-term solution to the staffing crisis. For that, the hospital is working towards a number of long-term recruitment and retention strategies.

Human Resources Director Brent McIntyre said the hospital is expanding its recruitment efforts by taking full advantage of social media channels and traditional methods such as in-person job fairs. They are also connecting with clinical educators in nursing to ensure that students are fully aware of career opportunities at PRH.

“We also want to ensure that our newest recruits not only feel welcome but supported through mentorship opportunities while finding new and innovative ways to express gratitude and ensure that our existing team members feel valued,” Mr. McIntyre said.

PRH is extremely appreciative of the work being done by all staff and physicians in these challenging times, calling the level of commitment and dedication to working together, “outstanding”.

## Pembroke Regional Hospital Foundation Launches New Digital Donor Wall



The Pembroke Regional Hospital Foundation is excited to share that they now have a new way to recognize and celebrate donors with the launch of a Digital Donor Wall located on the ground floor of Tower B in the atrium area by Mulvihill Drug Mart.

The new Digital Donor Wall not only showcases donors, but also highlights the Foundation’s fundraising activities and ways the community can get involved. In addition, thanks to state-of-the-art technology, the new wall features an area with QR codes that can be quickly and safely scanned with

a smart phone, allowing donors to select a project of their choice, and then be redirected to the Foundation’s secure donation site.

At the ribbon cutting event, PRH Foundation Chair Lisa Edmonds thanked the many donors who adorn the new Digital Wall. “Thank you for supporting our many campaigns, which in turn support all of those who use the hospital’s many services.”

For more information about the wall, or to donate, please visit [www.prhfoundation.com](http://www.prhfoundation.com).

## A Spotlight On...The First Episode Psychosis Program

*“We all want our loved ones to be well. Mental illness can present at any time and when it does, we need to be able to find the support that we need in a timely manner. When my 16-year-old son first presented with symptoms, I was stressed, scared and in need of knowledgeable, experienced and compassionate support. Our family found that in the First Episode Psychosis team. Not only did they provide the immediate care we required, but they were also able to link us to other services. They provided light in a dark moment.”*

### What is psychosis?

Psychosis is a medical condition that affects the brain and causes people to have trouble distinguishing between what is real and what is not. When this occurs, it is called a psychotic episode. An affected individual may experience hallucinations, paranoia and feelings of anxiety or depression. Psychosis usually occurs in a person’s late teens or early twenties and can be accompanied by disrupted sleep patterns, poor attention and concentration, loss of energy and motivation, social withdrawal and a decline in function at school or work.

Psychosis has multiple potential causes including stress, genetic factors, various medical conditions and the use of street drugs. The journey to recovery from a first episode of psychosis varies from person to person and can range from a quick reduction of symptoms to the need for weeks or months of ongoing support and treatment.

### How we help:

The *First Episode Psychosis* program is offered

to Renfrew County residents by Mental Health Services of Renfrew County (MHSRC) in collaboration with the Ottawa Hospital’s *On-Track* program. The program is operated by a small team of health professionals with the support of a psychiatrist and targets individuals aged 16 to 35 who are experiencing their first symptoms of psychosis.

Once in the program, individuals are provided with out-patient intervention and support for a period of one to three years with the aim of putting symptoms in remission through effective medications and coping strategies.

Those in the program undergo an initial assessment in order to determine the type of psychosis being experienced and then treatment is prescribed based on that outcome.



### Improving the client experience:

Earlier this year, representatives of Early Psychosis Intervention (EPI) - Ontario Network and the Provincial System Support Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health conducted a specialized review of the *First Episode Psychosis* program to ensure that the services delivered in Ontario EPI programs are consistent, high quality and in alignment with the EPI program model.

In total, 26 aspects of the program were rated on five-point scale by two trained assessors based on a review of program data, 10 client charts, and interviews with staff, psychiatrists, clients and family members. Of those, the program received ratings of four or five (considered good/excellent) in 16 of the sections.

The final report provided an opportunity for the team to celebrate their strengths which included timely, person-centred intervention, good family involvement and consistently positive feedback from clients and families alike with many clients feeling that the program improved their lives and, in one case, saved their life.

It also identified ways in which the team can improve the program by expanding the skillset of the team, finding additional ways to engage and support families and look into peer support options for families who wish to connect with others who have had similar experiences.

“Our team is very proud of the work that has been done to date to help the clients in our region who need this service and we are very appreciative of the feedback we have received which we can use to improve and enhance the service going forward,” Mireille Delorme, Director, MHSRC

To learn more about this and other programs, call the MHSRC Central Referral and Information Line Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except holidays: (613) 732-8770, extension 8006, or 1-800-991-7711 extension 8006

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call the Crisis Line at 1-866-996-0991.



www.PRHFoundation.com (613) 732-2811 extension 7408



**Corporate Pricing**

**\$250 / 1 year**  
**\$500 / 3 year**

**Individual Pricing**

**\$100 / 1 year**  
**\$200 / 3 year**

\*Have a photo taken with your plaque at the Giving Garden and posted on our social media. (optional)

\*Businesses will be listed with logo on our "Giving Garden" web page.

[www.PRHFoundation.com/givinggarden/](http://www.PRHFoundation.com/givinggarden/)

OR call the Foundation Office at

(613) 732-2811 extension 7408



Plaques can be purchased for the garden by businesses or individuals and dedicated in memory or in honour of someone special.



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**HELP KEEP CANCER CARE CLOSE TO HOME**

Our cancer treatment areas require updates and overall improvements including the pharmacy where much-needed medications are prepared, the Chemo treatment areas, and our waiting rooms.

These spaces are vital in the treatment and care of each and every cancer patient, and through this campaign, our goal is to ensure they are comfortable, easily accessible and state-of-the-art.

We need your help so that every single cancer patient has the most up-to-date equipment available to them at the Pembroke Regional Hospital, meaning one less worry for cancer patients and their families.



- **Help support local cancer patients.**
- **Help to expand the Chemotherapy treatment areas to care for even more local cancer patients.**
- **Help make a difference with a one time donation or every month by joining our monthly giving club.**

I have had three "encounters" with breast cancer during my 92 years and one with bladder cancer. My most recent diagnosis was in 2009 where it was determined that the cancer had metastasized into the wall of my sternum and was 4th stage. I have been taking chemotherapy every three weeks and have just completed my 100th treatment! The treatment has kept me alive much longer than predicted.

My early treatments were at the Queensway Carleton Cancer Centre and later, I was able to transfer to the Pembroke Chemotherapy Clinic. I was very happy to be able to make this move to avoid all the travel and long day trips which were exhausting and involved a lot of travelling in poor conditions.

We are very fortunate to have the opportunity to receive cancer treatment right here at the PRH. With continued treatment, I am hoping to see my 100th birthday! ~ Doris Siegel, 28+ years cancer survivor ~

**YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT THE Cancer Care Campaign**

Please complete this donation form and return it with an enclosed payment, if applicable, to **Pembroke Regional Hospital Foundation at 705 Mackay St, Pembroke, ON, K8A 1G8**  
A tax receipt will be issued for gifts of \$10 or more. Charitable Registration No. 870047610RR0001

**DONOR INFORMATION**

One-time donation of  Recurring monthly donation of

\$500    \$250    \$100    \$50    \$20    prefer to give \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to pay by:

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Cheque (payable to Pembroke Regional Hospital Foundation)

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_    Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Donor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Providing your email helps us to keep costs low with electronic receipting

By selecting "Recurring Monthly Donation," you can make a gift that keeps on giving and help us purchase our highest priority needs, as we need them! For additional information please call 613-732-2811 ext. 7408 or email: [foundation@prh.email](mailto:foundation@prh.email). To make an online donation visit [www.PRHFoundation.com](http://www.PRHFoundation.com).