

From Boiler Rooms to Cutting Edge Cardiac Care -- It's All About Putting Patients First

August 22, 2017

Dear Northerners,

A little more than a month has passed since I stepped into the role of Interim CEO at the North East LHIN.

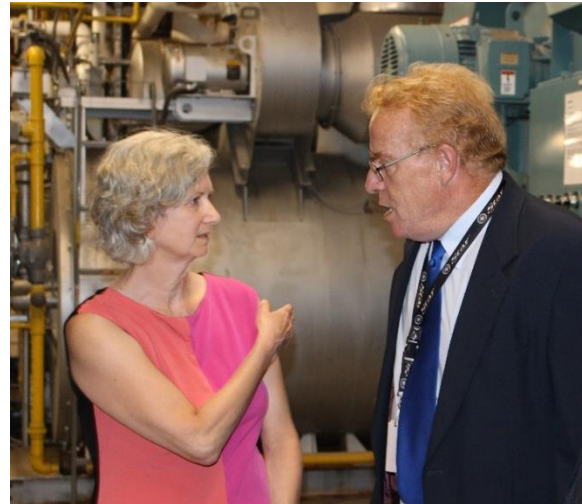
While I've been at the LHIN for five years as a Senior Director and more recently Vice President of Performance and Accountability, the role of CEO has provided me with many opportunities to learn first-hand how our health care investments have a positive impact on the people living across Northeastern Ontario.

In July, I was in the boiler room (!) of Health Sciences North to help announce funding for hospitals so they can tackle infrastructure upgrades, from improving back-up generators to sprinkler and fire alarm systems. In all, 20 of our hospitals received close to \$10 million – thanks in large part to both hospital and LHIN staff who worked hard to put business cases together.

While it may not be a quick link to make, investing in building repairs has a positive impact on a patient's experience with the health care system. I remember talking to a patient a few years ago who was so appreciative of the new windows installed at North Bay Regional Hospital's Kirkwood site. For the first time, she could see the lakeside view and was so happy with how the extra light in her room lifted her spirits every morning.

Last month, I also joined Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, for an announcement on an innovative Indigenous healing program that was researched and developed through the hard work of Gloria Daybutch and her staff at Maamwesying North Shore Community Health Services in Cutler.

At the event, a mother spoke about how she had sought treatment for her addiction and had experienced judgment and racism. After attending the new program offered by Maamwesying, she felt embraced by empathetic staff who helped her on the journey back to health. Now she feels like she can be a good role model for her children.



Kate Fyfe, Interim CEO of the North East LHIN, talking to Pat Tessier, Director of Facilities at Health Sciences North.

Known as *Beauty for Ashes*, this residential program will help address the effects of domestic violence, childhood and inter-generational trauma. Gloria, who was also the long-standing Chair of our Local Aboriginal Health Committee, grew her original vision to include the *Pain, Addiction, Mental Health within an Anishnawbek Recovery System* program to help increase access to sustainable and culturally appropriate care for Indigenous people dealing with mental health and addictions issues.

These new programs will help to increase access to quality mental health and addictions services for residents of the seven First Nation communities served by Maamwesying as well as the urban indigenous population of Sault Ste. Marie -- more than 15,000 people altogether.

As outlined in our NE LHIN ***Aboriginal Health and Reconciliation Action Plan***, Indigenous-focused health and wellness services are an important part of working together to address the health disparities caused by colonial policies and the residential school system. Our LHIN continues to move forward with the plan's 25 calls to action.

I was grateful for the opportunity to also join the Health Minister at an announcement to enhance the Sault Area Hospital's Cardiac Program – an investment that means some 500 patients and their families won't have to travel for angioplasty each year. Not having to travel will mean savings for patients and family members and friends who often accompany them. It's not only the cost of travelling though, it's also the stress of going to another city to receive medical treatment in an unfamiliar setting.

Like the many people who will benefit from these recent investments, I am a long-standing and proud Northerner who –when I'm not at my day job –relies on a strong system of care for my family and loved ones. I am honoured to work alongside the many health professionals and caring Northerners who are working to improve care for patients across Northeastern Ontario. It continues to be my privilege to meet with them and not only exchange ideas, but put thoughts into action, when it comes to building a better system of care for Northerners, together.

Happy mid-summer!

Kate