

Bancroft gets update from Quinte Health Care

By Kristena Schutt-Moore

During the Bancroft council meeting of Tuesday, Oct. 12 council got an update from Quinte Health Care president Stacey Daub and board chair Nancy Evans. They wanted to let council know what has been happening in Quinte Health Care hospitals and Daub officially introduced herself to council as she started as president in January. Daub said that she thought that it was important for councils to know the leaders at Quinte Health Care and requested an ongoing partnership to build and strengthen local health care.

"I often get asked what it's like to join an organization like Quinte Health Care in the midst of a pandemic," said Daub. "While it has been very strange in many ways it has also been incredibly humbling. I have been heartened not only by the healthcare teams, physicians, nurses, lab techs, hospitality workers, but also for the welcome and support from the communities I serve."

Daub said that on top of the pandemic another critical thing she wanted to do was to get out and go to the communities Quinte Health Care hospitals serve and get to know what they wanted from their hospitals.

She has been in Bancroft a few times introducing herself to business owners and organizations. A couple weeks ago she also stood at the main doors at Foodland talking with people about what is important to them about their hospital and the future of their hospital as they came in to do their grocery shopping. "I actually got to meet one of your family health team leaders, Carolyn Brown, so we had an ad-hoc extra 45 minutes talking about how we could work together. I see it as my role to see and understand the communities I serve and get to know my business partners, my municipal partners and my health and community service partners."

She said that the last year was an extraordinary year for Quinte Health Care but she was also impressed by the resiliency the health care teams have shown during the pandemic. "In addition to trying to keep pace with hospital services and COVID-19 our teams have also moved forward on important capital projects like a new regional ICU expansion."

She continued on expressing her thanks to all the municipal and community partners such as the North Hasting Development Fund, and all who rallied around the hospital during this difficult time.

She said that as it currently sits, she is "relatively optimistic" about the fourth wave as the numbers of cases are staying steady and relatively low. "You only need to look to the west to see what happens when COVID-19 public health measures are prematurely relaxed. It will put people's lives at risk, and it devastates public health systems including hospitals. But the COVID-19 numbers are not the full story to what is happening at Quinte Health Care and North Hastings hospital."

In addition to supporting the COVID-19 cases the health care teams are supporting an unprecedented number of emergency departments in patient visits. Since Ontario opened in the summer Daub says the hospitals have seen a marked and parsipiduos increase in the number of people coming back to the hospitals. She thinks that is in part due to people feeling safer to go out and to seek care they may have been delaying. Staff have also been working through care backlogs for items such as surgeries and diagnostic imaging that were put on hold during the height of the pandemic. On top of this they are providing back up support for services that have not been able to get back on their feet such as home care. "And they are doing this at a time when we are seeing an unprecedented health human resource crisis, which has been many years in the making but COVID-19 provided a kind of tipping point for it," Daub explained. "We also have a team of health care heroes that are very fatigued and tired after 18 months and a public and patients that are very tired and fatigued after 18 months."

Because of this Quinte Health Care has kept their priorities and goals simple. Daub said that the first is how can we make improvements for today, which includes finding ways to make sure the health care services open and accessible for people and trying to work through the back logs. The second part of this goal is how do we best support and stabilize the health care teams. The second goal is charting a course to reimagining health care's future. Daub said that second goal is part of why she wanted to talk with the council to connect about the future of the hospital in Bancroft. "It takes a community, from our foundations, our auxiliaries, our

community partners, to really advocate and work together. To not only address health care issues, but also health and wellness issues in our community.?

She also went on to talk about the exceptional work of the North Hastings Family Health Team providing home care, community care to hospital care. She remembered being in the hospital the Thursday before the meeting and seeing a primary healthcare physician who had worked a full day at his office, yet came into the hospital when another local physician couldn't make it in, so he took on another 12-hour shift. ?They have a level of dedication and support to the community that I think should be heralded and celebrated and grown over time.?

She noted that not everyone in the North Hastings Area had a family doctor and how it was something that needed to be worked on over time and that she was eager to work with both Hastings and Prince Edward County councils to develop ways to recruit and retrain health care physicians for the community. She quoted a statistic that in the Quinte Health Care area for every 100 babies that are born 20 of those babies and their mothers do not have a doctor and that she thought it was something that needed to be changed.

Daub had two requests for council. The first was for continued support for the local health care system and strengthening the Bancroft hospital. Two of the ways she asked for this is through the continued investment and support in capital redevelopment and capital equipment to provide quality care and keep a strong hospital. She and Kim Bishop of the fund development committee for the Bancroft hospital have talked several times about getting a CT scanner for the hospital as it is a standard of care. ?I was up last Thursday night and on that one day alone five people had been transported out of the community to get a cat scan taking away nurses on the transportation. Something that could have easily been done in the local community.?

The second area that Daub wanted to work with council on was to plan and advocate for a strong health care system, not only for the hospital but for a strong home, community and long term care system. She said that the communities need to work together as ?our voices are stronger together.?

She also asked that the town continue to try and develop and grow and attract a large amount of community health care such as doctors, nurses, technicians and more to choose the community as the place they want to live and practice health care. ?We lost three staff members in the last two weeks. Two of them to houseing and one because they couldn't find child care anywhere in the community. The region is beautiful, people want to come to Bancroft. But if they can't find housing or child care it makes it very difficult for them to move their families.?

She also wants to get the community involved in reimagining the hospital and the future of its healthcare. Quinte Health Care has launched a five year strategic plan process and they intend to hear from community members and service partners. One of the ways they are doing that is through a survey that is being made available through the municipal councils and offices. More information is available at www.qhc.on.ca.