

**Report from the Pembroke Regional Hospital  
to the  
Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario / Meeting of the Members  
June 2023  
Report for Fiscal Year 2022-2023**

We are pleased to submit this report from the Pembroke Regional Hospital to the Members of our Corporation and Sponsor, the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023. As requested, this report deals with the themes below as identified on the Risk Identification Worksheet and Elements of Mission Fidelity Assessment:

***Identification of Risks and Mitigation***

**Significant Health Human Resource Gaps**

The Pembroke Regional Hospital has been experiencing significant human resource challenges and is facing shortages across many disciplines and services, with vacancies in nursing positions being most problematic. Throughout the last fiscal year, we had to supplement our nursing staff with agency nurses in our highest risk areas of ED, ICU and Medical Program. In addition, we added a physician assistant to our hospitalist program due to significant shortages in the hospitalists' teams.

As part of our LEAN Management Business Performance Strategy, PRH has chosen "Workforce Stabilization" as one of three strategic priorities. We have conducted a strategic PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) and identified several opportunities in the area of innovative staffing models, retention and recruitment strategies and workplace wellness.

Our Quality Improvement Plan addresses all of these initiatives as drivers for the organization. Early in 2022 we introduced new classifications of workers to our organization such as healthcare aides (HCA), advanced care paramedics (ACP) and unit support workers (USW). We evaluated the satisfaction of staff and patients regarding these new team members and created permanent positions for HCAs on most units in the hospital as well continue to use ACPs as part of our team within the Emergency Department.

This year's work will focus on strengthening the team approach to care in the clinical units. We have seen a steady improvement in our staffing complement and will continually review the opportunity to discontinue the use of agency nurses without interrupting critical health care services.

Physician recruitment continues to be challenging. We have increased our efforts and are focussed on our highest risk areas of hospitalists, internal medicine and intensivists. In addition, we are working with the Ministry of Health (MOH) on new payment models and Hospital On-Call funding for physician groups. We have put contingency plans in place to assist us in mitigating shortages and to date, did not have to close any essential services at PRH.

**Year-to-Date deficit or End of Year Deficit**

The 2019 legislation, known as Bill 124, capped wage increases for nurses and other public sector workers at one percent a year for three years. It was ruled unconstitutional in November 2022 and the Ontario Nurses' Association sought retroactive pay through an arbitrator, since the contracts were subject to be reopened if Bill 124 was repealed or declared invalid. The ONA award and anticipated retroactive adjustments for CUPE staff are the key contributors to a large, unanticipated year-end deficit for PRH. In collaboration with the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA), negotiations on MOH payments for these salary increases and benefit adjustments are anticipated.

PRH has sought, and was approved for, an extension to the requirement of signing our Hospital Services Accountability Agreement for 2023/24. The initial budget submission to the MOH is placing PRH in a deficit position for this fiscal year due to cost pressures in supplies and anticipated significant wage increases. The government's budget approved a 4% increase to hospitals, however our funding letters have not yet arrived but are anticipated by the end of May. We will adjust our budget position once we receive our funding allocation.

### **Digital Infrastructure**

PRH is one of a minority of hospitals and other healthcare organizations who have not yet embarked on the adoption of one of the three approved Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) in Ontario.

Our closest tertiary care center, as well as all of the Hospitals that surround PRH and rely on our specialized services for patient and families in Renfrew County, have an EMR called EPIC. In order to service our patients and families well, provide excellent flow of information and care, provide the highest level of quality and safety and address cybersecurity, we are in the process of exploring the Total Cost of Ownership in joining The Ottawa Hospital instance of EPIC.

Our clinicians and our community have been asking for this next step in digital transformation for PRH. We are in discussions with Ontario Health (OH) and our local politicians who are asking us to proceed with a timely implementation. The journey to EPIC will transform our organization and will require significant change management efforts. It will impact every level of the organization.

The costs will be the single most expensive investment we have made to date. Funding the implementation, as well as ongoing software and licensing fees, will be challenging. In discussion with OH, we are advocating for assistance through provincial and/or federal funding on this priority implementation. Both the provincial and federal governments have placed digital infrastructure implementation and improvements in healthcare at the top of their priority list for investments.

Thank you for receiving this brief report. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our members and staff of CHSO for their support and guidance over the course of the past year. We value our relationship and look forward to our work together in the year ahead.