

Community Connection



Pembroke Regional Hospital

Holiday 2024 Edition



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PRH Celebrates Grand Opening Of Renovated Inpatient Surgical/Day Surgery Units

Pembroke Regional Hospital has proudly celebrated the grand opening of its newly renovated Inpatient Surgical space and Day Surgery Unit, marking an exciting milestone in the hospital's history.

The \$20 million renovation project which includes \$2.6 million in donations from the Pembroke Regional Hospital Foundation and the Pembroke Regional Hospital Auxiliary, represents the hospital's largest Ministry-funded investment since 2004 when Tower B was constructed.

The official opening held November 15th saw representation from approximately 70 invited guests including donors, community partners, government representatives, project leaders, members of the hospital's Surgical team and others who all came together to honour the efforts and the people who brought this project to life.

"Thanks to all involved for the hours of work that went into planning and designing this space, choosing the equipment, assisting our contractor and architect and getting the space ready for move in," said PRH President and CEO Sabine Mersmann. "Today, you are seeing the results of these incredible efforts designed to improve the care for our patients."

Paying tribute to all involved in the renovations including Hein Construction, their staff and subcontractors, Dredge Leahey Architects and project engineers who worked tirelessly to ensure the area would be as functional as possible within the limitations of the 1951 structure, Mrs.



From left, Dave Unrau (Past-Chair, PRH Board), Mike Godbout (Plant Services Director), Michele Dredge (DREDGE LEAHY Architects Inc.), Lisa Edmonds (PRH Foundation Board Chair), Lauren Theberge (Procurement/Project Management Coordinator), Michelle Lenson (DREDGE LEAHY Architects Inc.), Sabine Mersmann (PRH President/CEO), Peter Payton (Information Technology Director), Bishop Michael Brehl, John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MPP), Andrew Turton (Capital Project Manager), Father Ryan Holly, Scott Coombes (Vice-President of Finance/Corporate Services, Chief Financial Officer), Beth Brownlee (Vice-President Clinical/Support Services, Chief Nursing Executive) and Heather Macmillan (Manager, Operating Room/Medical Device Reprocessing/Surgical Program)

Mersmann said she never imagined that a 1950-era building could look this good in 2024!

Completed in several phases, the goal of the project was to co-locate and improve all Surgical services and patient space on the third floor of Towers A and D, linked by an enclosed walkway.

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Provincial Program Supports New Nurses

We're proud to announce the continued success of Ontario's *Community Commitment Program for Nurses (CCPN)*, an initiative under which every newly hired Registered Nurse (RN) who commits to two years of full time employment can apply for \$25,000 in grant funding so long as they meet the following criteria:

- Must not have been employed as a nurse in Ontario in the six months prior to being hired;
- Must hold a Certificate of Registration in good standing from the College of Nurses of Ontario;
- Must begin employment between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025;
- Must not be receiving funds simultaneously from the Ministry of Health for the Tuition Support Program for Nurses; and
- Must not have been hired through the Nursing Graduate Guarantee program.



Beth Brownlee

skilled nursing professionals across Ontario, and specifically, at PRH.

"We are grateful for this support as it allows us to foster a supportive environment, drawing in skilled professionals who contribute to our mission of delivering quality health services and enhancing our overall health care team," said Beth Brownlee, Vice-President of Clinical and Support Services, and Chief Nursing Executive.

At PRH, a total of 21 nurses have successfully enrolled in the program. These nurses have chosen to bring their expertise and compassion to our facility, ensuring that our patients continue to receive top-notch care. Their participation not only reflects their dedication to the nursing profession but also strengthens our hospital's ability to meet the health care needs of our population, Mrs. Brownlee said.

For more information about the *Community Commitment Program for Nurses* and its eligibility, please email bailey.kehoe@prh.ca.

Since its start in 2021, the program has been instrumental in attracting and retaining newly

2025 Will Bring Significant Change To PRH

As we approach the close of the year, I'm excited for you to read about some of the great work and transformative change that has been happening at Pembroke Regional Hospital and I'm thrilled to be able to share some additional updates on projects that will greatly enhance patient care and the patient experience in 2025.



Sabine Mersmann

Journey to Epic

As you may recall, we are investing approximately \$17 million in a new health information system known as *Epic*, a cutting-edge digital platform used by hospitals to securely manage patient records, streamline workflows, and enhance care coordination. This platform helps ensure that health care providers have quick and easy access to up-to-date patient information, improving the overall quality and efficiency of care.

A key feature of *Epic* is the *MyChart* patient portal which allows patients to access their medical information online. Through *MyChart*, patients will be able to view test results, manage appointments, and communicate directly with their health care team from the convenience of their electronic devices.

As you might imagine, there is a lot of work and training that will need to take place in order to switch to this platform and we are already in the early part of this preparatory phase. We will be keeping you informed as things progress.

Construction Updates

In addition to the completion of our Surgical Project which you will read about in this newsletter, a couple other major projects are shaping up beautifully and nearing readiness for occupancy.

Our new chemotherapy space in Tower D should be handed over to us at the end of the month and we're excited for patients and staff to experience this upgraded environment.

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PRH Celebrates Grand Opening...Continued From Front

The new Surgical Day Care unit was patient-ready in March of this year, transforming space previously occupied by the old operating rooms and hospital chapel into a bright, open concept, modern area that is co-located on the same floor as the new endoscopy suite and minor procedure rooms, Surgical registration, and the hospital's medical device reprocessing area.

Phase 3, which is nearly patient ready, involved a complete reconstruction of the hospital's 15-bed inpatient Surgical space which now features a mix of private and semi-private patient rooms which are larger than those there previously. Two new isolation rooms were also added along with all new infrastructure, and new and enhanced comfort and safety features including:

- Central air
- Large energy efficient windows
- Larger accessible bathrooms with modern fixtures, new plumbing, grab bars, an upgraded nurse call system and safety doors that open in both directions

"When you see these changes and improvements being made and the work that is being done at PRH to continuously bring better services to people of the area, it gives us all the more reason to be proud," said Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MPP John Yakabuski.

He added that in speaking with residents who have had surgery locally he has heard great anecdotes about the care and service they have received. "Now to have this new renovated space which makes everything more efficient, more effective, it's amazing to have this kind of service here in the valley."

Lisa Edmonds, Board Chair for the Pembroke Regional Hospital Foundation emphasized the importance of collaboration and community support for a project like this. "This is a huge milestone and I have the pleasure of saying thank you to the Foundation, the Auxiliary and the donors – all of you have made this



day possible. What we've done will make the patient experience even better when services are needed and we couldn't have done it without your help."

Amongst those in attendance, Mrs. Edmonds gave special mention to the family of Harold Smallpiece who, after his passing, enabled his children to name the hospital that would receive his gift of \$540,000 – they chose PRH and the Surgical Construction Project.

Dave Unrau, Past-Chair of the hospital's Board of Directors shared a personal testimonial as a Surgical program patient and described his experience in detail from encounters with friendly staff, to the calm he felt coming into the new space and the high class post-surgical care he received. He noted that his healing and recovery started the moment he entered the floor and thanked all involved for their vision of how this space could be transformed.

And finally, Dr. Colleen Haney, Chief of Surgery, spoke passionately about the facility's impact on patient care and what it means to the team to have this new workspace.

Paying tribute to those she works with, Dr. Haney said that the care they provide and the drive they have to do their best for their patients is humbling. "The walls around them don't change that but with these renovations, we now have a facility to match their world class care."

Dr. Haney noted that having higher volume procedures in dedicated space is good for flow and efficiency, and that having the new space will hopefully give the hospital an edge on future recruitment, but she said aspects like the added privacy the new space affords patients and their families is priceless.

The ceremony concluded with a blessing of the new space by Bishop Michael Brehl, and a symbolic ribbon cutting before guests were free to take self-guided tours of the space and enjoy some refreshments.

PRH Auxiliary Raising \$150,000 For New Diagnostic Equipment

The PRH Auxiliary is \$50,000 closer to their latest fundraising goal of \$150,000 needed to purchase a specialized machine that performs Bone Mineral Density scans.

The equipment will support timely, in-house assessments for bone health issues like osteoporosis, benefiting seniors and those at higher risk of bone fractures.

The first installment of \$50,000 was comprised of \$27,000 from Delta Bingo & Gaming Pembroke and \$23,000 from the Auxiliary's General Account which represents funds raised through the Auxiliary's Gift Shop, the Mural Cafe, TV rentals, the sale of HELPP tickets, fashion show proceeds and fees associated with the ATM machine.

"Improving access to essential diagnostic services and state-of-the-art equipment has always been a priority for the Auxiliary," said Diana Gagne, President of the Pembroke Regional Hospital Auxiliary. "With this new commitment, we aim to support our community by ensuring that the latest, vital equipment is available close to home.

Bone Mineral Densitometry is a non-invasive diagnostic imaging procedure that uses low-intensity X-rays to assess and monitor bone health. With age, bone mineral density diminishes, and can lead to skeletal diseases like osteoporosis, which is characterized by low bone mineral density. Progressive deterioration of bones presents an increased risk of fracture in older adults, which is why it is important to measure bone mineral density. In 2023/2024, a total of 1,010 of these procedures were performed at PRH.

The Auxiliary's latest fundraising commitment follows fulfillment of their \$500,000 pledge in support of the hospital's orthopedics program and upgrades to the Inpatient Surgical unit.

For more information about the Auxiliary's fundraising efforts or to learn how you can support the Auxiliary through volunteering, please email auxiliary@prh.ca.



Pictured, from left, Auxiliary President Diana Gagne, Auxiliary Secretary Harlene Buske, Auxiliary Treasurer Kathy Green, Auxiliary Member Rita Fox, PRH President and CEO Sabine Mersmann and Gift Shop Manager Brenda Long.

Change In 2025...Continued From Front

Designed with safety, comfort, and efficiency in mind, the new unit will feature more treatment chairs, private examination rooms, and improved amenities. In the meantime staff have done a great job transitioning the service to a temporary space and I want to extend my thanks to them and to our patients for their flexibility and understanding during this time.

Work also continues on our new main entrance and the relocation of Mulvihill Drug Mart in Tower C, with an expected completion date in early January. Once Mulvihill completes their fit-up, this project will move into its final phase, including development of new space for the Auxiliary's Gift Shop.

The entire project is expected to wrap up by April 2025, and we're excited about the convenience and accessibility this transformation will bring to our hospital.

Widespread Visual Improvements

We're also making great strides in updating our hospital's appearance, while taking a minimalist approach to signage and ensuring that wayfinding is clear and concise.

Among a number of small projects underway, we have dedicated painters refreshing priority patient-facing areas. We're also working with a local firm to improve exterior wayfinding for our patients and visitors, while also trialing light displays as an alternative to traditional directional signage indoors.

These updates and others will help create a more welcoming, calming and organized environment for everyone.

PRH To Expand Availability of Pediatric ENT Surgeries

Looking ahead to 2025, we're excited to expand the offering of pediatric ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat) surgeries as part of a regional program led by CHEO and the Kids Come First health team. This initiative will allow us to bring specialized surgical care closer to home for families in our community.

The program which was launched this past spring with funding from the province initially brought the CHEO Day Surgery program to two sites: Brockville General Hospital and Carleton Place.

We are currently collaborating with CHEO, our anesthetists, Clinical Education, our Surgical staff and Medical Device Reprocessing to plan the next steps.

New Funding Allows For Greater Use of CT and MRI

And speaking of service expansion, the Ministry of Health has provided us with additional funding for expanded MRI and CT hours in order to reduce wait times.

As a result, MRI hours now include weekends and we are offering CT in the evenings Monday through Thursday.

These updates are just a glimpse of the incredible work happening at Pembroke Regional Hospital.

As we head into the holidays, I would like to personally thank all our staff, physicians, and volunteers for their dedication and commitment to excellence.

And to each of you, I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a safe, healthy and happy new year!

Hospital Launches Naloxone Distribution Program In Response To Opioid Crisis

The Pembroke Regional Hospital's Emergency Department is excited about their work to support the Naloxone Distribution Program. In response to opioid overdoses in the region, Pembroke Regional Hospital has officially launched this program in partnership with the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU). This initiative, which went live October 1st, aims to make Naloxone kits more accessible to individuals at risk of an opioid overdose, as well as their family members and friends who may need to respond to an overdose emergency.

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that temporarily reverses the effects of an opioid overdose by restoring breathing. Opioids affect the part of the brain that controls breathing which is why taking too much of the drug can slow breathing and lead to unconsciousness and death.

With opioid use and overdoses on the rise, this

program is part of the region's broader harm reduction strategy and reflects the hospital's commitment to supporting the health and safety of its patients and the community.

"This program is a critical step in ensuring that those most at risk, as well as their loved ones, have access to this life-saving medication and the education needed to use it properly," said Beth Brownlee, Vice-President of Clinical and Support Services and Chief Nursing Executive.

PRH staff, trained by the RCDHU earlier this year, are equipped to provide training on Naloxone use to anyone receiving a kit. The training includes recognizing the signs of an overdose, the importance of calling 911, administering Naloxone, and performing chest compressions if required while waiting for emergency responders to arrive. Education on overdose prevention and the proper care of Naloxone kits is also part of the program.

At PRH, the Naloxone kits are available through the Emergency Department, the Acute Mental Health and Intensive Care units.



(Back row, from left) Dr. Chinmay Roy, Kira Barry, Brittany Kewley, Samantha Wojtowicz, Josie O'Malley, Samantha Duarte, Kaley Lamarche and Tracey Baxter. (Front row, from left) Kristen Pye, Katie Nolan, Erin Van Allen, Meshwa Patel and Baylie Corrigan

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Stroke Survivors & Caregivers Become a volunteer!

The After Stroke - Hospital Peer Connections program aims to inspire stroke survivors and their families to lead a meaningful life after a stroke. We are looking for volunteers who have had a stroke and are well into their recovery OR are caregivers of someone who has had a stroke. Volunteers will go into the hospital to visit with recent stroke survivors, providing peer support, hope and encouragement.

Would you like to:

- Share your story of stroke recovery
- Inspire others to live their best life after stroke
- Provide hope and encouragement to people who have just had a stroke

Scan the QR code, or visit our website:

<http://www.marchofdimes.ca/volunteer>



Kudos Corner

We are grateful to receive positive feedback from our patients and their families. Here is a recent example we would like to highlight.

I feel the need to express my sincere relief and gratitude to the staff who guided me through the experience of my first hip replacement.

On October 17th, I had an extremely positive experience. My nervousness was very high, but I quickly was able to relax because of the bright new environment on the newly renovated Surgical floor.

The pre-op nursing staff were very efficient, helpful, supportive, informative and very calming. Dr. Malcolm Chang and his team were excellent with their preparation before surgery - namely, they were very calming and informative about what was going to happen. I immediately felt in "the best of hands".

The positive experience continued post-operatively. The nursing staff took great care with my pain control and gave me very good "tips", advice and encouragement to take with me upon returning home. The physiotherapist was also most helpful and encouraging. So, I came home the same day (previously not able to fathom this possibility) feeling confident and positive about my recovery.

Please accept my sincere gratitude for all of the "TLC" offered and given to me during my brief "stay" at Pembroke Regional Hospital.

Most sincerely, Patricia Kelly

Expanded Teaching Unit Strengthens Physician Recruitment in Renfrew County



From left, Dr. Madeleine Nolan (resident), Dr. John Bonell (resident), Dr. Taylor Wilkins (resident), Dr. Richard Johnson (staff), Dr. Erin Ferrier (resident), Dr. Sadie Maidens (resident), Dr. Emma Sypes (resident), Dr. Claire Neilson (resident), Dr. Todd Gauthier (staff) and Dr. Brent Deveau (resident).

The Pembroke Family Medicine Teaching Unit (PFMTU) has recently completed a major expansion, marking a significant milestone in efforts to recruit and retain family physicians for Renfrew County. This initiative reflects the growing demand for family doctors in the region and Pembroke Regional Hospital's (PRH) ongoing commitment to ensuring access to high-quality care for local residents.

Located on the fourth floor of Tower D at PRH, the PFMTU serves over 11,000 patients and consists of nine family physicians, a physician assistant, and a growing number of medical residents and learners. With its 1,500-square-foot expansion earlier this year, the Unit has increased its capacity from eight to 12 family medicine residents, supporting the training of future physicians and addressing physician shortages in the region.

The expansion which was supported by \$380,000 in renovations, has added new workspaces for staff and learners.

"This expansion is a crucial step in tackling the high number of unattached patients in Renfrew County," said Dr. Richard Johnson, Site Director of the Pembroke Residency Program and Chief of Family Practice at PRH. "Since our program began in 2009, over 80% of our graduates have stayed in the area initially, and five years later, 60% are still practicing locally. Additionally, 95% of our graduates choose to remain in rural settings. Building a strong learner pipeline is a proven

strategy for long-term recruitment."

As a rural site within the University of Ottawa's Department of Family Medicine, the PFMTU trains residents for two years, providing immersive rural experiences. This includes optional two-month per year placements in Deep River or Barry's Bay with local preceptors. "These remote opportunities not only help prepare our residents for rural practice but also strengthen health care delivery across the county," Dr. Johnson said.

A number of innovative programs and training opportunities have also been launched this year such as Indigenous cultural awareness training in collaboration with the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan.

"Our focus goes beyond training; it's about creating connections to our communities and preparing physicians who are committed to providing care where it's needed most," said Dr. Johnson.

Pembroke Regional Hospital President and CEO Sabine Mersmann said that recruitment programs like this are essential for ensuring sustainable health care in our region. "We want to thank Dr. Johnson, his team and all physicians in the region for supporting our medical learners and making them feel welcome both in the workplace and in the community. We will continue to support this vital work for the improvement of health care access in Renfrew County."

Join Us As A Patient Advisor Or Part Of Our Patient And Family Advisory Council

Patient advisors volunteer in various capacities to provide feedback and ideas that help us improve the quality and safety of the care we provide.

To apply, or learn more, please call (613) 732-2811, extension 6161 or email laurie.tomasini@prh.ca



MERRY
Christmas
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR

May your Christmas sparkle with moments of love, laughter and goodwill. And may the year ahead be full of contentment and joy. Have a very Merry Christmas.

Making year-end donations to organizations you believe in is a great way to receive tax-credits, which help to both reduce the total amount owing* and directly benefit causes you believe in.

Supporting local health care through the Pembroke Regional Hospital Foundation is a great example of this, so we've helped to make it easy for you to figure out your optimal donation and tax credits.

www.prhfoundation.com/tax-calculator



Help Us Build Care For The Future, Close To Home

Building on PRH's commitment to having quality care closer to home, we are focused on raising the necessary funds that will advance and expand our ability to provide top quality patient care, and ensure that our teams have access to the very best equipment and advanced technology to serve our community.

As the purchase of equipment is not fully funded by the government, we rely on the generous support of the community to ensure we have state-of-the-art equipment available at PRH. In continuing the Foundation's Mission of raising, managing and distributing funds to the Pembroke Regional Hospital for its highest priority equipment needs, here are some of the upcoming needs we are fundraising for:



Replacement CT Scanner - Our hospital's existing CT Scanner (purchased in 2012), currently services 12,000 cases per year and is approaching end-of-life (estimated date of 2026). An updated CT Scanner is required to ensure patients have continued access to this critical diagnostic imaging service at PRH.

Health Information System (Epic) - *Epic* is a powerful digital health information system used by hospitals to manage patient care. It helps health care providers access and update patient medical records securely in real time, ensuring accurate and efficient care. *Epic* also streamlines hospital operations, from scheduling appointments to tracking lab results and coordinating treatments. For patients, *Epic* offers a convenient tool called **MyChart**, where they can view their health records, test results, and upcoming appointments. Through this portal, patients can also communicate with their care team and even request prescription refills, making health care easier and more accessible.

Other equipment needs - Bone Density Test Unit, Thyroid Uptake System, Ultrasound Machines, Patient Beds, Maternal Fetal Monitor, GlideScope and more.

You can be part of this remarkable journey to advance local health care by making a donation using the attached donation form or becoming a **Monthly Donor**.

Thank you for your support of local health care!

YES, I will help my Pembroke Regional Hospital

- Here is a one-time gift to help my PRH when it needs me the most.
- I want to make a monthly gift to ensure the continued health and well being of Renfrew County families for the foreseeable future.
- I wish to make a pledge gift of \$_____ per year for 3 years to act as a transformation gift towards the greatest equipment needs at the Pembroke Regional Hospital.

Gift Amount: \$30 \$50 \$100 Other: _____

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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 extension 7408 or email: foundation@prh.ca. To make an online donation visit www.PRHFoundation.com.