

Community Connection



Pembroke Regional Hospital Spring 2025 Edition

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Pembroke Regional Hospital Is Excited To Be Part Of An Expanded Alliance Of Eastern Ontario Hospitals Using The *Epic* Digital Health System

Our hospital is excited to announce that we'll be joining five other Eastern Ontario hospitals in the adoption of *Epic*, the health information system which features the *MyChart* patient portal.

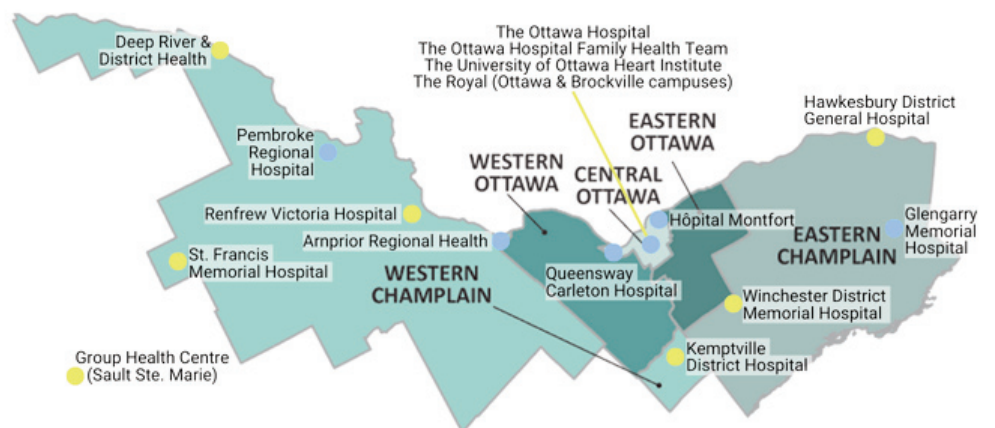
Together with Arnprior Regional Health, Glengarry Memorial Hospital, Hôpital Montfort, Queensway Carleton Hospital and The Royal, PRH will be part of an expanded launch of the digital health records system in the fall of 2026 which will ensure that patients and health care providers across Eastern Ontario have seamless access to health records while improving care coordination and patient outcomes.

Once the onboarding is complete, patients and health care providers at any one of the 16 partner organizations collectively known as the Atlas Alliance, will have access to the patient health records they need with just a few clicks. *Epic's* implementation and oversight will be managed by The Ottawa Hospital (TOH).

Cameron Love, TOH President and CEO explained that the expanded scope of the implementation project means that Pembroke Regional Hospital's go-live for *Epic* will be taking place later than initially anticipated. "This extended time to implementation takes into account the expanded workload to onboard six hospitals, the need to recruit for larger implementation teams, and the lead up training that will need to take place in order to ensure everyone is ready for go-live."

However, he said the end result of having 16 hospitals all on the same platform will be a real game changer for patients who often have appointments at multiple hospitals in the region and will soon, under *Epic*, have a single digital health record that can be accessed through *MyChart* and by any of the Atlas Alliance partners.

PRH President and CEO Sabine Mersmann said the hospital's multi-



million dollar investment in *Epic* will completely transform the hospital from working with a paper-based patient record to having a fully integrated electronic system.

From a recruitment perspective for physicians and other health care professionals, *Epic's* adoption will represent a standardized way of care delivery regardless of location and the hospital's learners will also be more comfortable moving between hospitals knowing the system and way of doing things is all the same.

"Onboarding with five other hospital partners will mean significant cost savings and incredible collaboration as we will all have access to the same standardized care pathways and best practices," Mrs. Mersmann said.

Acknowledging that this change project will represent the largest PRH has ever undertaken, Mrs. Mersmann said "Our team and our community are more than ready for this technological advancement and we are doing all we need on our end to prepare our hospital for this transformation."

PRH Announces New Chief of Staff



Dr. Declan Rowan

The Pembroke Regional Hospital's Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Declan Rowan as the new Chief of Staff, effective July 1st. Dr. Rowan will succeed Dr. Tom Hurley, who has served with distinction in this role for the past nine years.

Dr. Rowan brings over 30 years of clinical and leadership experience to PRH. He completed his medical education at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, and has held several senior positions across the region, including Chief of Hospitalist Medicine at PRH, Regional Primary Care Lead for Cancer Care Ontario, and Co-Chair of the Ottawa Valley Ontario Health Team Steering Committee.

He recently announced his retirement as Family Physician at the Pembroke Family Medicine Teaching Unit.

A resident of the Upper Ottawa Valley since 2006 and a father of five, Dr. Rowan is passionate about collaborative leadership, strategic system improvement, and ensuring access to high-quality, patient-centred care in his community. "It's a privilege to take on the role of Chief of Staff at Pembroke Regional Hospital. I'm inspired by the commitment of our medical staff and care teams, and I look forward to supporting a culture of collaboration, innovation, and excellence as we work together to meet the evolving needs of our community," said Dr. Rowan.



Dean Sauriol

Pembroke Regional Hospital Board Chair Dean Sauriol said he is thrilled to welcome Dr. Rowan as the hospital's new Chief of Staff.

"His extensive experience and vision for the hospital align perfectly with our mission and our goals. We are confident that under his leadership, PRH will continue to thrive and provide exceptional care to our community."

Continued on Page 2

PRH President And CEO Shares Update On Hospital's Transformative Upgrades

As shared in this update, many improvements and advancements in care delivery are taking place at PRH and enhancing the future trajectory of local health care.

In addition to those you will read about, I wanted to provide a brief overview of our construction projects and their status.

Surgical Project: On March 4th, our inpatient team successfully moved into their new space on the 3rd floor of Tower A, much to the delight of patients and staff who are now enjoying the bright, upgraded rooms and amenities. With the 2nd floor vacated, we've been able to refresh that area and will soon see the return of Medical patients to 2A.

Chemotherapy Unit: Our staff and patients moved into their new open-concept space in mid March and the feedback has been great. The final phase of this project on the 1st floor of Tower D is nearly complete, consisting of a new waiting room, meeting room and training room. We will host a grand opening of the entire space in the coming weeks.

Tower C Main Entrance: The

Mulvihill Drug Mart relocation and the opening of a new common area will take place in late May. Phase 2 of the project will then involve an install of automatic double doors in a new vestibule to create the hospital's new main entrance. Then, in preparation for the relocation of the Auxiliary's Gift Shop, this part of the work will also involve raising the floor in the former Mulvihill space. We are anticipating full completion of this project by the end of August – so it will be quite the transformation!

Looking ahead, we're already making plans to improve other parts of our facility including our 2nd floor Medical unit in Tower A. Should the province support these renovations, we would have an opportunity to transform the space as we've done in other areas to improve the patient experience and service delivery. While such a project would be a number of years out, it's important to start the planning process now.



Sabine Mersmann

New Chief of Staff...Continued from Front

PRH President and CEO Sabine Mersmann also expressed her enthusiasm for the new appointment. "Dr. Rowan is a great leader and will be an integral part of our leadership dyad. His dedication to patient-centred care and collaborative approach will undoubtedly drive our mission forward. We are excited to see the positive changes he will bring to our hospital."



Dr. Tom Hurley

Extending a heartfelt thank you to Dr. Hurley for his incredible leadership and contributions over the past nine years, Mrs. Mersmann said his commitment to excellence and dedication to Pembroke Regional Hospital has set a strong foundation for the future.

Dr. Hurley said serving as Chief of Staff for nearly a decade has been an honour. "I am proud of the progress we have made together and, as I step aside, I do so with sincere gratitude and confidence in the future. Dr. Rowan is a caring and competent physician and a natural leader. His past achievements have already earned him the respect of the professional staff, and I look forward to seeing his impact."

Infection Prevention and Control Tips For Hospital Visitors

As a visitor, it's important to follow the infection prevention and control guidelines provided by the healthcare team to keep everyone safe.

Screen Before You Visit

If you're not feeling well, please delay your visit. Screening before entering the hospital helps prevent the spread of illness.

Keep Your Hands Clean

One of the most effective ways to prevent infections is by cleaning your hands. Use the alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water available in the hospital.

When to Clean Your Hands:

- Before and after entering the hospital
- Before and after entering the patient's room or bed space
- Before and after wearing a mask, gown, or gloves
- Before eating, after using the washroom, or after blowing your nose
- Whenever your hands are visibly dirty
- Before or after providing care

Know How to Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) includes gowns, gloves, masks, and eye protection. It's worn by both staff and visitors to protect hands, eyes, nose, mouth, and clothing from germs that could cause infections.

If you're unsure whether PPE is required, check for instructions posted on the door or entrance to the patient's room, or ask a member of the care team. Always follow posted signs to identify the necessary PPE.

PRH Partners With County of Renfrew To Co-Host New HART Hub

Our hospital is excited to be co-hosting one of the province's 27 new Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs with the County of Renfrew.

The Renfrew County Mesa HART Hub represents a collaborative effort with Carefor, the City of Pembroke, the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan, MacKay Manor, Addictions Treatment Service, the Phoenix Centre for Children and Families, OATC (Ontario Addiction Treatment Centre) – Pembroke, Pathways Alcohol and Drug Treatments Services, Renfrew County Youth Wellness Hub, The Grind Pembroke, Renfrew County and District Health Unit, the Upper Ottawa Valley Ontario Provincial Police, local municipalities, first responders and various community organizations.

With an annual funding allocation of \$6.3 million, including \$1.3 million earmarked for Mental Health and Addictions Supportive Housing, PRH President and CEO Sabine Mersmann said the HART Hub will help address a critical need

in our region for services supporting those experiencing homelessness and addiction. Those services include:

- Primary Care
- Mental Health Services
- Addiction Care and Support
- Social Services
- Employment Services
- Supportive and Bridge Housing

It will complement existing services offered through the hospital's Mental Health program in partnership with the County's Mesa initiative and other regional mental health services.

"By thoughtfully integrating these established services into the HART Hub, we aim to create a more seamless and comprehensive support system for those struggling with homelessness and addiction," Mrs. Mersmann said, adding that the hospital is working closely with all involved to determine how best to integrate existing services launch other aspects of the Hub in the coming weeks and months.

New Partnership With CHEO Increases Local Availability Of Pediatric Surgeries

We are excited to share that a very successful go-live of a new PRH-CHEO partnership took place March 27th, enabling pediatric patients to have surgery closer to home while also helping to reduce wait times. The partnership is part of the *Regional Pediatric Surgical* program led by CHEO and the *Kids Come First* health team.

To facilitate this, CHEO surgeons have been granted privileges to operate at our hospital with the support of PRH nursing and anesthesia teams.

On launch day, the focus was on Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) surgeries, successfully completing five tonsil and adenoid procedures.

As part of the launch date, the CHEO team was on site to help support and guide our teams while also learning more about our flow and practices. It was an excellent collaboration and a day of high regard for both teams.

"Being able to work this closely with the CHEO team is really exciting for our staff and represents another important step in our commitment to delivering high-quality pediatric services and regional collaboration," said Beth Brownlee, Vice-President of Clinical Programs at PRH.

Going forward, we will be scheduling standard days in our Operating Room calendar for the CHEO partnership, focusing on ENT cases but also looking towards the provision of other services in the future, such as pediatric ophthalmology and general surgery.

The Regional Pediatric Surgical program was first launched in 2024 with funding from the province bringing the CHEO Day Surgery program to two sites: Brockville General Hospital and Carleton Place & District Memorial Hospital. PRH is part of the expansion for 2025 which will also include Hawkesbury's hospital.



Renfrew County Welcomes Four Physicians Through *Practice Ready Ontario* Program

Dr. Richard Johnson is excited to share that four new family physicians have recently settled into the community and more may be here by the summer thanks to the *Practice Ready Ontario* (PRO) program.

Dr. Johnson who is the Postgraduate Director of the Pembroke Family Medicine Teaching Unit and the Clinical Lead for the Ottawa Valley Ontario Health Team (OHT), said the *Practice Ready Ontario* program is helping to bring internationally trained physicians into our area at an expedited rate, marking a significant step forward in how the primary care shortage is being addressed in our region.



Dr. Richard Johnson

Launched in 2023, the PRO program helps to bring more internationally trained physicians into Ontario's health care workforce by removing the requirement to complete unnecessary re-education programs.

Only candidates who meet the registration requirements and safeguards set by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) are selected to participate in the program. These safeguards are based on national *Practice Ready Assessment Standards* established by the Medical Council of Canada.

For each physician, the CPSO verifies previous practice experience through a highly structured three-month field assessment, after which a supervisory license is issued. Each doctor is then supervised by a local family physician until they are eligible to receive an independent license. This rigorous process ensures that only highly qualified family doctors are recruited to our community for a minimum of three years return-of-service.

Dr. Johnson explained that the program's first round has been highly successful, with Renfrew County securing four of 28 candidates in Ontario. The new physicians who were welcomed into our community in the fall of 2024 are:

- Dr. Ali Ziaee (West Champlain Family Health Team)
- Dr. Helia Ghanean (West Champlain Family Health Team)
- Dr. Salwa Alshahabi (Pembroke Family Medicine Teaching Unit)
- Dr. Hadi Nemazi (Petawawa Centennial Family Health Centre)

Each has since taken on a roster of unattached patients, primarily those who were registered with *Health Care Connect*. To register for *Health Care Connect*, those without a family physician can call 1-800-445-1822 or visit www.ontario.ca/healthcareconnect.

"This year, up to 100 internationally trained physicians with training in family medicine who have completed their field assessment will begin practicing as a family doctor in rural and northern communities. We hope to be able to welcome some of these physicians by the summer," Dr. Johnson said.

Pembroke Regional Hospital President and CEO Sabine Mersmann expressed her gratitude to the physician groups and especially to the Pembroke Family Medicine Teaching Unit for taking on these new physicians.

"Not only are these new physicians helping to ensure that more local residents have a primary care physician, but they are also assisting with many hospital and long term care home services," Mrs. Mersmann said.

Recreation Therapy Brings Healing And Hope To Those With Mental Illness

On any given day, patients on our Acute Mental Health unit can be found partaking in a number of leisure activities, both group-based and independently, as part of their journey to recovery.

Some of the therapeutic activities include arts and crafts, relaxation exercises, walks and stretching on the unit's outdoor patio, gardening, pet therapy, board and card games, bean bag toss, trivia and bingo. Additionally, self-directed activities such as journaling, knitting, diamond art, paint-by-numbers, word searches, crossword puzzles, and adult colouring are offered and encouraged when groups aren't running.

"More than just activities, however, recreation therapy is an essential component of mental health treatment that offers patients meaningful opportunities to build skills, connect with others and improve their overall well-being," said Recreation Therapist Shannon Reckzin. "It's about using recreation as a tool to support recovery, improve mental health and enhance an individual's quality of life."

"Our goal is to uplift people through simple leisure activities," Ms. Reckzin said. "We challenge patients to connect with others through the activities that they do. We encourage them to say 'yes' in small increments and to try new things. As a result, it's incredibly rewarding to see them proud of their accomplishments and realize that they can effect change in themselves."

Ms. Reckzin said patients are also encouraged to use some of their down time in hospital to start planning for their return home by considering what they can add to their daily routine in order to maintain balance – whether that be joining a gym, volunteering, going for walks, planning social outings, or taking up some form of crafting or artwork.

"Recreation played a key role in helping me conquer my anxiety and

depression," shared one patient, adding that they "loved" how the activities helped to slow their racing thoughts to the point where they were actually able to laugh and enjoy the time spent with others.

Bailey Lance-Provençal, Clinical Manager of the hospital's Acute Mental Health unit said recreation therapy is designed to support holistic recovery for patients who are facing mental health challenges by involving them in meaningful and enjoyable activities that address various aspects of their well-being.



Shannon Reckzin, left, is seen with Marley and Pet Therapy Volunteer Marie Josee Lessard.

This approach helps individuals rediscover activities they enjoy, develop new coping strategies, and rebuild routines. By fostering these positive experiences, the program promotes overall mental health and wellness, enabling participants to actively engage in their own recovery process.

The benefits of recreation therapy are numerous. It reduces anxiety and stress, decreases isolation, elevates emotional well-being, increases independence, builds self-esteem and confidence, enhances motivation, promotes community integration, ensures better quality of sleep, minimizes trigger behaviors, and increases participation in meaningful activities.

Given the amount of pressure so many put on themselves in life, Ms. Reckzin said ensuring leisure time is set aside is important for everyone as it helps to manage stress and balance with work life.

"Our goal is to empower patients to see the possibilities in their recovery journey," Ms. Reckzin added. "Recreation therapy reminds them that there is joy and fulfillment to be found, even in challenging times."

Immunizations are safe and the most effective way to prevent many serious diseases and illnesses. There's no time like the present to catch up with routine immunizations.



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RENFREW COUNTY AND DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT



Increased Number of Medical Learners Helps To Boost Potential For Future Recruitment

At any given time, the Pembroke Regional Hospital is the proud host to a number of learners in various disciplines, on average, over 300 per year. This includes a significant number of medical learners who are supported by the hospital's health care team and may well become members of the hospital's professional staff in the future.

"Our commitment to education and training is unwavering," said PRH President and CEO Sabine Mersmann. "By supporting these learners, we are investing in the future of health care and that is really exciting. We not only welcome them in to our hospital, but to our broader community as well and we take the time to showcase the lifestyle that our region has to offer."



Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Chris de Jesus demonstrates casting techniques for first year Medical students.

Mrs. Mersmann added that the dedication and passion of these individuals is truly inspiring, and it's exciting to see them thrive as part of our health care team.

Currently, in addition to those learners who are in nursing or supporting other hospital services, those hosted by the Pembroke Regional Hospital include:

- 3rd Year Medical students from the University of Ottawa in the specialties of General Surgery, Obstetrics/Gynecology, and Family Medicine
- General Surgery and Family Medicine Residents who are in their last two years of training
- International medical students
- Midwives and Physician Assistants

In total, for the upcoming academic year, 191 medical learners will call PRH home for a period ranging from a single day to two-year placements. This number has been gradually increasing over the last several years, with an expectation of further growth in the years ahead.



PRH Physiatrist Dr. Debbie Timpson's work is observed by two first year Medical students.

Mrs. Mersmann expressed her gratitude to the staff and physicians who are doing a tremendous amount of work in order to support and accommodate the increased numbers. She said that they do so knowing how important and valuable it is to invest in these individuals and their educational journey.

For the hospital, the learners' presence is also a great value added given their fresh perspectives and eagerness to learn. "This not only enhances the quality of care we provide but it also helps foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. By integrating learners into our health care team, we ensure that our patients benefit from the latest advancements in medical knowledge and practice while we help shape those who will care for our residents in the years to come."

Kudos Corner

We are pleased to share a recent compliment sent to us by a patient who had a Surgical appointment in March.

I am writing to relay my great satisfaction with the staff who made my recent surgical experience a very good one. In particular, I would like to highlight some of the individuals I encountered before, during and post-surgery:

- *Unit Clerk, Ashley Scott, Pre-Op Assessment Clinic, who handled my appointment setup with efficiency and good cheer;*
- *Registered Nurse Joanne Fillipi, Pre-Admission Clinic, who provided important information and answered my questions prior to the day of surgery;*
- *Jeris Johnston, Registered Nurse who prepared me for transfer to the Surgical team in an efficient, timely and kind manner;*
- *Dorothy Bechamp, Porter, who clearly enjoyed her patient interactions;*
- *Lauren Dick, Registered Practical Nurse, who ensured I was comfortable post-surgery by providing me with roast beef sandwiches, juice, and my phone so I could reach family;*
- *Melissa Harriott, Registered Nurse, who assisted me with final preparations before going into the operating theatre;*
- *Dr. Erika Lee, Surgeon, who was patient and kind while describing how her team would proceed and was attentive to my final questions;*
- *Dr. Paul Lavigne, Anesthesiologist who was friendly, funny and helped me to understand how my body could recover from earlier trauma or deficiencies to keep performing at its best.*

Between Dr. Lee and Dr. Lavigne, I felt confident that I'd receive excellent expertise and care while delivering the best outcome for me. I've had a few surgeries over the decades, and this was my most positive experience to date. I'm grateful to all for your care and talents.



Leaving a gift in your will to
the Pembroke Regional
Hospital is an opportunity for
you to create stronger
healthcare for tomorrow!



LEGACY/ PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM

- ✓ Tax Benefits
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CONTACT US!

613-732-2811 x 7408

foundation@prh.ca



Help Keep Healthcare Close to Home!

Building on PRH's commitment to have 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, while ensuring that our teams have access to the very best equipment and advanced technology to serve our community. As the purchase of equipment is not funded by the government, it is up to the generous support of the community to ensure that we have state-of-the-art equipment available at PRH. In continuing the Foundation's mission of raising, managing and distributing funds to hospital for it's highest priority equipment needs, here are some of the upcoming needs we are fundraising for:



High priority needs of our regional hospital:

- **Replacement CT Scanner** - PRH's existing CT Scanner (purchased in 2012) currently services nearly 14,000 cases per year and is approaching end-of-life (estimated date of 2026). An updated CT Scanner is required to ensure that patients have continued access to this critical diagnostic imaging service at Pembroke Regional Hospital.
- **Health Information System (Epic)** - Best recognized by patients as the system that has the *MyChart* patient portal, all information will be transferred from a paper-based system to a connected digital system that receives and organizes all inputs along a patient's journey and analyzes that data to provide staff and physicians with actionable information to treat patients. *MyChart* will enable patients to allow access to health information including appointments, lab and diagnostic imaging results, and discharge/medication instructions.
- **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 donation form below 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: _____

☐ Please use my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMERICAN EXPRESS

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By selecting "Recurring Monthly Donation", you can make a gift that keeps on giving and helps 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.