

**Report from the Pembroke Regional Hospital
to the
Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario / Meeting of the Members
May 2025
Report for Fiscal Year 2024-2025**

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, 2025. As requested, this report deals with the themes below as indicated on the topics for inclusion.

Serving the people in our community who experience poverty, inequity and marginalization:

Pembroke Regional Hospital is the regional hospital for Renfrew County. Renfrew County has experienced a significant opioid crisis since 2022 and has seen a well above the Ontario average number of deaths associated with overdoses. The Homelessness crisis has taken a toll on the County and particularly the City of Pembroke.

About one year ago the Hospital CEO in her leadership role at the Ottawa Valley OHT initiated discussions on how to coordinate and organize efforts to address the drug crisis in Pembroke. Subsequently a County-wide committee was formed under the leadership of the OHT and Public Health with Mental Health and Addictions representatives and municipal leaders to systematically address the pillars of opioid management. The work of this committee was recently released and the plan is being implemented.

At the same time the County of Renfrew created a strategy called “Mesa” which is an integrated and coordinated low barrier service for people experiencing homelessness and addiction. The hospital’s crisis team through our Community Mental Health Program is a significant and collaborative partner in this strategy.

Starting with Mesa and the Minister’s announcement of proposed funding for HART Hubs across Ontario, the Hospital, the County and many partners answered the call for proposal and were successful in the application process. This resulted in PRH and the County of Renfrew co-leading the development and implementation of various aspects of the HART Hub in our rural community. The Hospital is leading the work on supportive housing and residential withdrawal management as well as the executive oversight of the project.

Our work on equity, diversity and inclusion:

Pembroke Regional Hospital formed its EDI Committee in 2022. There was a broad call for representatives, and the committee was immediately engaged and very active in their work to address stigma and bias, provide education and celebrations. Since the Committee’s inception, the Hospital is now celebrating Pride Month, has more focussed efforts on National Indigenous Peoples’ Day, Indigenous Awareness Week and has strengthened its relationship with various community groups such as PFLAG Renfrew County, Pembroke Pride, The Indigenous Health Circle, the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan and others.

Our leaders have participated in various education programs with PFLAG and Pride and in Indigenous teaching such as the Kairo Blanket Exercise. The Hospital participates on a Renfrew County Administrators Group and the first initiative we undertook focussed on Indigenous cultural safety training with our executives’ team. We had two full day sessions with Indigenous leaders and are working on the implementation of projects in each of our organizations.

We have an Indigenous representative on our Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) and are regularly communicating with the health leaders at Pikwakanagan to improve patient transitions and health service delivery. Our Spiritual Care Coordinator is organising and enabling smudging ceremonies as well as drumming circles.

Policy updates include a review of the gender-oriented language and making changes to promote greater inclusivity. Moreover, we encourage our leaders to indicate their pronouns in their signature lines.

Diversity on our leadership team and Board is a challenge in our community since we have a less diverse community than other regions in Ontario. We have participated in a recent OHA survey on Diversity of Board and leaders and are hoping to receive advice on how to improve.

Project SEARCH is an innovative initiative involving Pembroke Regional Hospital (PRH), the Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB), and Algonquin College. This program aims to create on-the-job internships for students with developmental or intellectual delays.

The program provides a combination of on-the-job training and classroom instruction, equipping students with the skills needed for successful employment. This year marks PRH's first participation in the program, with an anticipated start date in 2025. This initiative underscores PRH's commitment to addressing unmet needs in the community, particularly by supporting a group that, despite their talents and capabilities, often faces underemployment.

Through this project, PRH's values of Compassion, Collaboration, Commitment, and Courage will be lived out, ensuring that every intern receives the support and opportunities they deserve. Additionally, the program offers a side benefit of allowing PRH employees to give back to the community, fostering a sense of fulfillment and engagement among staff.

Developments and discussion in regards to MAiD:

At Pembroke Regional Hospital, we have focused a lot of attention on MAiD education for our staff and physicians. With the assistance of Dr. Hazel Markwell and our Board Ethics Committee, our efforts have centered around developing a comprehensive policy and we have created an education handout which outlines how to best support patients and families inquiring about MAiD. This handout encourages compassionate care and accurate information, while also supporting the transfer of care as appropriate. Additionally, we have ensured that our staff is well-informed about the steps to take when a patient asks about MAiD, including notifying the Most Responsible Physician (MRP) and considering other consults such as palliative care, ethics, spiritual care, and social work

We have started an open and regular dialogue with our community physicians who provide MAiD to assist us with early identification of patients who require a transfer into the community or to another hospital.

Dr. Markwell also provided an education session to the Board as well as to the professional staff at Grand Rounds on MAiD and the current legislation as well as the proposed changes to the legislation.