

New hospital president aims to 'hit the ground running'?

Written By MIKE BAKER

As Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) prepares to enter one of the most pivotal periods in its 22-year history, it will do so with a new captain at the wheel as Kim Delahunt prepares to take on the role of President and CAO on an interim basis.

Ms. Delahunt has spent her entire career working within the health care sector in Ontario. Most recently she was Vice President of Health System Strategy, Integration and Planning with the Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), but now she's focused on continuing the groundwork and maintaining the momentum generated by her predecessor, while hoping to leave her own imprint on an institutions she holds close to her heart.

'This is just such a huge opportunity for me, one that, when it became available, I just could not pass up,' Ms. Delahunt informed the Citizen. 'Headwaters is such a great hospital, I live here in the community, so this seemed like a perfect fit on both a personal and professional level.'

Ms. Delahunt started her new position in late September, initially working alongside former President and CAO Stacey Daub, who left her position on Oct. 9 for a new opportunity in Toronto, to ensure she hit the ground running.

Having worked closely alongside the hospital for several years in her position with the Central West LHIN, Ms. Delahunt says she's very well aware of the ongoing projects, such as the renovations and improvements to lobby and main entrance of the facility, future projects, like the planned renovations to the emergency department, and special initiatives, such as HHCC's role in the Hills of Headwaters Collaboration.

The one take-away from her first few weeks on the job, Ms. Delahunt says, has been witnessing first-hand how all staff employed by the hospital work together and, seemingly, pull together in the same direction.

'HHCC has such a strong reputation in the community and amongst its peers, and a lot of that has to do with the staff and the way they engage, not only with one other, but with the community,' Ms. Delahunt said. 'Every time I went to a meeting at Headwaters, from the moment I stepped into the hospital I felt a warm and welcoming atmosphere. It has a certain feel about it. I would hear before about how committed and hardworking some of the staff are, but I'm having the ability to see it first-hand now.'

While she is currently employed on an interim basis, Kim says she hopes to turn this opportunity into a permanent one. In the short-term, she discussed the projects that will be front and centre and her to-do list, notably serving as co-chair of the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative as the region seeks to be one of the first communities selected to become a new Ontario Health Team.

For that process, Ms. Delahunt says she's already in the process of organizing a mock site visit, to prepare all the different players in the Collaboration for when the Province conducts its visit sometime this fall.

'We're hoping to run the mock site visit in about three weeks. That will be about prepping materials and making sure everyone is comfortable speaking to everything included in our submission,' Ms. Delahunt said. 'All of our partners are excited by this. I believe we're ready to be one of the first communities (in Ontario to be selected as an OHT). The rich history of collaboration between service providers here in Dufferin-Caledon has been a tremendous base to build off of.'

Offering her thoughts on what, exactly, a transition to an OHT model would mean for services not only at the local hospital, but across all service providers in Dufferin-Caledon, Ms. Delahunt says it will enable patients to receive a more seamless service no matter where they go in the region.

'We've included extensive plans in this OHT process, so we have 30-day, 60-day and 90-day plans, as well as a first-year outlook.'

During that first year, we will carry out due diligence risk analysis with all of our partners on performance, financial stability, those types of things. Then we work towards developing a community board of directors and making sure all of our partners start to work closer together," Ms. Delahunt said.

One area of improvement, where patients will be able to see a marked difference, is in digital software.

"There's a lot of work we're doing on the digital side. We've set some clear targets in year one that will enable patients to book visits online, have access to results and see notes and information about their appointments. That's a really big thing. Our hope is that, eventually, we'll be able to roll that out across some of our partnering providers too," Ms. Delahunt said.

Looking long-term, Kim mentioned the hospital is in the process of establishing a 10-year master plan, which will help outline the future of the hospital and the services it hopes to provide over the next decade.

"We need to grow and bring more services that are truly needed to this community. We need to look at our population's health needs, to determine what those services are that are needed and can actually be provided locally," Ms. Delahunt said. "We're delivering a large number of babies at Headwaters, so perhaps we can look at that capacity, we can look at our operating rooms, and then even our emergency department. We're currently seeing double the number of patients that the ER department was originally built for."

Regarding new programming, Ms. Delahunt was hesitant to speculate, but suggested there could be potential for additional diagnostic imaging, specifically relating to MRIs and CTs, and improved surgical capacity. She also mentioned that the hospital has seen a marked increase in cancer care services provided to the community in recent years, so that could be another area for potential enhancement. More services for people suffering with mental health and addiction issues was also noted as a priority for the hospital.

"It's a really busy time at Headwaters hospital, I'm going to have my work cut out for me and I have some very big shoes to fill, but I'm excited to be here," Ms. Delahunt reiterated. "I've been welcomed with open arms. This is a committed group of staff and volunteers. Everyone is committed to ensuring Headwaters continues to be a highly respected hospital. I'm thankful to have the opportunity to play a part in that now, and hopefully long-term. This is an important stage for the hospital as we look to build for the future."

Check out next week's edition of the Caledon Citizen for part two of our in-depth look into the Hills of Headwaters Collaborative's bid to become one of the province's first Ontario Health Teams. Next week's piece will focus on how the transition will impact some of the key service providers currently operating in our region.