



Back to School 2008

Remarks for
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Living Arts Centre

Hi everyone and welcome!

While many in this room have been attending Back to School Conferences for the past eight years, last year was my first time. And I must say, I was very impressed.

It was well organized and the topics and speakers made it a truly rewarding learning experience.

And this year we've raised the bar of excellence even higher.

A great deal of hard work goes into coordinating this conference and I would like to acknowledge Caroline and the Back to School team for their important efforts.

Our theme - *Achieving Quality through Resilience and Innovation* – basically says it all.

How can we, as health care professionals, continue to provide quality service to our patients when our community's needs are growing and our resources are feeling a significant pinch?

Part of the answer is to be resilient and to be innovative. We at Trillium Health Centre have embraced this direction.

At last year's Back to School Conference I spoke about our objectives for this year, and in large part, we've met those goals.

I admit, our journey wasn't easy.

We've lived through a year in which we faced budget cuts and saw significant volume increases. Yet we marched ahead.

Yes, we at Trillium are a resilient group, and our determination and commitment to providing quality care - regardless of the challenges or obstacles we face – is not lost on our community, our partners, and most important, on our patients.

Someone once said that the life of a front-line hospital worker is much like that of an army officer – bloody, frantic and often undervalued by those in command.

Well, that's not the case for me, our Board of Directors, nor my senior team.

We value your work. We appreciate you, and we are proud of your many successes and accomplishments.

We recognize the amount of hours and commitment each and every one of you puts into your job and the dedication you give to our patients.

I know the sacrifices you make in order to give 100 per cent of your energy to your work, and then go home and give equal attention to your families and yourselves.

It's a tough balancing act that's greatly appreciated.

We don't say thank you as often as we should so today I would like to take this opportunity and say "Thank you".

Thank you everyone – to our staff, physicians and volunteers - for your commitment and dedication to our patients, their families and to each other.

Thank you to our generous Foundation donors, and to our many partners who invest in Trillium because they believe in our work and our commitment to providing the best care possible to our patients.

Thank you also to our health care partners - our neighbouring hospitals, CCACs, LHINs and the Ministry of Health – some are here with us today – for your support and direction.

We may think the work we do here is pretty much the same as in any other hospital.

Well, I've only been here for 18 months, and I've worked for and with many health care organizations across Canada and throughout the world - and I can assure you - all hospitals are not all alike.

I can honestly say that Trillium has a distinct heartbeat.

For despite the challenges and obstacles we face, we persevere. We look for solutions and we rely on each other.

That's not the case everywhere.

From my first day here, I have always been so proud of the Trillium team. I have always been so impressed with our people's spirit and passion for pushing the envelope to provide quality, patient-centred care. It's one of the main reasons why I came to Trillium.

And I was reminded of what a wonderful team I have here when I recently received word that the National Quality Institute had recognized Trillium for its organizational excellence, quality performance and for providing a healthy workplace with the gold award and the Progressive Excellence Program Level 4 award.

Trillium is only the second hospital in Canada to be recognized with this distinction and in awarding us this honour, NQI said Trillium was most deserving because it consistently showed:

- Strong leadership and commitment
- Strong patient focus at all levels
- Strategic alignment of aims, measures and activities
- Capability for improvement

- And an engaged “just do it” workforce.

This is much deserved recognition for the people of Trillium. And it made me reflect on all our accomplishments over the past year.

This was the year in which we:

- Started the Lean 5S de-cluttering program.
- Reduced wait times for cataract surgery and hip and knee replacements
- Opened six state-of-the art spaces: the fracture clinic, the catheterization lab, the urgent care centre, the Lockwood Cancer detection and treatment centre, the clinical and administrative building, and the Trillium way.
- Launched the Kailo Program to promote employee wellness.

And our many accomplishment don't stop here.

Let's not forget that we play a critical role in providing quality health care to more than one million people of all ages and diverse backgrounds.

Let's not forget that our hospital is a leader... a leader in environmental management, health informatics and patient-centred care.

We've won international attention for our work as a regional cardiac and stroke centre, and we have the largest free-standing day surgery centre in North America.

That's something to boast about, and boasting is something we need to do more of around here.

Trillium will officially receive the NQI award next month at the Canada Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner.

We were asked to develop a short video that demonstrates our Quality journey which we'll show at the dinner.

When I saw the video for the first time, I felt such a tremendous sense of pride.

As the images rolled past, I couldn't help but be thankful for having the opportunity to work with such an amazing group of people and I wanted... insisted... that we share it with you today.

If we're ready, lets turn off the lights and turn our attention to the video.

The Trillium story showcased in this video... our successes and achievements... are all because of you... because of everyone in this room...

You all deserve a round of applause.

I believe this recognition casts a positive light on Trillium. It strengthens our ability to recruit and retain top staff, physicians and volunteers.

This recognition also reinforces our public image as an innovative hospital that strives for excellence at every turn - a hospital that invests time, money and talent into providing quality care to its patients.

A hospital doesn't earn top awards by coasting on its past achievements. I believe we've climbed this far because of one magic word: QUALITY!

When I was growing up I often heard the word ‘quality’ spoken by adults. It was often my mother speaking to her friends about a new coat she had purchased – a quality cashmere coat you know.

Or, I’d see the word in advertisements – quality food, quality travel, and in newspapers to describe a politician as a “man of high quality”.

Rarely did we hear the word quality associated to health care.

We assumed doctors, surgeons, nurses and other care givers were all cut from the same cloth.

And we assumed that the provision of health care was equal regardless of where you were treated.

That wasn’t true then and it’s not true now.

What we do know is that today’s patient is better educated, well-read and impatient. They’re also willing to travel long distances to get the health care they need and deserve. They won’t opt for second-class service – its first class all the way.

And I don't blame them.

I too want the best health care team – a quality
team - to treat me.

Quality is a tiny adjective, but it means a lot, and we
at Trillium want to place that word before every
noun.

And we'll accomplish this through teamwork.

Together, we will continue to better our skills and
develop innovative ways to care for our
patients.

I know the word CHANGE has been used a lot
these past months, especially south of the border,
but I too believe change is positive.

You may be asking yourself, we just won
recognition for the wonderful work we do at Trillium,
so why would we want to make any changes?

The simple answer is because we're striving for
excellence.

ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

One of the first steps we're taking on our path towards excellence is the development of an accountability framework.

One that will guide us in our work life and in delivering quality service to our patients.

Some of you have told us that your roles and responsibilities at Trillium should be defined more clearly. That we should spell out exactly what is expected of you.

An accountability framework will do this.

It will allow us to measure performance against agreed-upon outcomes and service standards.

And help define our priorities and measure success.

It will show how each of us is accountable for our work and assess our individual contributions against those priorities

This outcomes-based framework will be non-punitive and will support continuous improvement

I think you'll agree that Trillium must continue to be patient-centred, and be identified by a strong brand and a clearly articulated service promise.

We should deliver a combination of services that our patients need based on their special needs or social and demographic circumstances.

And we must be able to provide our patients with a single point of access to all our programs and services no matter which Trillium location they go to first.

Our patients should be able to get the services they need, when they need them.

Services that are responsive and modern.

Our patients should also benefit from ongoing service improvements, thanks to an accountability framework that encourages and rewards innovation and gauges effectiveness and efficiency.

When the day comes that I leave Trillium, I want to leave knowing that I made a positive contribution to this hospital.

I want to leave a wonderful team in place, but most important, I want to leave knowing that Trillium has become synonymous with quality health care.

But the senior team can't do it alone. We need your input to reach our goals.

STANDARDS FOR BEHAVIOUR

And one of our goals for this year is to introduce Standards For Behaviour.

Our list of 12 standards of behaviour will guide us in the way we interact with our colleagues and guide us in our work.

And because we deal with the public, we must commit to the highest standards.

These standards will influence the way we speak, the way we dress, and how we behave. Taken together, they will help us live the Trillium promise

of patient-centred care and excellence in all that we do.

I truly believe these standards will promote a healthy work environment and I am pleased to support this policy which was initiated, led and developed by our own staff.

The 8 standards for behaviour, in no particular order are:

1. Work safely and ensure others are safe
2. Maintain commitment to co-workers
3. Communicate for greater understanding
4. Show courtesy in person, elevator and phone
5. Be accountable by keeping your word and through wayfinding
6. Respect our environment, and resources
7. Respect the privacy of everyone
8. Take pride in appearance and profession

I hope all of you will join me in practising and incorporating these standards of behaviour into the work we do here everyday.

We haven't ironed out all the details yet, but before anything is put into practice you will receive additional communication well in advance.

STRATEGIC PLAN

I want to take this opportunity to speak briefly about our new strategic plan.

I firmly believe that a smart institution should have a good road map based on the details of a strategic plan.

I say this because we don't know what lies ahead for us, so we better plan now for any unexpected twists and turns, or worse still - road blocks and dead ends we may face down the road.

I emphasize the word **us** because if we're going to face any uphill challenges, it will require commitment, determination, loyalty and drive from us all.

Our current strategic plan was developed in 2006 and it has served us really well. In the past three

years we have met many of our priorities and we're nearing completion on many others.

I'm now working very closely with our senior team and our Board of Directors on our next three-year plan which will be introduced in March.

This new plan - with input from staff, physicians, volunteers and our community – will shape our priorities for the next three years.

For the past several months, we've held several focus groups and meetings to engage and seek feedback from our internal and external stakeholders.

Thank you to all who completed the staff survey and to those who participated in our focus groups. Your input is very important and influences our work.

You will have other opportunities for input into the planning process, because what you think matters to us. We will build the next phase of Trillium together.

So far you've told us:

- Everything cannot be ours to do so we need to select a few items and focus on doing them well.
- We need to speak in language that is simple and easy to understand.
- And you believe the budget motivates our decisions. This is not true. The budget does not drive our decision making - quality and excellence in health care does.

We are only one hospital within the LHIN and that means we cannot operate in isolation within our community and within the greater health care network.

No longer can we make program decisions in isolation.

As part of a greater health care network, it is our responsibility to lead the way through innovation and by training the next generation of health care leaders as we enter the age of e-health.

And Trillium has done this in great part by
developing key partnerships.

Trillium already has relationships with more than
400 health care and community-based
organizations, which allows us to enhance our
health services.

Our partnership with the University of Toronto
Mississauga and our new status as a teaching
facility will allow us to meet our goal of developing
tomorrow's health care leaders.

Trillium was built on a culture of learning and I am
committed to continuing that learning and to sharing
the innovations that we develop.

I believe that information management drives quality
care, and we at Trillium are definitely in the driver's
seat.

And as it concerns the strategic plan - we're not
ready to announce anything just yet, but this I can
share with you today.

Our strategic plan will be closely linked to an accountability framework and to outcomes-based management.

As for our priorities – they'll be influenced by our LHIN, government, demographics, quality and excellence.

Next month I'll be meeting with the strategy team to refine our priorities.

And I hope to have a draft plan to show you by January.

HEALTHY WORKPLACE SURVEY

Now I want to talk a bit about us.

In our last survey, the majority of you said you are happy with your work at Trillium.

You enjoy working with your colleagues, and in general, you find the hospital to be a great place to work.

But many of you also outlined some challenges and areas that needed improvement.

Our results show that although we scored higher than our peer hospitals, staff satisfaction did drop approximately 3% and this is significant to me.

I want you to know that I hear you... we hear you... and we are working to address your concerns.

I have asked my senior team to work with each of their teams to improve work life for everyone.

This is important because we spend more than 1,500 hours working together every year, so employee satisfaction is important.

I believe a positive, healthy and rewarding culture benefits us all, but it requires continuous feedback.

We need to hear from you, because feedback is how we learn and grow. We want to know what we're doing right, and what needs fixing.

Thank you for telling us how you feel. We hear you and we will be acting and working with you to address your issues and challenges.

And what about our own health?

Studies show that the inability to balance work and family demands not only places stress on the individual, but also reduces work performance, increases absenteeism, leads to higher turnover, lower job commitment and poorer morale.

I truly believe that as we continue to transform the health care experience Trillium must provide a healthy workplace committed to learning and development.

Part of our strategic plan will be to find new ways to help staff balance their work and home life, because a healthy worker is a productive worker.

CONCLUSION

This is a very exciting time to be working at Trillium and in the health care sector in general.

And while I can't predict the future, I'm confident that Trillium will continue to win accolades for its innovation and quality of service for many years to come.

This hospital has won the respect of the health care community and the public at large, but it couldn't have reached these heights without you. Your passion and loyalty to your work has brought us here.

Again, I thank you for being here today and for staying committed to a hospital that makes quality a top priority.

Enjoy the rest of the conference.

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