

IERHA shares year's highlights at AGM

By Jennifer McFee

Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority representatives shared highlights of the past year at the RHA's recent annual general meeting, while also taking time to acknowledge the impacts of COVID in the Interlake and beyond.

The virtual meeting took place Monday, Oct. 3 with more than 96 participants from across the region joining online and by phone. Robert Maytwayashing, Interlake-Eastern RHA's Indigenous human resources development officer and an Anishinaabe Knowledge Keeper, opened the meeting with a prayer.

CEO Marion Ellis pointed out a number of unplanned influences on health care that needed to be considered for health-care delivery. These influences include increased staff vacancy rates and staff who needed to miss work after testing positive for COVID.

"Our staff have seen us all through a global pandemic and the conflicting demands it presented personally and professionally. Staff vacancies are additionally challenging for a workforce that is stretched thin," she said.

On the flipside, Ellis acknowledged the staff members whose commitment to their work and their communities have maintained delivery of health-care services through challenging times.

She also said the regional health authority has greatly benefitted from community members who value the people in health care and the health services being delivered. Through the global pandemic, flooding, grass fires and snow storms, elected leaders and community members have done all they can to protect the welfare of patients and residents and ensure health-care providers can continue delivering care.

Glen West, chair of IERHA's board of directors, also shared gratitude for the community's support for staff and physicians, particularly at the start of the pandemic when there were so many unknowns.

"Care for the caregivers has always been a hallmark of life in rural Manitoba, and we thank you for continuing to lift the spirits of health-care workers," West said. "You were there cheering us on during a very difficult time in health care."

On behalf of the board, West extended condolences to the region's residents who lost loved ones during the pandemic. At the same time, he also acknowledged the hard work of health-care workers who answered the call to support the pandemic response.

"So many of us were unable to memorialize people in traditional ways of mourning given the restrictions in place at the time. Over 2,000 Manitobans have lost their lives to COVID-19," he said.

"Each and every individual in health care played a role in getting us through the pandemic. And, to the best of their ability, these health-care workers continued to deliver the health-care services we needed. Our staff have continued to make care for patients, residents and clients a priority, regardless of the challenges that COVID-19 presented. For that, we will be eternally grateful."

He noted that COVID testing sites wrapped up in Eriksdale and Powerview-Pine Falls in March 2022, followed by the Selkirk testing site in April.

“The vaccination sites in Selkirk and Gimli both opened and closed over the past year. Almost 150,000 immunizations were delivered at the Selkirk supersite,” he said.

“At peak, the site was delivering 1,400 immunizations daily. The Gimli supersite provided almost 13,000 immunizations with a capacity of up to 400 immunizations a day.”

In addition, West noted that IERHA introduced a new strategic plan in 2021 through collaborative efforts with stakeholders and staff. The plan features six strategic goals — integrated and co-ordinated health care, primary and community care transformation, Indigenous and vulnerable populations, mental health and addictions, health human resources, and innovation and technology.

Each goal has its own strategic steering committee made up of board members, IERHA representatives and community members. Anyone interested in participating can fill out a strategic steering committee application form at www.ierha.ca under “Publications & Reports” and “Strategic Plan.”

Other opportunities exist for community members to contribute through local health involvement groups, which provide assistance, advice and information to the board. To get involved, visit ierha.ca, click on “Community Involvement” and then “Local Health Involvement Groups.”

AGM materials are posted on the IERHA website www.ierha.ca under “About Us” and “Annual General Meeting.” These include the annual report with financial statements, a recording of the meeting and an evaluation form related to the meeting.