DEEP RIVER & DISTRICT HEALTH

Deep River and District Health Board Highlights September 2026

Board

- The Board of Directors completed its annual orientation and education refresh, receiving a presentation from the Executive Leadership Team on the current provincial healthcare landscape, financial and workforce pressures, and Ontario Health's operational priorities. Discussions focused on hospital sector capacity, the ongoing shortage of Registered Nurses, changing models of care, the growing importance of primary care services, and the need for hospitals to identify efficiencies while maintaining access to quality services.
- The Board received an update on the Ministry of Health's Hospital Sector Stabilization Plan (HSSP), which aims to address financial sustainability and operational efficiency across Ontario hospitals. Following provincial benchmarking against comparable organizations, DRDH was identified as an efficient hospital, despite a projected operating deficit. DRDH has not been assigned specific additional efficiency targets for 2026–2027. The Board discussed potential indirect impacts of provincial hospital restructuring and the importance of multi-year financial planning.
- The Board received an overview of DRDH's financial and infrastructure position, including operating budget projections for the current year, provincial funding sources, major capital investments, multi-year planning commitments, the 2026–2027 Quality Improvement Plan and organizational strategic priorities.
- The Board received updates from the Chief of Staff regarding physician staffing and recruitment. Significant summer challenges in Emergency Department and hospitalist coverage were addressed through collaboration and additional coverage by local physicians, allowing the Emergency Department to remain open. Recruitment efforts continue, with encouraging prospects for 2027.
- The Board received an update from the Long-Term Care Medical Director regarding the Continuous Quality Improvement Committee's review of quality indicators, annual program evaluations, policy updates and Residents' Council reports.
- The Board received updates from the Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC), building on recent governance changes to strengthen patient, resident and family involvement. The Council's revised meeting approach emphasizes collaborative discussion, co-design and meaningful engagement, including contributions to patient experience, communication and long-term care planning.

Capital Development

- The Board received updates on the Long-Term Care capital development project:
    - Construction of the new 96-bed Four Seasons Lodge has surpassed 70% completion. Interior drywall and exterior mechanical and natural gas infrastructure work continue. The Capital Development Committee reviewed the August Project Status Report and project risks. Substantial completion is targeted for May 2027, with first resident occupancy anticipated in Summer 2027.
    - Planning for occupancy and operationalization continues. The first Ministry of Long-Term Care Occupancy Plan has been submitted, and procurement of furniture, fixtures and equipment, staffing plans and operational readiness activities are underway. Residents have contributed feedback on interior colours and finishes through Residents' Council.

    - Local emergency response partners toured the new Four Seasons Lodge construction site to discuss emergency access, preparedness and collaborative response planning ahead of occupancy.
- The Board also received updates on the Hospice Design and Program development:
    - Extensive hospice consultation was completed with community members, patients and families, healthcare partners, spiritual representatives and team members. Feedback is informing the architectural design, programming and staffing model. An initial business case is targeted for submission to Ontario Health by the end of October. Planning includes a future Hospice Steering Committee and consideration of bereavement, family, volunteer and spiritual supports.

DRDH Foundation Updates

- The DRDH Foundation held its Annual General Meeting in September, welcoming two new Directors for three-year terms from 2026 to 2029. The Foundation reported a milestone of $1 million in revenue in the 2025–2026 fiscal year, the first time annual revenue has reached this level.
- The Foundation is preparing for its inaugural Masquerade Ball on October 30, 2026. This fundraising event will launch the campaign supporting DRDH's future residential hospice. The Board recognized the Foundation's continued efforts to advance healthcare services across the Health Campus.

Auxiliary Updates

- The Board received an update on the Hospital Gift Shop, where two new coordinators have taken on operations and are bringing new approaches to the store.
- The Auxiliary is preparing a Catch the Ace fundraising lottery in mid-November, with proceeds supporting replacement mammography equipment for the Health Campus and continued access to local breast screening services.
- The Auxiliary continues to seek a suitable long-term location for the Whistle Stop that can support current operations, future growth and sustainability.

Health Campus Updates

Building Services

- Seasonal preparations have begun with annual inspections of critical business infrastructure well underway.
- The Ministry of Health sent an independent third-party of engineers to conduct a Facility Condition Assessment as part of the HIRF program. We await the report from the assessors as these reports are the basis for HIRF funding allocations.
- Construction of a new hydraulic loading dock is underway to improve delivery safety and staff workflows.

Community Access to Long-Term Care – Campfire Program

- DRDH welcomed the Minister of Long-Term Care during the summer for the announcement of provincial funding for the new Campfire Program. The program will offer community-based daytime supports to eligible individuals, helping them maintain independence and community connections while awaiting or considering long-term care.
- Planning continued through September, including team recruitment, program policies, clinical and recreational programming, and intake and referral processes. A community Open House is planned for October 8, with first clients anticipated after Thanksgiving.

Diagnostic Imaging

- Renewal of radiology reading services supports continued access to virtual interpretation services and opportunities for integration and quality improvement.

Dietary Department

- The Dietary team continues to work towards implementation of the electronic menu system. This system will support a paperless kitchen and food service model, with patients, residents and staff able to select food items electronically via tablets. The system will further integrate with menu development, production sheets, inventory and purchasing for the department. Go live is scheduled for October.

Emergency Department

- Phase One of the Emergency Department Modernization Project was completed, with the new centralized registration area opening September 30. The renovations improve privacy for registration and triage and include updated flooring in the main corridors. Phase Two planning continues and includes a secure medication room and a spiritual space for patients, families and staff, with input gathered from local spiritual leaders.
- A mentorship partnership had been finalized with Renfrew Victoria Hospital that will support nurses transitioning into Emergency Department practice. Focus will be to support exposure to critical care scenarios for nurses with limited experience in the Emergency Department.

Emergency Preparedness

- The organization held a collaborative tabletop exercise in August, welcoming representatives from the Deep River Fire Department, Deep River Police Department and County of Renfrew Paramedics. The scenario supported the organization and partners to work through a shelter-in-place as well as a “Code Orange – External Disaster” scenario in which a forest fire threatened the area and the DRDH team had to prepare for evacuation.
- Resulting from the Code Orange exercise, a Failure Mode Effect Analysis was completed to identify and rank risks related to ongoing operations in the event of an external disaster, including a highway closure.
- On September 9, DRDH activated its Emergency Operations Centre in response to a police shelter-in-place order, remaining active until the order was lifted September 10. Team debriefing and psychological supports were provided, with further review planned.

Environmental Stewardship

- The Family Health Team has also reduced routine use of examination table paper as an practice update and environmental sustainability initiative. Additional units including the Emergency Department are now also implementing this change. This change will help reduce waste, time, and operating costs while simplifying clinical workflows and reducing environmental impact.

Family Health Team

- The MINT Memory Clinic continues to support local access to cognitive assessment and memory-related care.
- Ongoing plumbing concerns at the new Primary Care Building remain under monitoring, with further investigation considered through future capital planning.

Human Resources

- Work continues with the ongoing implementation of the new electronic Scheduling System, with adjustment of workflows and staffing to support efficient use of the system.
- Recruitment continues for leadership roles including Manager of Community Programs, Long-Term Care Director of Care, Director of Human Resources and Vice President of Community and Long-Term Care.

Information Technology & Cybersecurity

- DRDH completed a significant internet bandwidth expansion in partnership with eHealth Ontario, supporting growth across the Health Campus and technology needs of the new long-term care home.
- The IT team has been working to upgrade the phone system at the organization in preparation for the go-live of the new Four Seasons Lodge. The upgrade will increase the amount of concurrent lines available to the organization, and transition the services to a more stable service for the anticipated size and need.
- DRDH participated in a regional cybersecurity tabletop exercise involving 164 participants, identifying opportunities to improve escalation, regional decision-making and collaboration.

Inpatient Medical Unit

- The inpatient Medical Unit experienced a lower than average census over the summer months, a trend that was also noted across many hospitals in our region. Work is ongoing regionally with Ontario Health to continue to decrease capacity pressures being experienced at larger sites.

Long-Term Care

- Four Seasons Lodge recognized Residents' Council Week in September and continued to engage residents in interior design and furniture selections for the new home.
- A LTC nursing workforce survey was completed in August, with results under review to support staff engagement and workforce sustainability.

Medical Affairs & Recruitment

- DRDH welcomed medical residents and clerks throughout the summer and September, offering experience in rural medicine alongside local physicians.
- The Joint Physician Recruitment Committee held meetings in July and September with Board and municipal partners. Work is underway on recruitment materials and exploration of incentives, with participation planned at the University of Ottawa medical resident job fair.

Medical Records

- The partnership with Renfrew Victoria Hospital for Emergency Department and inpatient health record coding continues, supporting specialized expertise and regional collaboration.

Nursing

- Five Clinical Externs completed summer placements through Ontario Health funding and subsequently transitioned into casual Personal Support Worker positions while continuing their nursing education.
- Additional Registered Nurses have been welcomed through staffing agency arrangements to support Emergency Department and inpatient staffing stability.
- Two Registered Nurses are currently working on their Emergency Nursing Certificate, a virtual program offered by the Michener Institute (at Unity Health Network (UHN)) in Toronto. This is a Ministry-funded program over 12 weeks to support nursing transition to practice in critical care settings.

Organizational & Workforce Development

- A Leadership Development Institute session was held with both formal and informal leaders across the organization, focused on change management and implementation of the organization's new formal change management framework. Participants practiced using standardized change management tools, working together and planning ahead on how to manage change in their teams.
- Additional employee video stories were released as part of the Employee Value Proposition initiative, supporting recruitment and retention. Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training also began in September.

Regional & Provincial Partners

- DRDH welcomed co-operative education students from Mackenzie Community School for fall placements and continued discussions on regional shared systems and operational collaboration.
- DRDH participated in advocacy regarding delays in access to specialized inpatient geriatric mental health services for long-term care residents in Renfrew County.
- The organization welcomed members of the Ottawa Valley Ontario Health Team Patient, Family, and Caregiver Advisory Council for a tour of the health campus. Participants came from across the OHT's catchment area to tour the campus and receive updates on the work occurring at DRDH.
- The Campus welcomed students from Algonquin College's Environmental Technician Program throughout the summer to complete environmental surveys and practical learning in and around the health campus. Students presented their final reports and presentations at the health campus to teachers, DRDH team members and community representatives. Reports and recommendations will be shared and aim to be preserved in the Deep River Library for the community.

Truth and Reconciliation

- DRDH marked the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30 with reflection and learning activities.
- In partnership with the Mashkiwizii Manido Foundation, a series of Indigenous education and reconciliation learning opportunities will be offered this fall to any interested team members, including Board Directors. Upcoming opportunities include participation in a series of Kairos Blanket Exercises, the first of which will be October. In addition to this session, an open education session on Truth and Reconciliation Commission and UNDRIP will be offered to build understanding of the TRC and its Calls to Action and introduce UNDRIP, the international human rights framework that establishes minimum standards for the rights, dignity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. The session will help participants consider what these commitments mean in practice and the role each of us can play in advancing reconciliation.

Quality

- The Board received an update on Accreditation 2027 preparations, including ongoing standards review, evidence collection and readiness activities. The Accreditation Canada survey is scheduled for April 2027.
- Implementation of the SMART Pump Infusion Library has been temporarily paused due to limited regional resources supporting integration with the Epic electronic health record.