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Chair's Report to the 2016 Annual General Meeting

June 9, 6 pm, St. Paul's United Church, Warkworth

Hello everyone. On behalf of the board of directors of The Bridge Hospice, I would like to share with you some of the highlights of the past year and touch briefly on what we are looking forward to in the next year.

At the heart of everything we do at The Bridge Hospice is the end-of-life care that we provide to our residents and the support we give to their families.

Last year we were pleased to announce an exciting new relationship with the Saint Elizabeth Community Enterprise. Under the terms of our five-year agreement, funding is provided to augment the existing services provided by the Central East Community Care Access Centre. Through this arrangement, we receive professional health care services, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Starting in September 2015, we began receiving this health care support. To assist us in ensuring that the new services were implemented in a co-ordinated and efficient way, we asked Cathy Henderson to act as our Residential Care Co-ordinator on a volunteer basis, ably assisted by Moira Mooney, Team Leader and our V. C. T. members Judy Kraushar and Ingrid Roberts. Together, Cathy and her team have ensured a smooth transition to the new service model and have been very active all year in managing resident care.

With this new model in place, our resident care volunteers have continued to provide outstanding support, comfort and care to residents and their families. The volunteers and health care staff work together, learning from one another and ensuring a supportive, caring and loving environment at the hospice.

Resident care volunteers will always be critical to us both now and in the future. We thank you for your passion, commitment and willingness to step forward and give your time to palliative care.

I am happy to say that since opening we have served 65 residents along with their families. With the funding of Saint Elizabeth we were able to double our resident numbers and able to use all three beds. While our residents' stays average about ten days, stays can be as short as part of a day to upwards of three months. About sixty per cent of our residents arrive from hospitals or long term care facilities while 40 per cent arrive from their homes.

In a few minutes, Cathy will provide you with details on what we have learned this year in providing service and the remarkable response we have had to the quality end-of-life care we provide.

The partnership agreement with Saint Elizabeth initiated significant growth and change for our organization. In response, over the last year we have conducted a review of our business model and have developed a strategic plan that is in the last stages of approval by our board of directors. This plan is aimed at ensuring stability and sustainability for The Bridge Hospice in the future. The items I will speak to in the next few minutes reflect our planning priorities.

Let me say that, beyond the resident care volunteers, the hospice depends heavily on many people with a wide variety of skills like administration, maintenance, grounds keeping, support with fundraising activities and events, participating on a board committee, speaking on our behalf and providing advice on policy and other matters.

We thank those who have provided this help over the years and strongly encourage others to join with us in this effort. This help is vital not only to supporting the operation on a day-to-day basis but it also helps us as we continue to educate and make people aware of this critical service in the heart of Northumberland County.

As we move ahead, we need that same support and innovative thinking focused on the financial support it takes to operate this hospice in a sustainable manner. Our growth over the last year has increased our need for operational funding beyond the health care funding we receive from Saint Elizabeth.

We are focused on creating a fund development strategy which will increase our fundraising efforts annually as well as seeking out new sources of funding to support our operations. We would welcome the assistance of volunteers who have experience and skills to share on this.

An important part of providing care is ensuring we play a vital role with those agencies and organizations who are committed to planning for palliative care whether locally, regionally or provincially. We take our stewardship role very seriously.

To that end, over the past year we have become part of the Northumberland Palliative Care Community Planning Team, the Central East Local Health Integration Network on palliative care and the Rural Practice Leadership Team of Hospice Palliative Care Ontario.

Our representation gives us a strong voice in ensuring that the small hospice has a perspective which is taken into account when designing future opportunities and ensuring that rural needs and uniqueness are part of that thinking.

We also maintain a good relationship with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. We met with John Fraser, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister in advance of his provincial consultations on palliative care last year. We are pleased that the Government of Ontario is acting on palliative care and look forward to hearing more from them in early fall on the allocation of residential hospice care funding support.

The Bridge Hospice through its Resident Care Committee has invested time this year in articulating our philosophy of care. This document affirms our commitment to provide high quality care to all residents without prejudice and in accord with their own preferences. It also offers a starting point from which we are addressing the matter of medical assistance in dying which is becoming a legal option for Canadians at the end of life. We continue to seek input from a broad range of clinical, legal and palliative care community perspectives as we develop our own policies on this important issue.

I would also like to let you know that we are recruiting for an oversight position entitled Director, Clinical Services and Operations. This position will formalize and build on the work already initiated to provide strong and excellent end-of-life care for our residents.

This addresses the existing work Cathy and her team have been doing and also addresses the leadership which is so vital to the day-to-day operation of the hospice.

So, all in all, a very busy year for the hospice filled with exciting changes, significant moves on many fronts, and planning that will ensure we can meet on a long-term basis, our mission which is about living to the end of life with the same advantages as being at home, supported every minute by an experienced and caring team of physicians, nurses, personal caregivers and volunteers.

Each year we say goodbye and thank those going off the board as we welcome new faces to our table. We have been very fortunate over the years to have attracted excellent people with the knowledge, dedication and commitment to help us move the agenda along and achieve many key milestones in the life of the hospice. Tonight is no exception as you will see when the nomination committee makes its report.

However, we must say our goodbyes, as board members, to Vicki Vannieuwenhuyze, Elizabeth Lancaster and Dr. Bob Henderson. They have, each in so many ways, contributed to who we are and where we are going.

I am very pleased to say that each will be continuing to help us with Vicki remaining as a community member on the Finance Committee, Elizabeth on the other end of the phone available to assist with advice and Bob remaining on the board in the capacity of Medical Director (on a volunteer basis) in a non-voting advisory capacity. I want to thank Bob for having taken on this role starting late last year which advises the board on the overall quality of care provided to residents.

This, of course, speaks so well to the way in which people continue their support of the hospice, each in different but critical capacities. So, a huge thank you to each of you for your board service and your continuing roles.

As we look back, The Bridge Hospice has been able, through the strength of volunteerism and innovative visioning, to create a unique and powerful service which was critically needed.

We have been recognized for this excellence by many across the province — from most importantly, our residents and their families, to health care and community leaders, to business leaders, to our fellow hospices and the Government of Ontario.

You have our word that we will work hard, as a board, to ensure this service is sustainable, but we also need your continuing help to get there. Please, join us in this next chapter of development and work with us to ensure sustainability for the future. Thank you for taking the time to be here tonight.

Jill Hutcheon

Chair, Board of Directors

The Bridge Hospice

Report delivered to Annual General Meeting, June 9, 2016