



137 Old Hastings Rd, Box 354, Warkworth, ON K0K 3K0

News Release – June 9, 2016

Occupancy soars as The Bridge Hospice shows ingenuity and foresight in provision of rural residential hospice service

WARKWORTH – At its annual general meeting on June 9, The Bridge Hospice board of directors, membership, staff and volunteers gathered to reflect on a dynamic year of growth, change, and strategic planning.

Jill Hutcheon, board chair, opened her remarks with an update on the innovative agreement with Saint Elizabeth Community Enterprise that launched in September 2015. Thanks to the five-year partnership, healthcare professionals are at the hospice at all times, assisted by hospice volunteers. The transition to the new care model was described as smooth, with healthcare staff and volunteers working together to provide outstanding care and comfort to residents and their families.

The presence of healthcare professionals 24/7 has allowed the three-bed hospice to operate at full capacity for the first time. As a result, occupancy rates have more than doubled since September. By the end of the fiscal year, The Bridge Hospice had cared for 65 residents and their families since opening in June 2013.

Significant growth and rising operational costs at the hospice catalyzed the board to review its business model and develop a comprehensive strategic plan to ensure the hospice's long-term sustainability. While the plan is still being finalized, Ms. Hutcheon identified priority areas, including a new funding strategy and outreach with key agencies and organizations.

Beyond overseeing day-to-day activities, the board engaged in important discussions about palliative care at local, regional, and provincial levels. Ms. Hutcheon and directors gave voice at every opportunity to the unique role and perspective of small hospices and the realities of life away from large cities, so that rural needs will be accommodated in policies and plans for end-of-life care.

Ms. Hutcheon reserved special praise for volunteers, citing their commitment, passion and excellence – in resident care, leadership, event organization, residence upkeep and finance. She called upon the people of Northumberland County to continue to actively engage with all opportunities to ensure the sustainability of the hospice and the continuation of its critical role in serving needs in this area.

“We depend on volunteers stepping up and giving us their advice and their time so we can all be proud of this community-based residence.

“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 the next chapter of development and work with us to ensure sustainability for the future,” she said.