



Annual General Meeting Remarks – Janet Knox, President and CEO *September 13, 2016*

As I was preparing for today and reflecting on our first year as Nova Scotia Health Authority, I found myself thinking not about the past, but about the future.

As we heard from our guest speaker (Peter MacLeod) meaningful engagement and real conversations are essential to change. When people are engaged in the why, what and how of change it builds trust and results in better, more widely supported decisions. That's one reason why I am convinced that now, more than ever, we have the opportunity to create a healthier Nova Scotia together.

There's no doubt that more Nova Scotians are talking about health and what it truly means to be healthy.

Individuals, families and communities understand the need to do things differently. They want to be part of the change – and in many cases – are already leading the way.

And now, more than ever, our province's health system is positioned to build on that momentum and be a leading partner in helping Nova Scotians be healthy and stay healthy.

The creation of Nova Scotia Health Authority was about far more than a change in geographic boundaries and a new structure.

Together with the IWK Health Centre and the Department of Health and Wellness, we are able to plan and co-ordinate our services provincially – to think and act as one system for the benefit of all Nova Scotians. We are better able to share information, best practices and resources quickly and effectively. And to work together more consistently toward common goals.

Our first year has shown promising results.

There are fewer people waiting for home support services and long-term care. Seven hundred more Nova Scotians had hip and knee surgeries and 745 more Nova Scotians received MRI scans than in the previous year. Our teams also helped support the arrival of hundreds of refugees from Syria.

Setting a solid foundation for learning and innovation is integral to our work. We welcomed more than 5,500 learners and supported more than 1,200 active research projects this past year. A new breath-holding technique at the Cape Breton Cancer Centre is helping some breast cancer patients with their treatments, and the power of a parent's touch initiative at St. Martha's Regional Hospital is promoting skin-to-skin contact for babies when they are



having procedures. These are just a couple of examples of innovations that are benefiting patients within the organization.

Across the province, we worked together to find efficiencies and share ideas, experience and resources. This allowed us to manage our resources more wisely and balance our budget.

So while this was a year of transition and change on many fronts, employees, physicians, learners and volunteers stayed focused on what matters most – meeting the health needs of individuals, families and communities and working with Nova Scotians and our partners toward our vision of healthy people, healthy communities – for generations.

Together with the IWK Health Centre and the Department of Health and Wellness, we are focused on how we can **better** meet the needs of our population - rethinking how we organize and deliver our programs and services across the province to increase access, enhance the safety and quality of our care, and make the best use of our collective resources – all with the goal of improving health.

However, we know that we will not achieve our vision and mission by focusing on **health care** alone. Good health starts at home and in our communities – at our schools and workplaces, playgrounds and parks. It requires the collective efforts of many - those in health, government and community working with Nova Scotians to focus more on wellness and the factors that really impact health – namely safe communities, a healthy environment, good education, jobs and housing.

As I travelled around the province over the past year, I heard and saw many examples of individuals, families and communities who are already leading the way. In the Guysborough-Antigonish area, people are helping babies with a healthier start by promoting breastfeeding-friendly spaces.

On the South Shore, neighbours are helping neighbours with household chores and errands so they can remain in their own homes longer.

And in Halifax, a mobile food market brings fresh fruits and vegetables to communities that have limited access to healthy and affordable food.

There are similar, equally inspiring stories throughout the entire province.

Just last month the Town of Amherst announced it would waive ice rental fees for youth programs this year – a great way to support participation and promote healthy active lifestyles.



Our first strategic plan, *Healthier Together*, is about helping Nova Scotians be healthy and stay healthy. It is our roadmap to build, grow and improve access and quality of health services while engaging Nova Scotians in creating a healthier future together.

There will be challenges along the way. Nova Scotia has an aging population with high rates of chronic disease. A child born here will live an average of one year less and have two years less of good health than the Canadian average. This is not the legacy we want to leave for future generations.

Better outcomes are needed. New strategies are needed. We must be bold and brave in creating solutions together for the benefit of all Nova Scotians. We all have an important role to play if we want a different and better story of health and prosperity in Nova Scotia.

That's what our *Talk about health* strategy is all about - Nova Scotians talking about the challenges and opportunities for better health and positive change. Thousands of Nova Scotians added their voice to the conversation – either in person or through our online forums over six months.

What we heard was that in order to create a healthier Nova Scotia, we need to live well, co-operate, co-ordinate and collaborate and encourage a healthy population. We need to build supportive systems and a healthy society. Most importantly, we heard that in spite of the challenges facing individuals and our province in achieving better health – there is hope – and passion and energy for creating a healthier future together.

We see this every day in the work of our 41 Foundations and 33 Auxiliaries, 7,000 volunteers and 37 Community Health Boards. These individuals and groups support patient care and the health of local communities in many different ways.

We also see it through our work with partners in health, education, business, community and government.

We appreciate your collective contributions and hope you will continue this journey with us.

Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity to change our collective future and create a healthier Nova Scotia.

We won't get there by repeating what we've always done. We need to change our narrative by building a spirit of co-operation rather than competition and by seeking solutions together. And we need to have the courage to choose a different path.

Together we have created a strong foundation and are well positioned to meet that challenge. I look forward to continuing the journey with you. We are *Healthier Together*.