

### Nova Scotia Health & Safety Leadership Charter Newsletter - Steering Committee CEO's Outlook for 2021



#### **Don Bureaux, President – Nova Scotia Community College**

When the world faces a multitude of crisis, we as CEO's have the opportunity to drive and encourage innovation and creativity within our organizations. Currently, we must recognize the intersection of the five crises we are facing as a society and find new opportunities to cultivate a growth mindset.

The first crisis pertains to our public health and safety and the fight against Covid-19. It is vital that we remain vigilant and be proactive in promoting the health and safety of our students and employees. The second is our economy. Within two weeks of the March 15th provincial shutdown, 75,000 Nova Scotians had lost their jobs and close to 30,000 remain displaced due to Covid-19. The third crisis facing the world has been with us for decades if not centuries and that is the social crisis. For those who suffer social inequities in our communities, the problem has been magnified with disproportionate impacts caused by our global pandemic. The fourth, though not directly related to the pandemic, is the Climate Crisis which proposes an exponential threat to mankind. Natural disasters such as forest fires and hurricanes as a result of climate change are coming increasingly severe. As a result of these four crises, I believe there is currently a crisis of hope. Far too many people amongst us are discouraged and not sure what tomorrow will bring.

As a member of the Nova Scotia Health and Safety Charter, it has never been more important to come together to collaborate and learn from one another to help us find the innovation and creativity needed to face the challenges before us. With the right mindset, leaders can make the best of these difficult times and seize the opportunity to improve both themselves and their teams. In essence, as signatories to this Charter, we have the ability to be the antidote to these five crises. Our work now is critical and finding solutions is essential.



#### **Danny Cavanagh, President – Nova Scotia Federation of Labour**

As we start our gradual resumption of life post-COVID -19, we need to give some serious thought to economic recovery. It will be essential to ask ourselves how we got here and to now look at how we can change to create a more equal and fair society and economy.

History tells us that government investment in its people and jobs works. Government investment rebuilt economies after the Second World War. We know it can be done. We have an excellent opportunity to address all the gaps and inequities we have seen throughout this global pandemic.

We have an excellent opportunity to turn this country into one where the engine runs full steam ahead with investments to create a society that looks after its people. We can fix our ailing healthcare system and establish national standards in healthcare and long-term care.

We need to see much needed investments in education and training, publicly-funded and operated childcare and early learning, better services for vulnerable populations and for the organizations that look after them. These types of investments will pay dividends into the future. Investments in public transportation will help thousands of people and will provide thousands of jobs.

Critical to our recovery will be to bring all stakeholders to the table, including business and labour, community and those voices who are traditionally unheard. We can do this together. With the right leadership and investment by governments, we can rebuild our economy by building a healthier, safer and more sustainable world, a world where no one is left behind.



### **Jacques Dube, CAO – Halifax Regional Municipality**

The coming year will see COVID-19 vaccines beginning to roll out with an estimated 3,000,000 of Canada's most vulnerable receiving a vaccine by the end of March 2021. That means for the vast majority of Canadians, a vaccine will become available by the end of 2021. That means that public health restrictions will be in place at some level for at least the coming year and the economic recovery will take us well into our 2022/23 fiscal year and beyond.

For HRM, in addition to the pandemic, we will continue to deal with the social crisis (anti-black racism, Black Lives Matter movement, social isolation, defunding police); a fiscal crisis (increased costs related to COVID in the face of downward pressures on revenue and the coming COVID mortgage default crisis); an environmental crisis (read climate change); and the housing crisis (lack of affordable housing for the lower middle class and emergency shelter space).

Q2 2020 statistics produced by the Halifax Partnership shows HRM's labour force shrank by 8,367 people (-3.3%) over Q2 2019, while employment declined significantly by 20,533 (-8.5%). The average selling price for Q2 2020 of \$352,255 was up 9.3% over Q2 2019. Halifax's overall office vacancy rate increased by 0.9 percentage points from the previous quarter, reaching 16.1% in Q2 2020. While many of the economic indicator comparisons between Q2 2020 and Q2 2019 show dramatic declines, it should be noted that signs of recovery across many fronts have become apparent in data for June and July.

Due to the truly unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, a tremendous amount of uncertainty surrounds any forecasts or predictions for the next few years. We must stay optimistic; hope the best; plan for the worst; be safe; doggedly follow Public Health guidelines in our workplaces and private lives; provide assistance for the most vulnerable; continue flexible work arrangements; communicate, communicate & communicate; and support each other and our colleagues.



**Eric Doucette, CEO – Seaview Manor**

As the CEO for Seaview Manor, a 113 bed Long Term Care Facility in Glace Bay, I have recently found myself, in what was the Atlantic Bubble, reflecting on our recent experience with Wave 1 of Covid-19. Little did our team expect to have such a profound humbling experience that truly illustrated our own human frailty in the face of an unknown viral enemy. But it also presented the team with a sense of fight and a resilience underpinned by wilful determination to mount the best defense we could muster. Despite their own fears, the team pulled together to work collaboratively to deliver safe, effective and compassionate care to our residents while at the same time supporting each other. Family, friends, and other support persons play a pivotal role in care. Throughout Wave 1 we had to rethink our

communication processes and we exploited technology to its fullest to support resident and family connections. As an employer, our attention to the critical importance of keeping our staff safe was like a red flashing beacon that kept us locked on the procurement of personal protective equipment and putting into place both administrative and environmental safety controls to maximize a safe working environment. Staff need for Covid-19 information was like a thirst that we were able to quench with daily Covid update meetings while respecting gathering limits. We also provided frequent Seaview Manor specific FAQs. We learned that not all staff have the same level of resiliency so having access to a family and employee assistance program proved invaluable. The importance of having fun and staying focused on the fact that the pandemic was not for ever, it is just for now was a simple mantra that allowed us to step through Wave 1 a day at a time appreciating that some were more difficult and demanding than others.

Sitting on the precipice of Wave 2, as the CEO in collaboration with my team, we are gearing up to take on the fight which we anticipate will present significant challenges. Many Long Term Care Providers will be delivering care in the face of a significant insurance industry barrier. Namely, new Covid-19 and other pandemic disease exclusionary clauses will result in the loss of coverages for personal and property liability. Providing 24 hour care requires effective staffing levels which is a challenge given the fact the LTC Sector is facing significant human resource shortages. Fatigue, and anxiety is anticipated to escalate among existing staff as we may face a Covid-19 surge upon a surge. We forecast an increasing dependency on our EAP program. While each Nova Scotia Health Zone will have a designated Regional Covid-19 Unit, many LTC providers, like Seaview Manor will be expected to provide “care in place.” The temporary renovation of a large open space we undertook in Wave 1 provides Seaview with a 7 bed Covid Unit. This unit will accommodate defined infection prevention and control protocols to ensure the care needs of residents who test positive for Covid-19 are provided safely. We anticipate families will want to be continuously engaged in the care of their loved ones having experienced the profound isolation that accompanied the complete lockdown in Wave 1. We are anticipating the implementation of routine randomized testing of non-symptomatic residents and staff as a commitment to active surveillance to identify cases and support timely contact tracing. Vaccine administration may present challenges for providers as we compete for what may be a limited supply owing to the high demand on the supply chain. As we move forward with our internal and external partners in the fight against Covid-19, we will embrace science, seize prevention through vaccines, and stay hopeful knowing that storms make people stronger and never last forever.





### **Steven Gaetz, CEO – St John Ambulance NS/PEI & Ottawa**

As a provincially regulated charitable training agency, Sir John Ambulance is capped at 60% capacity because of COVID19 restrictions. We can enhance training numbers by renting larger and more open spaces to accommodate social distancing. Currently we are preparing cash flow analyses every week and projecting out to fiscal year end as we finalize monthly Income Statements. In addition, we are engaged in a crystal ball event leading up to Budget 2021.

At SJA, we are planning for COVID19 to still be with us well into 2021. We will plan for reduced training capacity until at least Q3. We continue to limit all non-essential travel and reduced expenditures wherever possible to protect cash resources. Our clients confidence to train in person is growing and we have experienced full classrooms at the 60% capacity levels. We expect that to continue into 2021. Finally, we are realistically planning on a negative budget for 2021. That said, we do not expect to see any reductions in staffing and will continue to provide best in class first aid, mental health and other training programs in Nova Scotia and on Prince Edward Island.



### **Mark Gascoigne, CEO – Trampoline Branding**

In many respects I believe 2021 will be harder than 2020, but potentially could be better in almost all respects!

In March, 2020 we went into crisis; followed by panic; then some relief; which turned into frustrations; next resignation; and finally hope. From the initial realization of the pandemic to the promise of a vaccine, 2020 has toyed with our emotions like we have never experienced before. This was indeed hard for all of us and critically difficult for many.

Although these past months have been stressful, and will exact a toll, in some ways it was easier than I expect for 2021. Our decisions and actions over the last 9 months were binary and universal. Go home; Stay inside; Close your business; Keep your distance; Stay safe. These instructions were clear and needed little interpretation. As leaders, our role was to set an example, show solidarity, and help our most vulnerable. As noble and vital as this work was, we are now faced with an even greater challenge. If 2020 can be characterized as “retreat and care for each other”, 2021 will be to “come out safely and do all that we can do”. All that we can do to help all our business recover. Help our staff to flourish and succeed. And to bring our province out from this pandemic stronger and healthier than when it started.

It's true that a ship is never safer than when it's in port. But ships were built to sail. We can't change the wind, but we can adjust the sails to move forward safely, and with steadfast purpose. We have a chance to lead Nova Scotia back on course safely. We've shown that we know when it's time to use safe harbour. Soon it will be time to leave port toward a better future. A future, that with our leadership, will find us stronger, more resilient, more prosperous, and safer than ever before.

Being the CEO of a Nova Scotia based company I feel incredibly fortunate both at this time in history and at this time in my career. As the world starts to move beyond the pandemic, I believe our province is poised to bounce back better than most. We at Trampoline have set a course for 2021 and our senior leadership team is ready to navigate whatever is in store over the coming months.

Steady as she goes!



### **Susan Hayes, CEO – Windsor Elms Village**

With 2021 in our sights, I am sure that most of us wonder how deep the legacy of our current year will overlap. Its reasonable to wonder, essential to plan for but, I would suggest, equally critical that we do not let it define us. Never before has the management of health, safety, and wellness been so essential.

As a leader in the Long Term Care sector, I have chosen to embrace the lessons from the past year and apply solid quality improvement principles to them. What did I learn? What opportunities evolved as a result of such immediate and risk-driven in changes? How is my organization stronger because of it? How can we affect change in the system? One could get mired in the losses, both current and future, but for me, using the clarity to support the future is how I choose to move forward. After all, isn't that what leadership is all about? Turning the reality into the possible for those in our charge.

So as I look to 2021, I look to the possibilities that come with it. Embrace gratitude. Facilitate the growth and success of others. Most importantly, start writing next year's ending now. Be a safer and more impactful organization. Together we have the opportunity to build on the strength and success that Nova Scotia has shown the world this year. As a CEO, I make that commitment, and I ask you to join me. Let's inspire others to do so. We've got this!



### **Dr. Krista Jangaard, CEO – IWK Health Authority**

There is no doubt that when looking back at 2020, what will most fill our collective memories will be the extraordinary events surrounding the global pandemic known as COVID-19. Few events in recent history have had such a profound impact on all levels of society on such a global level. Healthcare organizations like the IWK were part of the frontline response and were required to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. We reorganized service delivery to prepare for COVID patients, stood up testing and assessment centers, reprioritized ambulatory appointments and services and changed how we thought about work could be done. Some staff were re-deployed to cover new services, some moved to working from home and while

the hands on providers continued on site but in a changed physical environment . Ways of working and spaces to meet new standards were devised to ensure that patients and families could receive care. Many of these changes will continue in 2021 as we move through the next phases of pan-demic response.

“What can we expect from 2021?” The easiest answer is “We really don’t know yet.” While we have learned much about this coronavirus we still have a lot we don’t yet fully understand. While we seek expanded knowledge and a vaccine, one very important thing we can do is to continue to focus on the safety and well-being of our staff. Some of the innovations that have come to life during the pandemic- staff supports focusing on health and well-being, peer groups within organizations, online mental health resources, enhanced communication, policies to support new ways of working - to name but a few have pushed us forward and must not be lost. As leaders we must seize the opportunity to continue to move forward some of the initiatives made necessary by crisis. One of our big opportunities is to re-imagine patterns of work, a process likely more complicated than simply work in the office or work at home, but what an opportunity to build and enhance the lives of our staff. While we will continue the need to be adaptive and agile, making decisions as situations change and new evidence arises, we can be certain at least that making sure are people are supported will be an ongoing priority.



**Cliff Langin, President – East Coast Medical Mobile Inc.**

At ECMM have been very proactive within our organization and our clients to assure that we are operating in a safe manner since we are a medica/safety company. Our overall volume is at 75% of our last years volume over the last few months however it is difficult to say if that volume will maintain in the coming months. I must say that the Wage Subsidy program available has been a life saver since March 2020 till now so we hope that assistance will continue into the coming year.

We at ECMM will continue to service our clints as we have done over the last twenty five years and hopefully survive these difficult times. Year 2021 will be difficult in new business development as most companies are extremely aware of their day to day expenses to keep them in business. It is very difficult to predict the coming year as this COVID-19 can change daily so like most companies we will continue with what we have done in the past by maintaining good fiscal management and working with our existing clients.





**Stuart MacLean, CEO – WCB Nova Scotia**

This past year has challenged us all like never before. In the face of a global pandemic, leaders across our province have had to step up and lead through uncertainty, through tragedy, and through constant change, as we've continued to navigate our new normal.

As I reflect back on the past nine months, there are three themes in particular that have held strong within our province and that stand out to me – resilience, adaptability, and a focus on a safety.

These themes have formed the foundation of our province's response to COVID-19, and they have underscored the daily lives of all Nova Scotians for much of the year.

For WCB Nova Scotia, they are the principles that guided us, as we, like so many other organizations, shifted our entire operations remote within a few days, and again, more recently, as we've gone through our staged, safe return to the office, all the while ensuring we continued to be there for the employers and workers of Nova Scotia who depend on our services.

They are the concepts we highlighted in an awareness campaign created to support workplaces in working safely through COVID-19, and they were at the core of our response when we worked with the province to defer premium payments and waive interest and penalties for employers.

So as we look to 2021, I think it's imperative that we continue to embrace these themes and build on the momentum that, although might have started out of necessity in response to the pandemic, provides much opportunity for a new and different way forward.

For WCB Nova Scotia, this includes things like exploring what a long-term remote workforce strategy could look like for our organization. And building on the innovative ways we have worked with health service providers over the past few months by leveraging technology and virtual treatments, especially as we consider the full return to work model in 2021.

For all Nova Scotians this means not losing that focus on safety and using appropriate PPE, whether it's to protect against the spread of COVID-19 or to reduce the risk of any other workplace injury.

We know that COVID-19 will continue to be part of our lives for some time to come, but this doesn't mean that other workplace safety hazards and risks have gone away. In fact, it's quite the opposite. And the challenges we face when it comes to claim durations, of which Nova Scotia has some of the highest in Canada, have only been compounded by the pandemic.

As we approach the elimination of the unfunded liability, and continue through the final stages of a business transformation that has given us new tools, processes and data to enable a whole new kind of service down the road, the WCB's future is bright.

And as we look to pave a new, safer path forward for our province, it's our collective resilience and ability to adapt, as a province and as leaders, that will be crucial in helping us get there.

### **Our ask of members...**

- ≈ **Please stay involved and attend Charter events**
- ≈ **Provide us feedback on activities and communications**
- ≈ **Share and learn from each other**
- ≈ **Encourage other organizations to become signatories**
- ≈ **Stay safe**