



Report of the President & CEO to the Board of Directors

Date: November 2, 2023

Needless to say the last 11 days have been a test for our patients, community and staff. A test that I believe our staff is passing.

On the early morning hours of October 23, we - along with 4 other ESC hospitals and our not-for-profit shared services entity Transform discovered a possible cyberattack. To contain the incident and prevent further harm, we had to shut down our IT systems.

Our Windsor Regional Hospital staff went into immediate action and implemented downtime procedures without missing a beat continued to care for our patients.

The cyberattack was confirmed the morning of October 23.

Immediately, our IT team engaged the security threat team we already had on contract in the event of such an incident.

Our staff have been amazing throughout all of this. They leapt into action to continue to care for our patients and each other. In addition, they have not stopped. I could not be prouder of them.

To their credit, not one ambulatory surgical procedure was delayed. After the first few days, scheduled surgeries are now nearly back to 100%. We are also making substantial progress on curative radiation treatment started back safely and should be able to make some announcements over the next few days.

The cyberattack is not one person in their basement on a computer. The perpetrators are a sophisticated web of people who extort the healthcare sector. They target us while we are caring for our most critically ill. They attack hospitals while we are emerging from a worldwide pandemic. We are not the first healthcare system to be struck by these bandits and will not be the last.

We have leading experts helping restore our systems – safely – and I stress the word safely.

This is not something you can do overnight. This will take time. This will take weeks. We are hopeful that over the next few weeks we will be able to bring back key clinical applications one by one. Our collective focus is on cancer patients and getting those systems up quickly but safely. In addition, we are making substantial progress.

We know that there are those in the press who are critical of our efforts. We will not engage with this uniformed commentary, except to say this: we are doing our very best to recover as safely and quickly as possible. In addition, we are not doing this alone.

We are working with experts who have been involved in hundreds of these cyberattacks.

We are in non-stop discussions with other hospitals and Ontario Health.

We have seen the very best of Ontario come to our aid, just as Windsor Regional Hospital did for others during the pandemic.

We are sharing information as it becomes available and on our experts' advice. There will be a time, after we safely resume critical care, to do a root cause analysis and learn from this. We will learn, improve, and help other institutions prepare.

I want to thank our front-line payroll team as well. Under impossible circumstances, they have made sure all employees have been paid and paid pretty darn accurately, pulling together data from different sources with an opportunity for all staff to address any issues.

At the same time, we have provided credit monitoring to our staff as a precaution.

At this point, we do not know all the data impacted. We are investigating and will have more information soon. The bad actors have published some of the data they stole. They did this because we would not succumb to their ransom demands. We closely examined whether to pay, but we knew, and our experts and law enforcement, all confirmed, that we could not trust the promise of criminal to delete this information. We learned that payment would not speed up the safe restoration of our network. Therefore, we did not pay.

This decision is consistent with the recent joint statement of the 50 members of the international counter ransomware initiative – including Canada – that have agreed to sign a pledge never to pay a ransom to cybercriminals.

As soon as we determine exactly what data was affected, we will notify those impacted as required by law. We have already notified the appropriate authorities of the breach and are working with local Police, OPP, Interpol and FBI on the criminal investigation.

Our focus always is on our patients and fellow staff. Just like during the pandemic we will continue to have that laser focus.

I want to thank our Windsor/Essex community for their understanding and support during these critical times. I share some comments some have posted across the Erie St Clair region.

I also want to highlight a couple other issues that occurred since our last meeting.

On October 19, 2023, dignitaries and leadership from regional first nation communities joined Windsor Regional Hospital and community leaders to honour the land where the new Windsor/Essex Acute Care Hospital will be built and the connection of the original peoples who resided in the area and received healing from the medicines of mother earth.

Caldwell First Nation led a traditional land ceremony at the future home of the new hospital at the northeast corner of County rd. 42 and the 9th Concession, which is located on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of the Three Fires Confederacy (Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi).

I want to thank Chief Duckworth for her leadership, partnership and friendship for a very profound and memorable day.

Also on October 19, the Evolv metal detectors started in operation. Since that date – 13 days – we have captured 159 knives and 88 other items like screwdrivers, and other “items” like razor blades and needles. No guns.