



Exceptional
care
for every patient,
every time.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026



Thunder Bay Regional
Health Sciences
Centre

Thunder Bay Regional
Health Research
Institute

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC) is a 375-bed acute care facility and academic health sciences centre. As the only tertiary health care provider in the region, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre provides comprehensive care to more than 245,000 people in a region the size of France.

TBRHSC teaches the next generation of health care providers and advances medical research through the Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute (TBRHRI). Patients benefit from interprofessional teams of dedicated health care providers and access to leading-edge medical technology and clinical trials. TBRHSC is proudly affiliated with Lakehead University, Confederation College and NOSM University.

TBRHSC operates on sacred land. We respectfully acknowledge that we work on the traditional lands of the people of Fort William First Nation. This land is the territory of the Anishinabek Nation and is home to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850. Today, Thunder Bay is the home to many Indigenous Peoples from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work together in this community and on this territory.

We are committed to embedding equity, diversity and inclusion in all the care, education and research that we do. We believe that our differences are key to our growth as an organization and a community, and to our ability to develop innovative approaches to deliver exceptional care to patients, every time.

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Executive Summary

The *Strategic Plan 2026* begins a momentous phase for Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC) and Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute (TBRHRI). As the inaugural joint strategic plan, it is the foundation on which significant progress in patient care and health research will be made.

This plan was built on extensive engagement with patients, families, the public, volunteers, staff and health service providers. Updated *Mission, Vision and Values* statements reflect the input received, while responses were clear that the organizations’ philosophy needs to remain the same: patients at the centre of everything we do. TBRHSC is committed to upholding its position as a leader in Patient and Family Centred Care by introducing the principles of co-design into care planning to ensure care better reflects the needs of the patients and families.

Strategic Plan 2026 is an evolution that builds on the successes of the previous

strategic plan, with focused strategic directions identified during stakeholder consultations, including *Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion, Patient Experience and Staff Experience*. A clear emphasis on *Research, Innovation, & Learning* will help prioritize and integrate research efforts, build research capacity and create an environment that better supports research, innovation, teaching, and learning.

The strategic enabler *Sustainable Future* is critical to the organizations’ financial health and future success, and includes supporting expansion of digital health, creation of a clinical services plan, advancing partnerships and system integration, and achieving operational sustainability.

With this new strategic plan, TBRHSC and TBRHRI will strive for continuous improvement, driven by the needs of the patients and families served, and the commitment to exceptional care for every patient, every time.

“ We felt safe and secure during the birth and post delivery care of our child.”

Patient, via Strategic Plan 2026 Engagement Survey



Our Current Environment

Population & Care

Population of Northwestern Ontario is relatively static and expected to **grow slowly over the next**

20
YEARS

Major shift in population in Northwestern Ontario over the next 10 years, with **significant growth in patients aged**

65
YEARS AND OLDER

Our Patients

Patients with acute care needs in Northwestern Ontario have about

50%
MORE

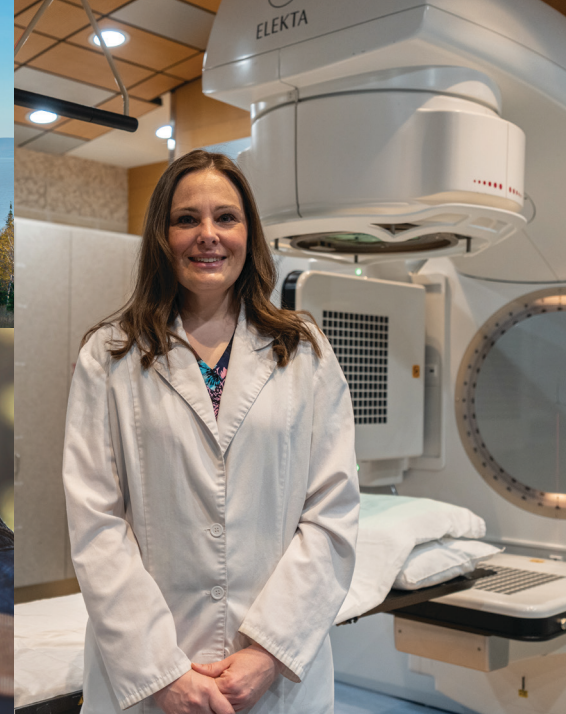
comorbidities* than the Ontario average, which makes care needs more complex

There are about

2,000

patients in the region with **complex acute and chronic conditions** that contribute to very high use of hospital Emergency and Inpatient services

*Comorbidities are diseases and conditions that often occur together with another disease or condition



Demand for acute care services

Per capita demand for acute care services within Northwestern Ontario is the **highest of all jurisdictions in Ontario**

Our **aging population** will drive further increases in demand for acute care services

90%
of acute inpatient care is provided within Northwestern Ontario, with the remaining provided in southern Ontario and Manitoba

Some patients **travel to southern Ontario** for complex specialty care (e.g. cardiac surgery, paediatric care, etc.) not currently available in the region

About **65%** **of acute hospital service** for patients in Northwestern Ontario is provided by TBRHSC, with the balance shared among the 11 smaller acute hospitals in the region

TBRHSC frequently experiences high occupancy exceeding bed capacity, mostly due to **significant alternate level of care (ALC)** patients**

Staffing

Staff turnover is **relatively low** compared to Ontario peers

Average **sick time usage** is comparable to Ontario peers

Average **workforce age** is **10%** lower than Ontario peers

Recruitment and retention challenges existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and have increased recently

Financial

Despite strong operational efficiency, we continue to face **financial challenges**, which makes it difficult to address operational and equipment needs

**Alternate level of care (ALC) patients are those occupying acute care hospital beds who are not acutely ill or do not require the intensity of resources or services provided in an acute hospital setting.



Development of our Plan

Our previous Strategic Plan 2020 ended in early 2020, just **before the COVID-19 pandemic began**

Development of *Strategic Plan 2026* began in early 2021 under the guidance of the **Strategic Planning Advisory Committee**. The committee was comprised of TBRHSC and TBRHRI Board members, leaders, staff, physicians, Patient Family Advisors, learners, partners, and academic leaders

We were encouraged to stretch our thinking by engaging eight thought-leaders from around the world, who provided their perspectives on **seven areas of focus** including:

- 1 **Racism, Diversity, & Inclusion**
- 2 **Reimagining Patient Care after the COVID-19 Pandemic**
- 3 **Reimagining Work - The Hospital Workplace of the Future**
- 4 **Research & Innovation**
- 5 **Hospital Without Walls**
- 6 **Health Systems Thinking**
- 7 **Digital Health**

Plan development was informed by more than

120

engagement sessions (e.g. interviews, focus groups, and surveys) with more than

700

stakeholders including:

- Patients
- Patient Family Advisors
- Members of the public
- Staff (from frontline to leadership)
- Physicians
- Volunteers
- Learners
- Physician leaders
- Regional partners
- Funders
- Regional leaders from outside health care sector

Preliminary priorities were determined based on feedback received during stakeholder **consultation** and subsequent **discussions** with leadership and the TBRHSC and TBRHRI Boards, and used to create a draft plan

The draft Plan was then reviewed, refined and finalized based on further consultations with **stakeholders** and **TBRHSC and TBRHRI leadership**

“A regional strategy is needed to reduce needless emergency visits and hospital admissions.”

Patient, via Strategic Plan 2026 Engagement Survey

MISSION:

We provide quality care to patients and families, supported and advanced by research, innovation, and education that is responsive to the needs of the population of Northwestern Ontario.

VISION:



PHILOSOPHY:

Patients at the centre of everything we do.

VALUES:

DIVERSITY

We foster a people-centred environment that is inclusive of all.

COMPASSION

We show empathy, compassion and respect by acknowledging ourselves as learners in understanding the experiences of others, and by considering the needs, thoughts and feelings of those we serve and with whom we work.

EXCELLENCE

We deliver the highest quality service in every encounter and in all our work.

INNOVATION

We embrace continual learning and improvement to drive positive change.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We sustain and reinvest in our mission and communities by wisely planning for and managing our resources.

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS:

			
			
Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion We all belong	Patient Experience Empathy, compassion, and respect in every encounter	Staff Experience This is where we want to work, grow, and thrive	Research, Innovation, & Learning Driven by the needs of our patients, our staff, and our communities



Sustainable Future
Ensuring our Healthy Future



Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion

We all belong

WHAT WE WILL DO

Embed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in everything we do.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Assess policies and procedures, using an equity lens.
- Create an Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Steering Committee.
- Recruit Indigenous staff.
- Identify opportunities for education and development of Indigenous individuals.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Provide a culturally safe experience for all patients and staff.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Provide cultural safety and equity, diversity, and inclusion training for all staff.
- Conduct a walk-through of the Hospital's physical environment with an equity lens.
- Implement the principles of the Truth & Reconciliation Call to Action.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE IT

- Increase staff engagement in cultural safety and equity, diversity, and inclusion training.
- Increase positive patient experience survey results related to their experience, views, and beliefs being acknowledged as part of care.

Patient Experience

Empathy, compassion, and respect in every encounter

WHAT WE WILL DO

Treat each person with compassion, respect, and empathy.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Develop and implement the framework for co-design.
- Embrace patient-centred communication principles.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Focus relentlessly on quality.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Develop an annual Quality Improvement Plan.
- Incorporate quality best practices.
- Review a summary of patient safety events.
- Assess current services through the lenses of consistency, coordination, and transitions.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Become experts in caring for patients with complex care needs.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Improve coordination, care, and support for patients with complex health issues.
- Develop a Substance Use and Addictions Strategy.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE IT

- Increase positive patient experience survey results.
- Improve quality of care and reduce preventable harm.
- Improve access, care, and support for patients with complex care needs in collaboration with our partners.

Staff Experience

This is where we want to work, grow, and thrive

WHAT WE WILL DO

Retain, recruit, and support the people needed to shape our future.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Improve physical and emotional safety, and violence prevention.
- Achieve a safe and just culture that encourages open dialogue.
- Update our current wellness plan.
- Monitor our staff vacancy rates and enhance recruitment processes.
- Implement recruitment processes to reflect Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion.
- Implement an Interprofessional Collaborative Model of Practice.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE IT

- Increase positive staff experience survey results.
- Improve staff engagement.
- Recruit and retain necessary staff.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Support the ongoing development of our current and future leaders.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Ensure staff have access to professional development resources and opportunities.
- Implement a leadership development framework.

Research, Innovation, & Learning

Driven by the needs
of our patients,
our staff, and our
communities

WHAT WE WILL DO

Assess and prioritize our research efforts.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Prioritize research and assess current research initiatives.
- Enable opportunities for knowledge translation.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Enhance staff capacity and capability for research success.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Recruit researchers to address staffing gaps.
- Retain current staff and mentor new researchers.
- Establish an evaluation framework.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Create an environment supportive of research, innovation, and learning.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Encourage staff to lead and participate in research, innovation, and learning.
- Support continuous education and professional development.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE IT

- Increase patients enrolled or involved in research studies.
- Increase number of research publications, grants, and external funding.
- Increase number of learners.

Sustainable Future

Ensuring our
Healthy
Future

STRATEGIC PLAN

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WHAT WE WILL DO

Advance digital health to improve patient and staff experiences.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Secure and implement the electronic health record.
- Determine required data systems.
- Implement a plan to meet information needs.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Develop a Hospital Clinical Services Plan to clarify our acute care and academic mandates.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Determine which current services are consistent with our mandates.
- Estimate our short and long-term service demand.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Advance Partnerships and System Integration.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Advance existing regional partnerships and programs.
- Pursue strategic partnership and integration opportunities.
- Be a voice and advocate for the needs of our entire region.

WHAT WE WILL DO

Achieve Operational Sustainability and Accountability.

HOW WE WILL DO IT

- Create an accountability framework.
- Provide training and supports to improve accountability.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE IT

- Prioritize our services and find operational efficiencies.
- Increase partnerships to improve and integrate care for patients.

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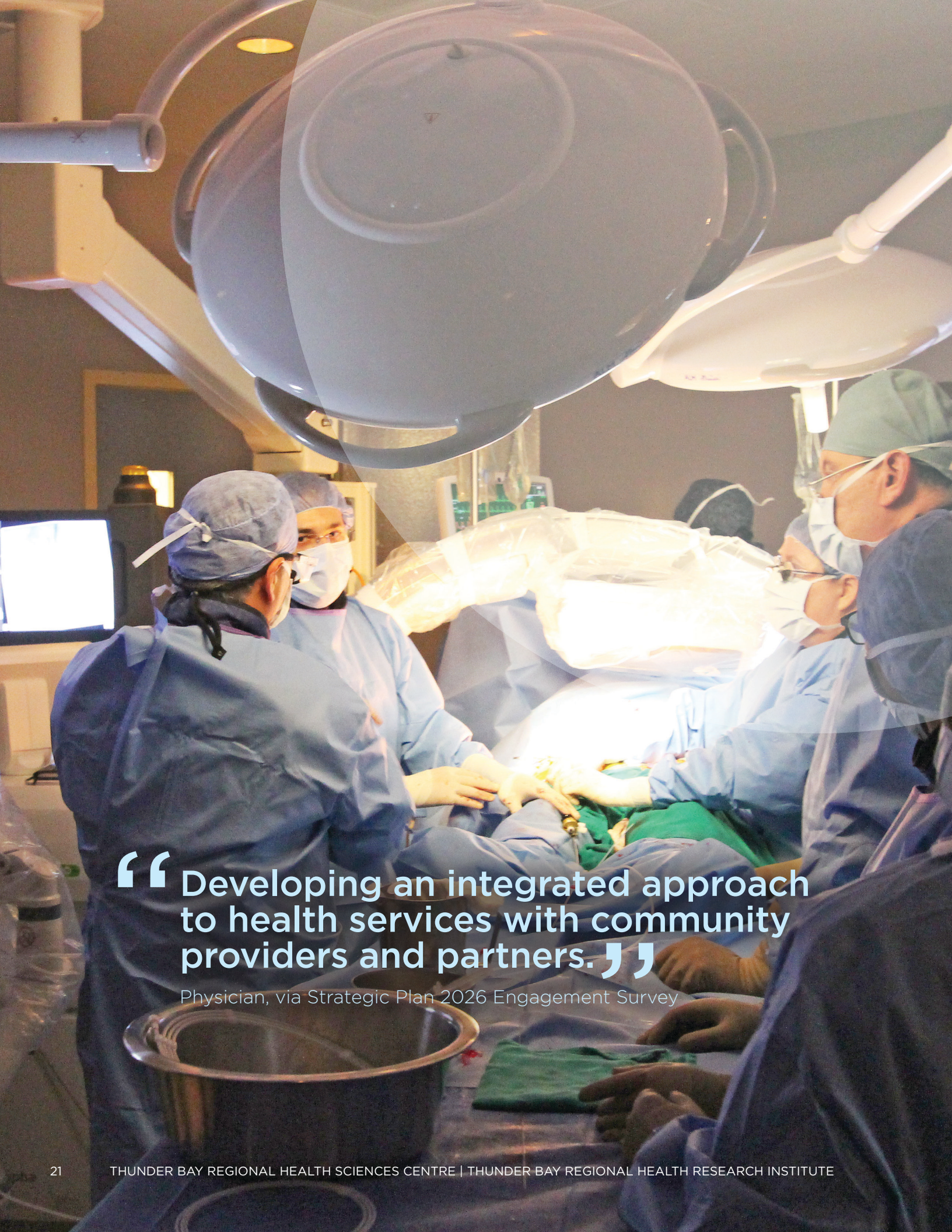
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““ Developing an integrated approach to health services with community providers and partners.””

Physician, via Strategic Plan 2026 Engagement Survey

Looking Ahead

Since our establishment in 2004 and 2007 respectively, the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute have continuously evolved and expanded our directions, programs, services and facilities to advance and to support the health care needs of the people of Northwestern Ontario and to fulfill the mandate of becoming a leading academic health sciences centre.

Successes to date are the result of the hard work, dedication and commitment of staff, physicians, volunteers, partners and donors. That dedication and commitment is evident with the launch of *Strategic Plan 2026*, the first ever strategic plan jointly created by the Thunder Bay Regional Health

Sciences Centre and the Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute and developed through consultation and collaboration with hundreds of stakeholders. *Strategic Plan 2026* will build on our successes over the last five years and will help us to address the health needs of residents of Northwestern Ontario.

Strategic Plan 2026 is dynamic and will evolve in response to changing needs and ongoing stakeholder feedback. Progress reports will be made to the public annually, including the results of strategic performance indicators that will be used to measure success in achieving goals and advancing the vision of *Exceptional care for every patient, every time.*

““ While things aren’t perfect, I believe that providing health care in these challenging times is complicated. Meeting the needs of everyone may not be possible, but keeping patients safe and prioritizing care is being done with forethought and professionalism.””

Patient, via Strategic Plan 2026 Engagement Survey



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