

Together let's #AccelerateAction for Gender Equality

It's hard to believe that in 2025, which still feels like the distant future, true gender parity is still far away. Now more than ever, it is important to accelerate action for gender equality, the theme of this year's [International Women's Day](#) (March 8).

The World Economic Forum estimates that at the current rate of progress, it will take five generations from now to reach full gender parity. However, we can push it forward, so that our great-great-great-grand daughters, and many others, will benefit.

Parity is needed in so many areas, including wages where women earn on average [84 cents](#) to each loonie that men do (and racialized women much less), and stereotypes that limit women's career paths.

Health care is also an area where, despite advances, parity is still needed. Women have long been under-represented in medical research both as researchers and research subjects. For instance, the use default "male" [crash test dummies](#) has led to higher rates of injury (47%) and death (17%) for women involved in traffic accidents, because safety features have been built for male bodies. Studies in the 1980s and early 1990s, looking at the effect of diet and exercise on heart attacks, did not include women at all.

[But women's experience with heart disease](#) can be different to men's as it tends to affect the smaller blood vessels, and can cause symptoms such as nausea, shortness of breath, and back/neck pain, rather than crushing chest pain. Despite heart disease and stroke being the number one cause of premature death in Canadian women, 89% of women are unaware of their unique risk factors that can include menstruation, conception and menopause.

What #AccelerateAction means to me ...

As a health care leader, accelerating action means ensuring women and girls:

- can make informed decisions about their health,
- have access to quality education and training in diverse fields, such as STEM, trades and business, and
- feel valued, heard and empowered to succeed and take on leadership roles.

I realize that I'm writing from a position of privilege as our Timmins and District Hospital's (TADH) CEO/President, on a senior leadership team that also includes a long-time, respected leader in [Joan Ludwig](#), Vice President of Clinical and Chief Nursing Executive. Throughout our organization we have many women in positions of leadership, as directors and managers, as well as working as physicians, nurses and other health care professionals.

One of these amazing women includes Deanne Bacvar, who shifted gears from a career in banking to pursue nursing in her 30s. After working at TADH as an RN in various

departments, she went on to further studies to become a nurse practitioner (NP) – which the hospital helped support through a “grow your own program.” Deanne recently started work as the hospital’s first Surgical Program NP. As an NP, Deanne brings a different lens to supporting surgical patients, working to improve their experience, outcomes, and transitions of care, as well as collaborate with surgeons and other team members to extend their work. Deanne’s clearly a life-long learner. It’s heartening to know, colleagues at the hospital have supported her on this journey.

Transgender Day of Visibility

March also includes another date focused on equality, equity and inclusiveness: March 31 is the International Transgender Day of Visibility – a day to celebrate the ways trans people have always enriched our world. Affirmation and acceptance are ways to build a culture where everyone feels included and free to be their authentic selves. With legislation targeting transgender people in the United States, it’s important that as Canadians we show that inclusiveness and diversity continue to be among our core values.

Diversity Equity, Inclusion, Social Accountability and Anti-Racism (DEISA-A)

As Chair of TADH’s inaugural DEISA-A Committee, started in 2023, we are working on equity-based transformational initiatives with the goal of helping to reduce health disparities and improve access for people living across the Cochrane district. The committee is about to embark on its second action plan which includes twelve calls to action to strengthen health equity approaches over the next 15 months.

We know that healthier communities are ones where everyone feels valued and included, and systemic barriers are addressed. As a hospital, TADH is striving to provide exemplary care to Northerners through our values that include respecting the diversity of the people we serve. I’ll share more about this work in the coming months.

Take care,
Kate Fyfe