

Waste Diversion Success Continues At Pembroke Regional Hospital

August 22, 2016

PEMBROKE – Acquiring new equipment or new programs at the Pembroke Regional Hospital often takes the spotlight in terms of health care news, however, some of the hospital's great stories also happen behind the scenes.

One example of this is the success and advancement of the hospital's waste management program.

"We are well ahead of many other hospitals when it comes to waste diversion," said Marilyn Watson, Manager of Environment Services at PRH. "We are diverting more waste from the landfill site than the average hospital typically would. We are very environmentally responsible with our regular waste stream and we have now further improved our program by moving to reusable sharps and pharmaceutical waste containers." Ms. Watson said.

Typically, hospitals have single-use sharps containers or self-service reusable containers and must maximize the use of the container in order to minimize the cost to the facility. Ultimately it is most economical to fill each container to the fill line; however, this practice can lead to overfilling and an increased opportunity for exposure and needle stick injuries.

In February of this year, the Pembroke Regional Hospital teamed up with Stericycle to use their Sharps Management Service; a proactive approach to sharps management through which containers are exchanged and replaced by Stericycle technicians before overfilling. The containers themselves are also improved in terms of design for use, improving staff safety. Ms. Watson said the program is working well.

"Not only have we gained health and safety improvements, but we are also realizing savings, both financially and environmentally. By using the Sharps Management Service, we are saving 4,740 containers from going to landfill – which translates into 19,770 pounds of plastic kept out of landfill, 1,527 pounds of cardboard kept out of landfill, and the prevention of 11,731 pounds of CO₂ emissions," she said.

It was noted that in addition to the sharps aspect of the new program, pharmaceutical waste is now sorted more efficiently and is stored more securely, insuring that all waste is being disposed of in a responsible manner.

PRH has recently contracted services through The Ottawa Hospital so that they are reducing biomedical waste being sent to landfill with no additional cost.

For nearly a decade, Pembroke Regional Hospital has had a waste management program in place through which approximately 38.2% of the hospital's waste is diverted from landfill through recycling. This doesn't include e-waste (such as printer cartridges etc.), which is donated to Valour Public School for processing through their own e-waste

diversion program.

“Our goal is to continually beef up and improve our recycling program by looking for advanced practices,” Ms. Watson said.

Another aspect of the waste management program that makes PRH unique is the recycling of organics. “We are the only hospital in our area that we know of that recycles organics and we’ve been doing this for a long time. It’s a huge weight and a huge diversion program,” Ms. Watson said, noting that a total of 18 large green bins full of organics are diverted from landfill and recycled by the Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre each week.

Hospital President and CEO Pierre Noel said there is great pride in knowing how well the hospital is doing in terms of reducing its impact on the environment. “Our Environmental Services team recognizes the importance of waste management and has taken a lot of initiative to find ways to improve the practices we have in place as a way of protecting and preserving our environment for future generations,” Mr. Noel said.