

# MEMRAMCOOK-TANTRAMAR COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

**News Release**

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## **Rural Health Action Group Reaches a Key Turning Point**

“After more than two years of local consultation and a year of active collaboration with the Horizon Health Network, we’ve come to a key turning point,” says John Higham, co-chair of Tantramar’s Rural Health Action Group (RHAG).

“Together, we’ve established an effective working model for community participation in health care reform and have defined regional priorities for action. Phase One of the process — definition and vision — is complete. Phase Two — refinement and implementation — is getting under way.”

Phase One of the collaboration included the formation, in January 2022, of a Service Design Working Group (SDWG). This group of community volunteers with a background in health service developed a project plan, consulted with Horizon personnel, and conducted representative interviews with primary health care providers in the region. Seven months later, in August 2022, the SDWG presented a vision for collaborative action, outlining seven key priorities ranging from access to essential services to improvement of long term care, and recommending action steps to address specific issues.

Foremost among the priorities was the restoration and improvement of essential services through the Sackville Memorial Hospital. Important progress in this field was reported to the Tantramar Town Council at a special meeting held on April 3rd, 2023, where Margaret Melanson, acting CEO of Horizon, was pleased to announce a number of positive steps.

Physical improvements at the Sackville Hospital include refurbishment of the Emergency Department, completed in March, and two operating rooms currently being redesigned to accommodate more surgery.

Of equal or greater importance has been a successful recruitment drive to increase the nursing staff to the level required to sustain acute care and emergency services in Sackville. With parallel recruiting of physicians under way, Horizon's goal is to offer round-the-clock emergency care as soon as possible.

Enhanced opportunities for education and training are being introduced to enhance morale and retention of medical staff, as are events devoted to recognition and appreciation of their service.

"We are very pleased with what has been achieved during Phase One of our collaboration with Horizon," commented John Higham. "We look forward with high hopes to the constructive challenges of Phase Two that will require far greater community involvement."