



Rising above challenges

Improvement pathways
at Vitalité Health Network

QUARTERLY REPORT
TO THE COMMUNITY
MARCH 2024

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Our Purpose

To foster the health of our patients and communities, today and tomorrow.

Through a collaborative, learning approach, we foster the health of our communities and ensure the best care for our patients. We are an innovative, forward-looking network, where everyone's voice counts, and where patients and families come first.

Our Values

Safety and respect above all

Humility and curiosity at the heart of a learning culture

Collaboration and mutual support that promote synergy

Integrity and accountability in all our actions



Rising above challenges

Message from the President and CEO

While Vitalité Health Network has been very much in the news since the start of 2024, behind the scenes, efforts have continued so that we can rise above the challenges and stay on course for continuous improvement.

This report to the community describes the improvement projects and initiatives underway at the Network that are in line with our three major directions: **employee experience**, **patient experience** and **building closer ties with communities**. It presents the results for the last quarter, from January 1 to March 31, 2024.

In a way, these are pathways taken to support the necessary transformation of the health care system, brought about by an aging population, an increase in chronic diseases and the labour shortage.

Among other things, this report discusses the rollout of local family health teams, the patient flow optimization project and various projects with an impact on hospital efficiency and performance. Recruitment and retention results for the quarter are also reported.

We also highlight our efforts to build closer ties with our communities and staff on the ground, the driving forces of our Network.

Last but not least, I salute the commitment of our health care workers who are hard at work caring for patients and helping to improve our health care system. I would also like to thank our health care partners, our volunteers and our communities, who play a key role in this great societal project.

Happy reading!





Dr. France Desrosiers
President and CEO

Message from the Chairman of the Board of Directors

In office since July 2023, the members of the Board of Directors are keeping a close eye on the issues facing the health care system, which is experiencing its share of challenges.

We can see the scope and complexity of the issues. However, the continuous improvement approach and the vision of Vitalité Health Network are a source of confidence for the future.

Aware of the challenges, the Network has set itself on solid pathways, based on projections, evidence and continuous learning-based strategic planning, to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

The quarterly report is a way for the community to track this progress and to better understand the connections between projects and initiatives, as well as between organizational values and the Network's actions that support change.

I invite you to read it with interest, as well as to consult the detailed performance report published on the Network's website, which shows all the results for the quarter.





Mr. Thomas Soucy
Chairman of the
Board of Directors



Major directions

-  Patient experience
-  Employee experience
-  Building closer ties with communities

Strategic priorities

-  Improving access to primary health care
-  Improving patient flow and hospital performance

Patient experience

Improving patient flow and hospital performance and improving access to primary health care requires a wide range of projects and initiatives that mobilize teams in the field and involve them in the search for solutions.

Primary care: The Vitalité model is proving its worth



Vitalité Health Network, which has made access to primary health care one of its two major strategic priorities, has developed a care model based on having each patient under the care of local family health teams.

Every team is connected to their own referral group, which is responsible for quickly guiding patients to the right service provider. The aim is to provide access in five days, while also providing better follow-up thanks to the creation of a connected system.

Some care performed by physicians (Pap tests, newborn health checkups, or ear washing) can be delegated to other health professionals based on a patient's needs. Administrative support is provided so that the professionals can focus on delivering care.

The model, whose implementation began in 2023, is progressing quickly and is already making it possible to care for a greater number of patients, while saving money:

- Six local family health teams with 33 doctors and 8 nurse practitioners are now active, and 22 teams are currently being built;
- The referral centre for the Edmundston region is up and running. It is supported by a new women's health centre and a new urgent care centre for minor and urgent cases;
- The Network has a medical director dedicated to this project and has created new manager positions.





VIDEO ADD-ON

Dr. Isabelle-Anne Girouard invites us to the new Connexion Health Centre, which is located in Moncton. Her team has joined the model established by the Network and is starting to take on orphan patients in the region.

The initial results of this pilot project are promising for the future of primary health care. In the Edmundston region, the newly created team was able to reduce the average access time by 18.9 days.

In the Dieppe region, the teams formed over the past few months were able to add 3,660 individuals to their patient base of 19,633 patients.

The collaborative meetings, which began 12 months ago, are continuing apace in the regions served by Vitalité Health Network.



Key results

New patients being cared for	4,116
Average wait time for patients in the model	From 12.62 to 7 days
Physicians involved in building the model	126 out of 216 (58%)
Nurse practitioners involved	15
Other health professionals involved	32

Community	Teams in the co-building process	Active teams	Care providers involved	
			PHYSICIANS	NURSE PRACTITIONERS
Edmundston Haut-Madawaska	2	1	17	1
Dieppe	6	3	35	-
Memramcook	1	-	3	-
Moncton	2	1	3	7
Cocagne Cap-Pelé	1	1	4	-
Lamèque	1	-	5	2.6
Shippagan	1	-	9	-
Caraquet	1	-	-	-
Bathurst	3	-	14	-
Tracadie	1	-	4	-
Grand Falls	1	-	8	3
Shediac	1	-	15	1
Campbellton	1	-	10	-
TOTAL	22	6	127	14.6

Patient flow at the heart of transformation efforts



Improving patient flow and hospital performance is the other major strategic priority of the Network.

We are working to improve patient flow to ensure that a bed is available as soon as a patient requires hospitalization for an acute problem. In a context where needs are growing and human resources are limited, we need to improve the performance of our services.

This large-scale initiative will be implemented over an 18-month period. It involves facilitating every stage of the patient's care, from consultation to admission, right through to discharge.

Teams from all hospital facilities will be mobilized, including all client program teams, as well as crosscutting sectors such as laboratory, pharmacy and professional services.

This major transformation will involve not only the creation of a new organizational culture, but also the deployment of a range of strategies and new processes, including the following:

- The creation of discharge planning teams;
- Data collection to support the management of hospital activities;
- The creation of communication tools designed to involve families and keep them better informed about the care process, the anticipated discharge date and the steps to be taken;
- The establishment of assessment criteria at each stage of the care pathway to make it easier to identify alternatives to hospital admission, anticipate the risks of delays and determine the measures needed for the return home.

Together, to optimize PATIENT FLOW



These efforts will contribute to achieving **three key objectives:**

- 1 Reduce occupancy rates** in our facilities to ease pressure on the system;
- 2 Reduce patient length of stay** while maintaining quality of care;
- 3 Reduce wait times** for tests, surgery and emergency services.

The patient mobilization program, which aims to accelerate patient recovery, and the robotic surgery program, for example, are examples of projects that have an impact on patient flow.

Early mobilization for faster recovery



The Network has developed a patient mobilization program to accelerate recovery and prevent patient deconditioning, while easing the burden on nursing staff.

This project, which involves professional services, is directly linked to the patient flow project, as it has an impact on the length of stay.

A team of kinesiologists is on hand to help inpatients with their exercise needs. The aim is to maintain muscle mass and improve mobility, as well as to reduce the risk of complications.

Follow-up continues after hospital discharge to help maintain independence and prevent readmission. To date, around half of patients continue to exercise according to the plan after returning home.

The mobilization program is now set up in a large number of units in the Network's four zones, and 22 of the 26 kinesiologist positions created have been filled.

The results are clearly positive.

We have seen a one-day reduction in the average length of stay for patients who have taken part in the initiative. We have also noted an improvement in mobility and autonomy in the activities of daily living.



Key results

- ▶ **ONE-DAY** reduction in length of stay
- ▶ Improvement in mobility and autonomy
- ▶ **100% satisfaction rate** (questionnaire distributed to patients and staff)

A stronger team for hemodialysis care



In the summer of 2023, the Network created a specialized hemodialysis patient care attendant training program for the Beauséjour zone. Learners received coaching as well as theoretical and practical instruction for three months, while being paired with a nurse mentor.

This backing has made it possible to implement a new collaborative care model designed to respond to growing demand and a shortage of staff. This model, which involves a redistribution of tasks and the creation of collaborative teams, helps to optimize the services offered to patients, while reducing the workload of registered nurses.

The recruitment of graduating nurses, the intake of preceptorship nursing students and the training of nursing students continue, with the aim of reducing the number of vacancies in this sector.

Optimizing the role of health care workers increases the Network's capacity to provide patient care, which aligns with the organization's purpose, which is to foster the health of our patients and communities, today and tomorrow.

This innovative training program also embodies Vitalité Health Network's values of humility, curiosity, collaboration and mutual support.



Key results

- ▶ Training of 11 care attendants
- ▶ Reduction in the need for agency staff by 10 full-time equivalents
- ▶ Reduction in the workload for nursing staff

Robotic surgery program off to a successful start



Between February 1, 2023, and March 1, 2024, 322 patients were operated on using the surgical robot installed at the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre.

The team successfully completed the first year of the robotic surgery program without any complications requiring open surgery. The robot enables less invasive surgery, which reduces the risk of complications, promotes faster recovery and therefore shortens hospital stays.

This program has an impact on patient flow because it frees up beds more quickly for the next patients. Currently used for urology and gynecologic oncology surgery, the robot will soon be used for other specialties too. When more surgeons are trained to use the state-of-the-art equipment, thoracic surgery and then general surgery will be possible.



VIDEO ADD-ON

Performing a robot-assisted minimally invasive surgery

is now possible at the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre. Explore this cutting edge technology with Dr. Robyn Comeau, gynecologic oncologist, and Dr. Jocelyne Hébert, Director of Surgical Services.

The acquisition of a surgical robot was made possible through a \$6.5 million fundraising campaign by the CHU Dumont Foundation with its generous donors.

"My experience with robotic surgery has been positive. It's still surgery, so there's a certain amount of fear involved, but the robot made things easier than I could have imagined and I didn't really have to take any pain medication."

- **Katherine Woodard**
Moncton



The Network's surgical services continue their drive for medical innovation. Starting this spring, patients undergoing hip or knee surgery, colorectal surgery or gynecologic surgery will have access to a new app that provides advice and follow-up before and after the procedure to improve their recovery.

This digital care pathway platform will be available to patients undergoing surgery in the surgical suite of the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre, Chaleur Regional Hospital or Edmundston Regional Hospital. Patients in the Restigouche Zone who undergo hip or knee surgery will also have access to the app.

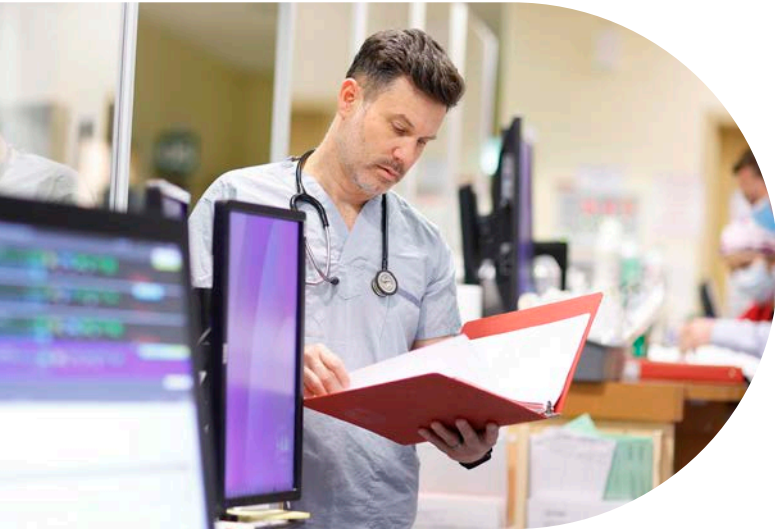
Key results

- ▶ **322** patients operated on as of March 1, 2024
- ▶ **0** transitions to open surgery
- ▶ **6** surgeons trained
- ▶ **Average length of stay compared with open or laparoscopic surgery**
 - ◆ Nephrectomy: **- 2.2 days**
 - ◆ Cystectomy: **-1.5 days**
 - ◆ Prostatectomy and hysterectomy: **- 0.5 days**

Emergency: Waiting room reinforcements welcome



Since summer 2023, patient care attendants have been taking turns monitoring the health status of patients in the waiting room of the Emergency Department at the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre.



Their role is to check patients' vital signs and look after their well-being until they are seen by the doctor.

Implementation of this new mode of operation is now completed, and the results of this pilot project are largely positive.

The presence of care attendants means greater supervision and improved care. It also makes it possible to respond faster in the event of a sudden deterioration in a patient's state of health.

Patients appreciate this additional support and the number of complaints is declining. The team has also noted a reduction in verbal abuse of staff since the addition of security guards in the waiting room. Verbal abuse of health care professionals remains an unacceptable reality. The public receiving services must cooperate to ensure a healthy and respectful working environment.

The Network is working to extend this model to other zones over the coming months. This model also increases the Network's capacity to provide patient care.

Kiosks to measure registration wait times and improve efficiency



An improvement project carried out at the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre in 2023 has streamlined the registration process. The working environment has been redesigned and some process-related inefficiencies have been eliminated. In addition, distribution of a questionnaire gives patients a greater capacity for feedback.

These adjustments reduced the average registration time from 18 minutes in February 2023 to 13 minutes in January 2024.

Efforts are now continuing in the Acadie-Bathurst Zone. This time the priority is the redistribution of certain tasks.

Furthermore, kiosks have been installed at the Chaleur Regional Hospital, the Lamèque Hospital and Community Health Centre and the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre. These machines provide the Network with reliable indicators of wait times and instantaneous measurement of waiting room occupancy.

These kiosks will be installed in all of the Network's admitting departments.



Key results

- ▶ **Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre: 30% reduction in average registration wait time**

Employee experience

In addition to recruitment initiatives, retention initiatives are also being implemented to improve attendance, engagement and job satisfaction. We want to provide health care workers with a healthy, engaging and safe work environment, which ultimately contributes to our ability to deliver quality patient care.

Creation of an interdisciplinary occupational health team



An interdisciplinary occupational health team has been created to support employees who are experiencing health challenges that are interfering with their attendance at work. This team, comprised of an occupational physician, a nurse practitioner and an occupational therapist, soon to be joined by a psychologist, provides employees with timely access to primary health care professionals. All services are offered regionally, either in person, virtually or by telephone.

Staff engagement



The Network is developing a tool to improve the frequency and quality of its employee engagement assessments. A new tool (employee net promoter score) will be used every quarter. It will provide a better understanding of the employee experience in the workplace and empower managers in their work with their teams to make improvements that foster engagement.

Staff rest cabins



Since February 2024, the employees at the Edmundston Regional Hospital, the Restigouche Hospital Centre and the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre have been able to enjoy the new rest cabins. Equipped with a vibrating massage chair, a soothing sound environment and a light therapy system, these cabins provide a truly relaxing session. These cabins will also soon be available in the Campbellton Regional Hospital, the Chaleur Regional Hospital and the Tracadie Hospital.

Improved attendance management and fewer workplace accidents



Vitalité Health Network continues to implement the project to improve attendance management, which aims to ensure more active management of frequent absenteeism and better supervision of employees by the disability management team. These efforts are closely linked to those being made to improve the employee experience, the patient experience and hospital performance.

The annual average of paid sick leave days per employee in the Network was 12.4 compared with 14.3, in 2022-2023. The Network has set itself the goal of achieving an annual average of 10 days of paid sick leave per employee by the end of 2024-2025.

Employee safety in the workplace also improved during the year. The annual lost-time accident rate is 1.9 accidents per 100 workers, compared with 3.1 in 2022-2023 and 4.0 in 2021-2022.

Key results

- ▶ 2022-2023 **14.3**
- ▶ 2023-2024 **12.4** after three quarters (annualized average)
- ▶ **Annual workplace accident rate per 100 health care workers**
 - ◆ 2021-2022 **4.0**
 - ◆ 2022-2023 **3.1**
 - ◆ 2023-2024 **1.9**

Recruitment and hires (nursing)



The talent acquisition team meets daily to accelerate hiring in nursing and other critical health care professions. These meetings help set recruitment priorities and ensure that efforts are constantly aligned with the organization's needs.

Recruitment and hiring initiatives

- Faster mobilization of known potential candidates
- Support with immigration and residential and community settlement
- Financial incentives
- Improving the experience of student employees
- Improving access to recruitment information and data
- Improving recruitment event planning



Stay interviews



As part of a pilot project, stay interviews were conducted by managers with staff members who had between 36 and 48 months of service. Some 160 employees from the pharmacy and mother-child services sectors took part in these interviews. The compiled and analyzed responses of participants have provided tangible avenues for improvement to increase the sense of recognition and commitment at work. The project will soon be rolled out across the Network to give more employees a voice.

"The fruits of my multidisciplinary team's work are what I find most gratifying because I am aware of the positive effects of health recruitment on people's lives."

- **Kim Arseneau**
Talent Acquisition
Advisor and rising
star of the Network



Other projects underway

- Pre-retirement interview process in the nursing sector
- Stay interview process
- Review of processes for welcoming and integrating new employees in non-clinical sectors

International recruitment



Vitalité Health Network representatives took part in job fairs in Morocco, France and Belgium in fall 2023, as well as in virtual fairs with international candidates. Nearly 200 potential hires were identified at these events and the recruitment team is currently working to confirm these hires.

In 2023, more than 100 new international employees started at Vitalité Health Network. Thanks to our recruitment efforts with international candidates, as well as New Brunswick graduates and health care workers from other provinces, we expect to see an increase in the number of recruits in 2024.

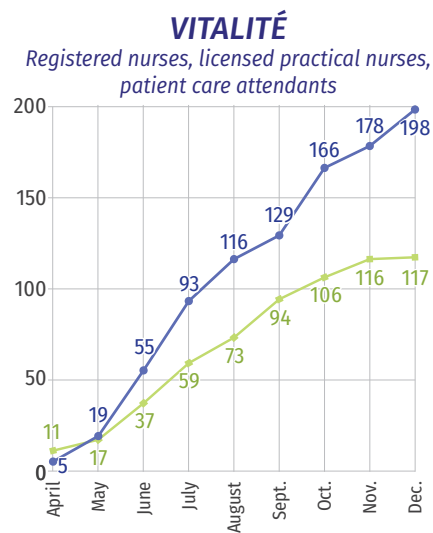
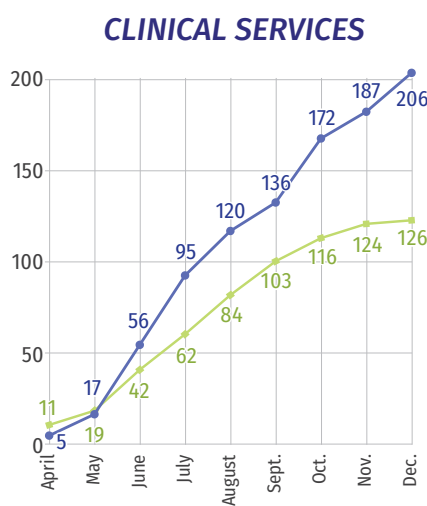
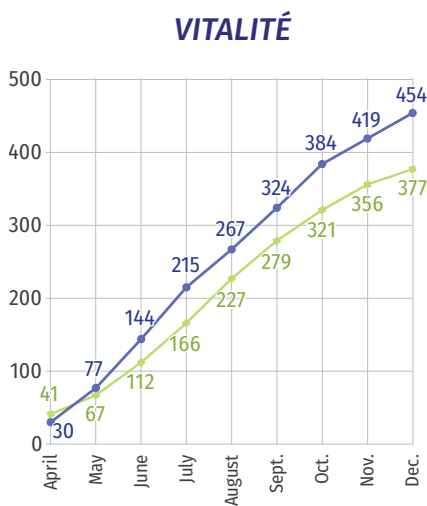
Additional missions are planned this spring to Morocco and Côte d'Ivoire.

Key results (April 1st to December 2023)

	Number of graduates hired*	Number of international hires*	International offers for which a response is pending	Other hires*
Registered nurses	83	96**	70	43
Licensed practical nurses	48			50
Patient care attendants	55			45
TOTAL	186	96	70	138

* Accepted offers

** Will start as patient care attendants until registered in N.B.



Hires — Departures

For the second year in a row, the number of new hires at the Network has exceeded departures.

Building closer ties with communities

Optimizing the health care system depends on the commitment of all stakeholders, including health partners, the education sector and communities. Aware of the need for synergy, Vitalité Health Network continues to invest in its relationships, both internally (with its teams on the ground) and externally.

Community meetings



The Network's Leadership Team continued its community meetings, including meeting with the Chaleur Regional Service Commission in March. A number of health-related issues were discussed at this meeting, which focused on forging connections to boost collaboration between Vitalité Health Network and the communities of the Chaleur Regional Service Commission. In fact, the next Community Health Needs Assessment report, due to be launched in April 2024, will focus on this region.

"The meeting with Vitalité Health Network's senior management further strengthened our ties. We're very excited about the upcoming health needs assessment of our communities and the establishment of our learning community. This is perfectly in line with the community development mandate of the Chaleur Regional Service Commission."

- **Jennifer Pitre**
Community Development Manager,
Chaleur Regional Service Commission



Community Health Needs Assessment – Dieppe and Memramcook



The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) continues to progress well for the communities of Dieppe and Memramcook. Over the last few months, the Vitalité Health Network team has met with the Community Advisory Committee regarding the assessment and has completed several key steps in the needs assessment process. This includes a review of available statistical data, the collection of new qualitative data through ten focus groups and nine interviews, and the data analysis stage. The last meeting of the Community Advisory Committee is scheduled for May 2024, while the summer period will be used to draft and translate the report, which will be published in fall 2024.



Closer ties with the postsecondary education community



Concrete steps have been taken to build closer ties between Vitalité Health Network and French-language postsecondary institutions, such as the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick and the Université de Moncton.

Senior leaders from the Network and the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick met in February 2024 to continue their efforts to join forces and facilitate the pathway of candidates through the stages from recruitment to training, through to access to internships and to health professions.

The goal of combining the strengths of the Network with those of the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick is to prepare for the future and overcome the labour shortage facing the health care system. Determining current and future needs will make it possible to tailor recruitment strategies and the promotion of health professions to meet needs.

Avenues for improvement might include focusing on international recruitment, coordinating recruitment efforts at the local level (particularly in high schools), offering incentives or job offers to candidates at the start of their training, or offering health care internships within Vitalité Health Network and internships in other professional fields.



Health care workers and volunteers, the driving force behind the Network

Black History Month



In February, Vitalité Health Network celebrated Black History Month. At the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre, for example, the Cultural Fusion Committee organized awareness activities: newcomer employees were invited to proudly wear their traditional clothing, share recipes for international dishes, or share photos of their country of origin. These activities provided an opportunity to discover the culture of the increasing number of staff members from immigrant backgrounds within the Network.

Dietitians honoured in March

During Nutrition Month in March, efforts were made not only to raise public awareness about healthy eating, but also to recognize the work of the Network's dietitians, who work in hospitals, community health centres and public health. These professionals have completed extensive and rigorous university training and are registered with the province's regulatory body for dietitians.

Recognition of pharmacy staff

During Pharmacy Appreciation Month in March, Vitalité Health Network put the spotlight on its pharmacy departments, which employ over 250 people (pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and assistants, support staff, pharmacy residents and students). Within each health care facility, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians ensure that patients receive effective and safe pharmaceutical services, from processing prescriptions to contributing to research projects, for example.



Volunteer program to support nursing units

In January 2024, Volunteer Services launched the Unit Support Volunteer Program in the Restigouche and Northwest zones. This program aims to integrate volunteers into the delivery of health care by focusing on providing compassionate support to improve the experience of patients and their families.

The program draws on previous hospital programs, recognizing the valuable contribution of volunteers. Through the mobilization of volunteers, this program fosters a sense of community and promotes health knowledge and education. The project will be launched in the Acadie-Bathurst and Beauséjour zones in the coming months.



In the photo, from left to right: Claudette Maltais, volunteer, Michelle Stewart, patient care attendant, and Diane Lavoie, volunteer in the Restigouche Zone.

Volunteer recruitment

If you are interested in volunteering within Vitalité Health Network, please visit the Volunteers page on our website: vitalitenb.ca/en/volunteers.

Closer ties between the Leadership Team and staff on the ground



The Leadership Team's efforts to build closer ties with staff on the ground continue. These initiatives include a new blog entitled "The Voice of Our Leaders", launched in 2024, that provides members of the Leadership Team with an opportunity to share their perspective on the issues, challenges and priorities facing their sector and the health care system as a whole. The publication of this blog gives staff on the ground a better understanding of the transformation taking place within the health care system.

Furthermore, members of the Leadership Team are making on-site visits more regularly to gain a better understanding of the day-to-day realities of staff.

As such, they go to various facilities and sectors to take the pulse of the teams and provide follow-ups that can improve the employee experience. The "To your health and your ideas" lunches with the President and CEO also continue. These meetings with employees from various sectors not only bring senior management and staff closer together, but also provide an opportunity to improve both operations and the work climate.



Openness and transparency, to serve you better

Follow our progress

See the [Performance Report](#)

- The report is published on the Network’s website and updated on a quarterly basis.

For each key indicator, the report provides the:

- Benchmark (national or international figure for the same indicators);
- Network’s target for the current quarter;
- Results for the current quarter;
- Trend over recent quarters.

The colour code shows progress made:

- Green – exceeds target
- Yellow – meets target (+/- 5%)
- Red – below target

The items measured are chosen based on the improvements to be made. It is normal to see yellow and red, which indicates a gap between the current performance and desired performance.



[Vitalité performance indicators \(vitalitenb.ca\)](https://vitalitenb.ca)

Participate in the public meeting of the Board of Directors

Join us, online or in person, at the public meeting of the Board of Directors to be held on Tuesday, April 23, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. at the Quality Hotel & Conference Centre located at 157 Water Street, in Campbellton.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. France Desrosiers, President and CEO of Vitalité Health Network, and Thomas Soucy, Chairman of the Board, will answer questions from the public about the quarterly report, the public meeting of the Board and other Network initiatives.



The link to attend the virtual meeting will be published in the social media and available at: bit.ly/vitalitenb-meetings

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