

Canadian College of Health Leaders - Eastern Ontario Chapter SPOTLIGHT PROFILE

Mr. Ray Racette, CHE

CEO, Canadian College of Health Leaders
Theme: Healthcare at the National Level

A Deputy Minister once told him that the Canadian College of Health Leaders (CCHL) is the thread to learn and stay connected in Canada. Little did he know that years later, after a full career in health administration, Mr. Racette would return to his hometown of Ottawa as the CEO of CCHL, bringing a strong modernization agenda and vast experience. The Eastern Ontario Chapter of CCHL interviewed Mr. Racette to learn about his career and ask him about healthcare improvement at a national-level!

Following graduation with a Masters in Health Administration (MHA) from the Telfer School of Management in 1979, Mr. Racette moved to Yellowknife to take his first job as a Program Policy Officer with the territorial government, being in a time when healthcare was transitioning from a federal to a territorial responsibility. Following this, Mr. Racette became the assistant executive director at Stanton Yellowknife Hospital, where he worked to advance a Treasury Board submission that he had previously written while in government - to rebuild the Stanton hospital!

Following his time in Yellowknife, Mr. Racette spent 18 years in Manitoba where he was first the CEO of a rural community hospital and faced the challenge of merging two hospitals and replacing them with a new regional centre. Showing exemplary leadership and knowing what would follow for other professionals, Mr. Racette put his job on the line to initiate the merger (as only one CEO would be required). Once started, this was a massive change project, proposing an entirely new model of regional care under the mantra of "services closer to home". The merger was a success, the new health centre (Boundary Trails) is delivering on the new model of regional care, while respecting the strong sense of community pride and ownership over their healthcare system.

Following his rural experience, Ray spent the next 10 years in Manitoba as CEO of the Victoria General Hospital in south Winnipeg, which was also moving through the regionalization process. This in mind, he maintained strong relationships with

Biography in-Brief



Mr. Racette has been the CEO at CCHL since 2008. Following a Life Sciences degree from Queens University & a Masters of Health Administration from the Telfer School of management, he has contributed to numerous healthcare improvement initiatives across Canada! Now with the CCHL, Ray is looking to modernize the college and its influence on leadership.

Ray and his wife Kathleen have a daughter Claire who is completing her Masters in Occupational Therapy at U of T.

Hobbies include reading, traveling and fitness.

the regional health authority, and the community. His unique challenge at the Victoria Hospital was to modernize and rebuild some of its key units (eg. oncology, emergency department) while working with the regional program teams to integrate services. In this process, Ray learned enormously about the support that a hospital Foundation and an engaged volunteer program can offer, and also about the importance of an inter-disciplinary senior management structure connecting sites and regional leadership as one team.

LEADING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

In 2008, Mr. Racette moved back to his hometown Ottawa to take on the role of CEO of the CCHL. He saw this as his opportunity to build a more modern college and work on its support for health leadership across Canada. He has been a CCHL member his whole career, helped build and rejuvenate chapters and appreciates what CCHL must do to serve members based in various Canadian settings.



QUESTION - What do you see as the main challenge(s) facing healthcare at the national level?

1) How we spread success! There remains a belief that people must begin change projects from ground zero and so they tend to move much slower than actually necessary. We should find better ways to build from each other's successes, and agree to engage, collaborate and learn continuously from each other. With this, the federal government can play an important convener role for the provinces/territories to find stronger national approaches. A good example of federal government engagement is Australia, where their states work with the commonwealth government to agree on national goals, and when accepted, are then executed at the "state" level.

To advance the national health agenda, there are also targeted areas that can be invested in to improve patient outcomes. There is an opportunity for the federal government to invest more forcefully into electronic health records, which can improve a patients' experience, safety and quality of care across the continuum of health services they must navigate.

2) How we advance priorities. As seen at the Great Canadian Healthcare Debate during the NHLC Conference in Ottawa last year, Indigenous Health was recognized by health leaders as an essential national health issue to advance. As articulated during the Debate by Dr. Alika Lafontaine, Project Chair for the Indigenous Health Alliance, the solutions needed by First Nations aren't always those proposed. Building trust, engaging, listening and taking the right action are all needed.

QUESTION - Do you have any advice for those new to healthcare and administration?

This is a noble, important career where you can make a difference on improving service. We are in the midst of change and in change there is always opportunity. In coming years there will be a handoff between boomers and millennials and you're lucky as there are many powerful tools to support this transition. The LEADS framework is a perfect example, serving as a common language for leadership and outlining the behaviors we all should strive to embody in our practice.

**Book of Choice:
Being Mortal - Dr. Atul
Gawande**

*Thank you for your time Mr. Racette and for sharing your experience
and perspectives with the Eastern Ontario Chapter!*