

Canadian College of Health Leaders - Eastern Ontario Chapter SPOTLIGHT PROFILE

TOM Schonberg

Previous President and CEO
Queensway Carleton Hospital (QCH)

To learn more about Tom, CCHL Eastern Ontario Chapter interviewed two local health leaders: Eric Hanna, President and CEO at Arnprior Regional Health; Alex Schonberg, Organizational Effectiveness Business Partner and Project Manager at Baycrest Health Sciences.

Interview with Eric Hanna

How long did you know Tom? What were some of Tom's biggest achievements?

I knew Tom for over 25 years, before he became the CEO of QCH. I was working as an VP at QCH for eight years from 2001 to 2008. Tom's biggest achievements were developing various programs and services in the QCH to meet the growing needs of the community.

What was it about Tom that made him such a well-respected leader?

Tom was a member of The Canadian College of Health Leaders and American College of Healthcare Executives. In 2014, The City of Ottawa awarded him The Order of Ottawa to acknowledge his significant contributions to our city.

He believed that "if you don't have your own home in order, you cannot be a strong partner". When he first joined QCH, there were challenges in finance and human resources. During his first 3 years at QCH, he spent a lot of efforts in improving the services and programs. For example, back then there was only one CT scan and no MRI, therefore, he focused on the development of diagnostic imaging department. He also improved the cancer care service on the west end of Ottawa.

Biography in-Brief



As President and CEO of Queensway Carleton Hospital for 20 years, Tom was a steady, guiding hand, and deeply devoted leader -- steering the west-Ottawa hospital through many seasons of expansion and growth into the regional leader that it is today, admired and respected across Ottawa and surrounding regions, and in the province at large.

Tom was a tireless advocate for QCH, its staff and its patients, and was successful in laying the foundation for the hospital's single largest expansion since its inaugural year in 1976, including an upcoming, substantial expansion to its mental health services and space.

Honoured and respected by colleagues and peers, Tom Schonberg carried a mighty weight for the good of the community he called home. A man of integrity, respect and care, his achievements are due high praise, though his character never sought it. His pride in QCH ran deep, yet he led each step with humility.

Ann Fuller, 2019, *Queensway Carleton Hospital Mourns Passing of President & CEO, Tom Schonberg*, [Press release]. Retrieved from https://www.qch.on.ca/NewsroomFiles/NewsRelease_To mSchonberg_Feb12_2019.pdf

For the recent 17 years, QCH was in good shape and played as a strong partner in the Champlain region. Tom played a leadership role in many regional collaborations and quality improvement initiatives. Tom was the collaborative leader and sponsor for the Eastern Ontario Regional Laboratory Association (EORLA), which encompassed the operation of 19 regional clinical laboratories in the Champlain Local health Integration Network of Eastern Ontario. Tom was also a leader in a Champlain region orthopedics initiative, allocating expertise and resources to establish standardized procedures and centralized intake of knee replacement.

What other contributions has Tom made for the healthcare industry?

Tom was a mentor for health care leaders at various stage of their career. He took interest in others' career development and inspired them to be their best. In the last decade, Tom was the preceptor of QCH for Master of Health Administration students from Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa. He mentored the future leaders by working closely with them.

Three of his previous VPs of QCH become hospital CEOs, including Eric Hanna (CEO of Arnprior Regional Health), Michael Cohen (CEO of Glengarry Memorial Hospital), and Dr. Andrew Falconer (CEO of St. Mary's General Hospital).

Interview with Alex Schonberg

How did your father Tom influence you on your career choice?

The work he did was hard work, but I could see how meaningful it was to him and that's what got me interested in healthcare. I thought I could be for any number of companies, but it's hard to get the same satisfaction if you're making bubble gum or cars, as opposed to helping people's health and wellbeing. And that's meaningful to him and me.

No matter where he was, he always spoke highly of QCH. He always based his decisions at work on what was best for the community. It was never about him personally. He was very humble about the work that he did but was always happy to recognize his team.

During his 20 years at QCH, he was the preceptor for 11 MHA students, among whom 4 won the preceptor of the year award. He was proud that not only did he mentor students, but he also helped them accomplish their projects successfully and make them think about their career goals at an early stage. He was very good at assessing talents and finding the right people. He wasn't a clinician by background himself and he appreciated that different people brought different skills to the team. He was trying to be very conscious of his own strengths and weaknesses. He always had strong people on his team to make up to his shortcomings. He engaged, coached and mentored, and shared his strengths with his team members.

I plan to continue working in healthcare management. I hope one day at the end of my career, people will say that I had a positive impact on the community like my dad had.

What did Tom love to do in his spare time?

Tom always loved to ski and snowboard. He liked being outdoors and he thought it was important to have family time. He always said that the reason he didn't put me into hockey was because he didn't want to just sit in the stand all day while I was on the rink. We thought it was important and be more fun to do things as a family. Mom, dad and I would often go downhill skiing on the weekends. When he was 50, I convinced him to learn snowboard with me. We've been snowboarding for the last 15 years. In the summer not much changes, we just put on different equipment and go waterskiing and wakeboarding. It was a lot of fun!

He also loved to travel, especially to learn about different histories and heritages. He was a big foodie, although he was not the best chef himself. He always loved to try local cuisine and learn local culture.

What make you most proud of Tom?

The most surprising thing for me was to see all the comments after he passed away. He really loved to interact with all the staff and he knew the importance of every single person working there no matter what their roles were. I heard someone share stories that during lunch time, Tom always went to the cafeteria and sat at random tables to talk to people. He had the ability make you feel that you were the most important person in the room. He really cared about how your day was going and wanted to make sure that QCH was the best place to work. He wanted to make sure that everyone had the same sense of pride about what they did for the organization. I knew that's always the way he was but hearing that many people confirmed it and was nice to hear after he passed away. To me he was a smart, lovable goof and I will always love him.

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