

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Surgical Services recovery advances, LWDH sets full restoration target

Kenora, ON, September 21st, 2026 – Recovery efforts continue at Lake of the Woods District Hospital (LWDH) following a flood that occurred on the hospital's fourth floor in May. While the incident affected approximately 25 percent of the hospital's functional space in the west wing and disrupted Surgical Services, significant progress has been made in restoring operations and advancing recovery efforts.

"Our focus has been ensuring patients continue to receive safe, high-quality care while working toward the full restoration of our surgical program," said Cheryl O'Flaherty, President and CEO of Lake of the Woods District Hospital. "I am incredibly proud of the dedication, creativity, and resilience demonstrated by our teams over the past several months. The work involved has been immense and has required contributions from staff across the organization and beyond. While some of the solutions explored will not move forward, the knowledge gained, relationships strengthened, and planning undertaken through this process have enhanced our organizational capacity. These experiences will inform our work going forward, ensuring we are even better positioned to adapt, innovate, and continue delivering high-quality care for the communities we serve."

Since the flood, LWDH has advanced several key recovery initiatives including:

Maintaining Access to Surgical Care

Working closely with patients, physicians, and healthcare partners across the region, access to surgical services outside Kenora was coordinated where appropriate. Since June, LWDH surgical teams have travelled to Thunder Bay to perform orthopedic and urology procedures for regional and LWDH patients. LWDH is deeply grateful to the staff who made these trips, recognizing the personal sacrifices involved, including time away from home and family. The hospital also extends its appreciation to Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre for its partnership and support, which have been instrumental in maintaining access to surgical care for patients during the recovery period.

Establishing Temporary Operating Capacity

To maintain access to urgent surgical care in Kenora, within days of the flood, two temporary operating environments were established in the hospital to provide capacity for urgent obstetrical procedures, life-or-limb trauma cases, infectious disease cases, and priority endoscopy procedures. Their development required extensive collaboration among clinical teams, hospital leadership, the Province, and the LWDH Board of Directors. LWDH is grateful for the collaboration and shared commitment that enabled these critical services to remain available at LWDH.

Advancing Restoration of the Surgical Services Unit

Restoration of the hospital's west wing remains the primary focus of recovery efforts. Demolition began within days of the flood, and reconstruction continues to progress steadily. LWDH is grateful for the support of the City of Kenora in helping advance the project through permitting

and construction processes, ensuring work remains on track. We also thank the many vendors, and contractors who have played a critical role in advancing restoration efforts.

With significant progress now achieved, a full restoration of Surgical Services is within sight. The hospital is targeting **December 2026** for the reopening of the second-floor Surgical Services area.

Building Stronger Partnerships for the Future

Multiple interim solutions were extensively explored, including options through Emergency Medical Assistance Team, constructing a temporary surgical suite within the rehabilitation department, Canadian Armed Forces infrastructure, Supply Ontario resources, and the resources available through Canadian Red Cross. While these efforts will not result in an interim surgical suite, they demonstrate remarkable creativity, advocacy, commitment, and collaboration across the organization. The strong relationships established with partners throughout this process is an extremely valuable outcome, and we are incredibly grateful for their support.

“Throughout this difficult period, we have never lost sight of the people behind the numbers, the patients affected are our friends, family members, neighbours, colleagues, and their loved ones.” said Debra Bastone, Manager of Surgical Services.

O’Flaherty added, “The impact of this disruption has been felt deeply across our communities. We understood the urgency of finding solutions and advocated at every opportunity, exploring every viable option to minimize the impact on patients and preserve access to care. The commitment to our patients has guided our recovery efforts from day one and continues to shape the work ahead. If there is one lesson to take from this experience, it is the value of strong partnerships and coordinated regional planning.”

Throughout every stage of the response and recovery, patient safety and quality of care have remained the hospital's highest priorities. LWDH extends its sincere gratitude to staff, physicians, volunteers, community partners, and patients for their continued support, flexibility, and dedication throughout this journey. Their collective efforts have been instrumental in maintaining care services and advancing recovery across the organization.

For ongoing updates on the restoration progress, visit lwdh.on.ca

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