



Anniversary Address

2007

Serving the Health
Care Community
Since 1967

Celebrating Our Past; Embracing Our Future

Message from Carl Braun, Ph.D.

Chair, Hospitals In-Common Laboratory Inc.

In the 40 years since HICL was founded, health care in all its aspects has undergone significant changes. Our organization too has changed. Our facilities, structure and service delivery methods have been repeatedly reinvented. New, improved technologies have been developed and implemented, and a whole generation of health care recipients has grown up and had children of their own.

At the same time, other things at HICL haven't changed at all. Our dedication to our hospital partners and the welfare of patients is as strong today as when we began in 1967. Our commitment to providing a top-notch, valuable service to hospitals, not only in Ontario but across Canada, has remained consistent and firm, despite changes in funding, a technological revolution and dramatic adjustments in strategy on the part of government.

We are proud of how far we've come, of our ability to adapt and the dedication to excellence that we've kept alive for so many years. And, as we look back on our 40-year history, it is clear that HICL owes a debt of gratitude to the people who have made our organization the success it is.

It is because of you – our staff, hospital partners, board members, physicians and health care professionals who support our services – that our organization has stood the test of time. It is thanks to you that we continue to thrive here today, poised and prepared to face the future. We are confident that with your continued support and guidance, the next phase of our journey together will be every bit as successful as the last.

1967

HICL is founded

1976

First HICL specimen collection centre opens

1987

HICL begins to develop its own IS system

1996

HICL begins to transition to a pilot project framework

The Road to Today

Like most good ideas, the one that led to the founding of HICL in 1967 was elegant in its simplicity. We believed that hospital laboratories could control costs and improve efficiency by having certain tests performed in a central location rather than at individual hospitals. So too could more opportunities be found for developing, using and learning about new technology and sharing information and innovations.

HICL then began to revolutionize laboratory testing in Ontario. Our Laboratory Referral Network – the Grid – started to evolve and grow into what would become the backbone of our organization. Better linkages were established between and among hospitals, doctors, patients and state-of-the-art testing facilities. Technology was continuously updated and methods continued to improve.

Further, we saw that laboratories in area hospitals could provide a valuable service to their communities by performing additional tests for patients of local doctors and other community health organizations. It was a win-win situation. Hospitals were able to take advantage of untapped capacity in their labs to perform the additional tests. This led to increased output and greater efficiencies. It also produced greater employment opportunities, as more professional and highly skilled technical staff was needed to provide ongoing laboratory services in their own communities. Doctors and patients in the vicinity benefited from faster turn-around times and quick, reliable testing services. Information and access to it improved as community and hospital lab results were consolidated into a single database and complete laboratory profiles for each patient.

By 1992, our partner hospitals were receiving more than \$10-million per year for the additional laboratory services referred to them by HICL. The people of Ontario were saving \$4-million annually in fees that would otherwise have been paid to commercial laboratories charging as much as 25 per cent more than HICL for community laboratory services.

But only a few years later, that scenario was to change. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care opted for a new direction that led to an overhaul of the medical laboratory system in Ontario, and HICL found itself in a battle for its very existence. By demonstrating our flexibility and willingness to adapt, we convinced the Ministry to allow us to continue working with six of our hospital partners. It was agreed that these hospital laboratories, in partnership with HICL, would operate pilot projects to test different service delivery models. We continue to operate within this framework today.

Throughout the years and in spite of the changes, HICL has remained constant in its ability to provide the best service possible. Although productivity and efficiency have allowed us to reduce overall costs, we face ever-increasing demand for more and better tests. Our aging population will continue to place greater demands on our health care system, including both diagnostics and therapeutics.

Better Service, Better Value

The number of laboratory tests HICL offers its clients has increased dramatically in the last 25 years.

Tests offered in 2007

460

Tests offered in 1982

282

1967

Canada's Centennial

2007

HICL joins SSHA's Ontario Network for e-Health (ONE)

Joanne Greer, Director of HICL's Laboratory Referral Network, retired this year after 32 years of service.



Staying Close to Our Customers

Forty years of successful operations have confirmed that HICL's commitment to constant improvement is also the key to our survival. We have continuously invested and reinvested in our own future, always looking for ways to progress and update our services with new and better equipment, methods and technologies.

In the late 1960s, HICL was one of the first facilities in the country to pioneer lab automation equipment and develop much of the training and techniques that this innovation required. This willingness to embrace new and better ways of doing things has continued to characterize our corporate philosophy, guiding us to pursue industry best practices and more effective ways to work.

In 1987, HICL took a huge step forward by implementing our own new laboratory information system. This major investment in equipment and infrastructure freed us from the need to rent computer space, and gave us the ability to direct our own growth with respect to information management and technology. We have gone on to develop sophisticated electronic information-management tools that provide better data storage, analysis, security and distribution methods. We now operate not only our own private network, but also communicate with other health care providers over the Ministry's Smart Systems for Health Agency's network. Our state-of-the-art technology for managing information has earned us a place of leadership in the Ontario health care system.

Today, HICL continues to focus on constant improvement as we respond to the needs of our partners. In 2006, the Ministry approved a small increase in funding for community laboratory testing. A portion of the revenue HICL received was reinvested into community services; for example, to add staff at the Fergus collection centre and reduce patient wait times. More funds went to relocate our specimen collection centre operation in New Liskeard to a bigger and brighter facility and to upgrade our telecommunications network.

In Partnership with People

Throughout HICL's existence, our cornerstone has always been the people we work with and those whom we serve. The users of Ontario's and Canada's health care systems are our ultimate customers, and we never lose sight of the trust they place in us and the work we do.

The hub of our operation has always been the hundreds of hospital laboratory staff members who are the actual service providers. Although they can often seem invisible, they provide the technical expertise in what we do.

We continually work with hospital administrators and laboratory managers where specialized testing and methodologies are developed and offered. These clinical facilities and their tests allow HICL to provide the new and innovative products and services that keep us up-to-date and relevant, helping to advance and improve diagnostics and patient care.

Our business has been built on logistics, smooth processes and seamless connections. But delivering them is not always easy. To make it look that way, we have relied on the capabilities and resourcefulness of our HICL staff. With competence and can-do attitudes, people like our own Joanne Greer, who retired from HICL this year after 32 years of service, became the face and voice of our organization. For Joanne and many more like her, our business was, and is, personal. The commitment she and so many of her fellow employees have brought to customer service and the trustworthy relationships they have cultivated with our partners is the true measure of our success.

1977

Elvis Presley dies at Graceland

1987

Prozac approved for use

1997

Hong Kong returns to Chinese rule

2007

Apple sells one million iPhones in just 74 days

A Bright Future Beckons

New opportunities continue to present themselves, and we will continue to welcome them. HICL has expanded its mandate, extending its testing services and expertise to reach the occupational health and safety marketplace.

We are proud to continue working with our hospital partners and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in an effort to find better ways to provide community laboratory services. This year, HICL is helping to evaluate pilot project services in a review that the Ministry is conducting, calling on our many years of experience in this area to help shape policy for health care in Ontario.

While new ventures can be exciting and revitalizing, the core of HICL remains true to the roots we established 40 years ago. Our commitment remains, first and foremost, to the work we do with our hospital partners and we are particularly dedicated to expanding the reference laboratory services provided by the Grid.

The future holds the promise of brilliant new technology, more life-saving tools and ever better methodology. HICL will continue to be an active participant as new miracles unfold, helping to improve the health of Canadians just as we have for the last 40 years. Our mission statement – the words that shaped our past – now will serve to guide our course for the future: *Enhancing, through innovation and partnerships, laboratory services within publicly funded health care systems.*

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