

# AN UNEXPECTED SURPRISE

**B.C. chapter comes out on top to win President's award**



▲ LEFT TO RIGHT: B.C. chapter executive members Rick Molnar, Steve McEwan, Doug Davis, Sarah Thorn, Norbert Fischer, Mitch Weimer and Mark Swain. (Missing from photo are team members Arthur Buse and Caroline Reid.)

**T**wenty months into the COVID-19 public health crisis and much is the same but different. British Columbia, like other provinces, is battling another wave of infections and struggling with hospital capacity once again. Yet healthcare professionals are no longer viewed as the unsung heroes of the pandemic. Instead, they are being threatened and harassed by scores of people gathering outside hospitals to protest government restrictions and vaccine mandates. In spite of these added challenges, those working on the front-lines and behind-the-scenes continue to show up and rise above the call of duty to ensure the highest quality of care is pro-

vided at their facilities. This is in part due to their unwavering commitment to their chosen career path. It is also thanks to the encouragement of colleagues and professional organizations like the Canadian Healthcare Engineering Society (CHES), which provides programs and support that creates a stronger community and helps its members face whatever lays ahead.

“CHES has been a stable organization in the 20 months of great changes to healthcare practices,” says B.C. chapter chair, Norbert Fischer. “The sharing of information and lessons learned has been invaluable.”

So, too, have been the efforts of the chapter executive, which has spent the past

year diligently working on behalf of the membership to deliver value in new and perhaps even unexpected ways given in-person interactions have come to a near halt. Their accomplishments, among other endeavours, garnered CHES B.C. the 2021 President's Award, which came as a shock to the chapter chair.

“I was in disbelief when I found out,” says Fischer, adding the chapter was narrowly nudged out by CHES Maritime and Ontario in recent years.

This is the second time the B.C. chapter has been bestowed the recognition. The first was in 2014, when the President's award launched.

“It was very encouraging news,

especially with everything else we've gone through of late," says Fischer.

News that was welcomed not just by the chapter chair but the entire executive team, including Sarah Thorn, Rick Molnar, Doug Davis, Arthur Buse, Mitch Weimer, Mark Swain, Caroline Reid and Steve McEwan.

The President's award is presented annually to the CHES chapter that demonstrates its commitment to education, administration and representation in the activities of the chapter and national board. Each chapter is scored on accounting practices, conference/education day, membership, chapter executive practices, committee work and additional offerings (from submitting articles to the CHES journal, *Canadian Healthcare Facilities* to providing extra member benefits). Specifically, points are given for activities that benefit members and the work of CHES, such as number of meetings attended in the course of committee work and special education sessions. The recipient of the much-coveted award receives two CHES national conference registrations and expenses paid up to a maximum of \$2,500 each, as well as a trophy engraved with the victorious team's names.

On the education front, the chapter moved its annual conference online this year instead of cancelling it outright as it did in 2020. The format changed from a two-day to a one-week event May 31-June 4, that featured a single webinar each day to prevent "Zoom burnout," says Fischer. What remained the same was the theme, *The Physical Environment: Creating Patient-focused Facilities*. Dr. Marietta Van Den Berg, a psychiatrist with the Fraser Health Authority, provided the keynote address that emphasized techniques like mindfulness meditation, coping mechanisms and wellness strategies to help healthcare professionals not just survive but thrive during this unprecedented period.

"The session really offered the opportunity to pause and reflect on the past to ensure we're taking time for ourselves, which is so important to physical and mental health," says Fischer.

Well over 100 people attended each day. The event was not limited to CHES B.C. members; the chapter executive opened the conference up to non-members in the province and CHES members from across the country at no charge. This, Fischer says, helped with recruitment at a time

when membership was on the decline due to the lack of formal face-to-face interactions. (The chapter saw a 15 per cent reduction in membership between March 2020 and March 2021, down to just under 200 members from 234.) A daily prize draw of two \$50 gift certificates helped keep people engaged. CHES B.C. was able to absorb this cost in addition to the others — the chapter also covered the expenses of all supporting vendors and exhibitors as a token of appreciation — because of its good financial standing, despite not generating much revenue since prior to the pandemic.

Its monetary position has enabled the chapter to pay for members to take part in CHES's 2021 webinar series and national (virtual) conference, as well as to continue to offer bursaries at five colleges — British Columbia Institute of Technology, Okanagan College, College of New Caledonia, Camosun College and Thompson Rivers University — and a \$1,000 tuition grant to members in good standing who want to take education programs to help further their careers within hospital engineering services departments.

Looking to the future, Fischer says he is cautiously optimistic that members will be able to meet in-person again in spring at the chapter's next conference. It is currently scheduled for June 5-7, at the Whistler Conference Centre. Here, the chapter will present the newly created CHES B.C. Healthcare Award to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to healthcare engineering in the province. The executive team will also host its annual general meeting during which a new vice-chair, secretary and treasurer will be elected to continue the important work and progress the chapter has made thus far.

"It is an honour and a rewarding experience to work with a team of talented members who are dedicated to learning, teaching and sharing with others who work in healthcare," says Fischer. "This knowledge is the foundation of what we apply to our work routines as we all strive for excellence in our facilities." ■



## **TRANE announces Luis Rodrigues as General Manager, Comprehensive Energy & Infrastructure Solutions of Ontario & Eastern Canada**

**TRANE**, a world leader in creating comfortable, sustainable and efficient environments, has appointed **Luis Rodrigues** as General Manager, Comprehensive Energy and Infrastructure Solutions.

In this capacity, Luis will lead a team of professionals responsible for assisting both private and public sector organizations address their mounting challenges associated with aging infrastructure and meet their corporate environmental leadership directives including net zero goals, resulting in better performing and healthier buildings.

Luis brings to Trane over 40 years of experience leading teams and developing both small and large scale comprehensive guaranteed facility improvement programs that have won national recognition in Canada and abroad. Luis takes personal ownership and involvement in each and every program to ensure the complete satisfaction of clients he serves.

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