

Meet new Harvest Manitoba CEO Vince Barletta



Supplied photo

Vince Barletta, recently the president and CEO of the St. Boniface Hospital Foundation, is the new CEO of Harvest Manitoba.



Harvest Manitoba's board of directors announced earlier this month that Vince Barletta is the new CEO of the organization. His resumé features top-level non-profit management experience, most recently as president and CEO of the St. Boniface Hospital Foundation.

We caught up with him for an interview in which he showed capability, vision and caring so we wanted to share some of his thoughts with you:

- **On settling in** — I think that for any leader coming into something new, the most important thing is to listen and gain knowledge from the people that are there. That includes the staff, the board, the volunteers, the donors, and our partners. I will be taking the first number of months to learn how we have worked together in the past and how we can work together in the future.

- **Child hunger** — Manitobans share a deep sense of responsibility to all our kids. No childhood should be hungry or worrying about their next meal. A healthy meal is not going to solve all challenges faced by young people, but hunger will affect them for life, and it's an area where we can do something. So, let's do it.

- **Empathy** — Whether through illness, income loss or systemic poverty, one of the most difficult things about poverty is that it limits your choices. Can you imagine the gut-wrenching decisions people make between food and rent, medicine or childcare? Between food on the table and school clothes, sports and activities? Terrible choices to face.

- **Painful lessons** — The pandemic almost closed Harvest's doors. Part of my job is to make sure that when that next shock arrives, a public health crisis, economic emergency or whatever — Harvest is prepared, stronger, more resilient, and better able to respond.

- **Leading a province-wide organization** — Winnipeg is our largest community but we also serve rural and northern communities across Manitoba through our Community Food Network of food banks and agencies. We also work with many partners, including agricultural producers and farm families. I grew up in Brandon, and would like to learn more about what's happening on the ground there and across the province.

- **Reaching for the top** — Manitobans everywhere are increasing their understanding of the plight of our Indigenous neighbours.

An important piece of what we do is learning from and working with leaders from Indigenous communities across our province and doing more to meet their needs. I know there is incredible leadership in the Indigenous community in Manitoba. Dedicated people with passion and ideas about how we increase access to food, reduce food insecurity and poverty, and build bridges toward truth and reconciliation.

- **Community core** — Harvest is not a government-funded agency. Our key strength has been that Harvest operates on the generosity of Manitobans, period.

- **Hands-on** — I'd be happy to get in the truck and deliver hampers. But I've got to tell you, they better not let me drive it because I'm not sure if we'll get where we're going. But I'll be happy to come along.

- **Work-life balance** — You need to be able to draw your energy from your work and the people you meet along the way. I really thrive on and enjoy meeting, engaging and learning from people. And, I have my get-aways, too.

At the end of the interview, the new CEO indulged us in a few 'quick hits' that might shine another light on what makes Vince, Vince.

- **Jets or Bombers** — That's a tough one. I'm excited about the start to the Bomber season. I'm a huge Jets fan. It's hard to choose between two incredible partners of Harvest.

- **Rock 'n' roll, or...** — There's no 'or'.

- **Favourite food** — My father is Italian. My mother Ukrainian. Spaghetti and meatballs or cabbage rolls. I love them both.

- **Movie you've seen multiple times** — I'm a big fan of Martin Scorsese. From *Goodfellas* to *The Irishman*, he's got a huge library to enjoy.

- **Current or recent book** — I tend to listen to a lot of audiobooks and podcasts. I like Malcolm Gladwell. *Blink* and *Outliers*. He's from Waterloo, Ont. A great storyteller.

- **A band or concert** — Crosby, Stills, Nash, Young at the old MTS Centre.

Vince Barletta's first 'official' day on the job was Sept. 20. I'm sure all Manitobans wish him — and Harvest — all the best.

For more information on Harvest Manitoba and its programs, visit www.harvestmanitoba.ca