

Letters to the Editor

Concerned by health region's approach to filling nursing needs at Shaunavon Hospital

I read the Prairie Post online article "Nursing Shortage causing lots of issues for Shaunavon" (also in this week's edition of The Shaunavon Standard) with a great deal of shock and concern. I'm not sure if the residents of Shaunavon and area realize that there are healthcare providers right in their community who have offered their skills and services as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) to the Cypress Health Region - only to be told to 'wait until August'. Unfortunately, the health care crisis in this province has chosen to land on Shaunavon and area and it is RIGHT NOW! And despite the availability of a LPN in this community - one who indicated her interest and readiness to work back in February, the Cypress Health Region is reducing hours of service for you and your family, and your neighbors. The Region indicates efforts have been made to recruit from outside nursing agencies - but they neglect to even consider the resources right in their own back yard. Shaunavon and area residents deserve better health services from the Cypress Health Region. They will continue to suffer from a lack of emergency services as a result of poor planning for the impending nurse shortage. In the article, Ms. Illerbrun, CHR Executive Director of Health

Services indicates they are looking creative strategies such as nursing agencies...how about looking at some tried and true methods, like keeping your retiring staff as casuals? They are well trained and already oriented to the facility. The Health Region has indicated that a component of their CHES program makes retiring staff, who are still willing to work, absent themselves from the workplace for 6 months. Except the shortage is RIGHT NOW! I do not understand this strategy if the ultimate goal is to maintain the delivery of quality health care services in this community. I would ask: if the Regions most immediate issue is a temporary LPN, then why have they not called an available LPN in Shaunavon since March? Does this make any sense to anyone in Shaunavon? It seems like another budget reduction by cutting much needed services. The Shaunavon Hospital is yet another casualty in the ongoing health care crisis. I share the worry of those who live and work in this community - how does the Health Region expect folks to plan their emergency?

Barbara Cape
President
SEIU-West

Nursing Shortage at Shaunavon

CHRIS JASTER

A nursing shortage in Shaunavon may cause more issues than just the three-day disruption of emergency services the community experienced June 10-13.

Shaunavon is currently short one licensed practical nurse, who is battling a long-term illness, and three registered nurses. Some of the RNs have been covering the LPN rotation and working extra hours to keep the hospital open.

A shortage, however, occurred last weekend forcing the emergency and outpatient services to shut down from 7 p.m. June 10 until 7 p.m. June 13.

Emergency services stepped up to work extra shifts in case of emergencies.

The Cypress Health Region is struggling to find new nurses for the community, especially a temporary LPN to cover the long-term leave. Since a registered nurse, physician and lab/diagnostic staff are needed to keep emergency services open, the staffing situation may create more disruptions in Shaunavon's near future.

"Short-term, you may see some temporary disruptions," said Gloria Illerbrun, the region's executive director of health services. "Our nursing staff here have been very good working to the last minute trying to avoid those disruptions, which means trades and putting their personal lives on hold, but I suspect there will be some in the short term."

Cypress staff has always maintained it is just one nurse or doctor away from a diversion in virtually every

community in the region. People taking time off for holidays this summer may make the situation even more difficult.

Illerbrun and the region, however, are looking at preventing more disruptions in the future by soliciting the help of agency nurses.

Illerbrun has contacted Canadian nurses' agencies and is in discussions with working out an agreement that will allow those nurses to work in the Cypress Health Region. The region is hoping to use the agency nurses on a temporary basis to help fill in job vacancies throughout the region.

"We haven't used (that) in the health region before," said Illerbrun. "We're looking into that and we're waiting for some call backs on stuff with that. If we can come to a successful arrangement then they could help us through the summer."

Even if the agency agrees to have some of its nurses fill in temporarily for the Cypress Health Region, it doesn't mean the nurses will come in right away. Every new staff member in the region must go through an orientation process before they can practise in the region.

Response times by the nurses to fill vacant positions will be quicker once the nurses are orientated.

Although Illerbrun would like to see all the open nursing positions filled in the region, she is hopeful using agency nurses will help the region attain its ultimate goal.

"The goal is to maintain 24-hour services in our hospitals and that's what we're working diligently towards," she said.

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Winners will be drawn on September 30, 2011. Discover how much fun reading can be! (No photocopies please.)

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o c e a n e g y x o d c n v t t t
e y n r s r d t e e l s a n h e b
h c o n v e c t i o n p o g n n a
g l i t y h o r u o o i u o d e u
r i t s e p t d w r t o i n n g n
o n a a o s i d l a r t i o o n
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n o i t a m r o f s n a r t t d l
d o p w y t p d n o s e a a a y o
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o t h i s p d c s i o i r o a t k
s e d a l g r e v e n b p h g y n
d w n o i t a l o c r e p m a w s

atmosphere
biosphere
bog
cloud
condensation
convection
creek
cycling
dehydration
drought
evaporation
everglades
flood
gas
groundwater
hail
heat
humidity
hydration
hydrogen
ice
lake
liquid
ocean
oxygen
percolation
perspiration
pond
precipitation
rain
respiration
river
runoff
saturation
sleet
snow
steam
sun
swamp
transformation
transpiration
vapor
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