

## HURON PERTH HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Nursing Shortage at Clinton Public Hospital Emergency Department Results in Temporary Reduction in Hours of Operation Effective December 2, 2019**

The Emergency Department (ED) at the Clinton Public Hospital (CPH) site of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance (HPHA) will be reducing operating hours due to a nursing staff shortage.

Starting Monday, December 2, 2019, the **CPH ED will be accepting patients from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM**, and will be closed overnight until 8:00 AM. This reduction in hours will be in effect until further notice.

“Providing safe emergency care is our number one priority and moving to reduced operating hours is our only option of ensuring that at this time,” says Andrew Williams, President and Chief Executive Officer.

The HPHA has been experiencing significant recruitment challenges at the CPH ED for the last five years. In the last year alone, there have been eighteen job postings in an attempt to recruit the experienced nursing staff that are required to fill vacant shifts in the department. Vacant shifts are largely the result of local nurses retiring and part-time staff leaving for other positions in and out of the Huron Perth Region.

Recruitment and retention of Registered Nurses (RNs) is very challenging in rural communities. Nurses are required to develop a high degree of competency in a number of clinical areas and specialties, and new graduates are often unprepared to work in a rural setting without significant orientation and mentorship. A balance of experienced and novice nurses is required to provide safe, quality care.

Attempts have also been made to fill vacant ED shifts at the CPH site with nursing staff from HPHA’s other three sites. However, this can only be done with a Nurse’s consent per the collective agreement. The loss of an RN at any HPHA site will result in similar challenges.

This situation is not sustainable, and as a result, alternative options for ED service provision were explored, until an adequate staffing complement is stabilized.

#### **OPTIONS EXPLORED**

1. Reduced hours of operation, with a daily closure from 8:00 P.M. to 8:00 A.M.
2. Staggered hours of operation to include weekend closure of ED.
3. Recruitment of second RN for overnight hours, including agency nurses
4. Train two additional inpatient nurses to also work in ED.

The decision to move to reduced operating hours was made by the HPHA Board of Directors at their meeting held on November 7, 2019. This decision was based on a recommendation from

leadership in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, CPH Physician Leadership and the South West Local Integration Network.

Of the four options considered, moving to reduced hours in the ED has the least impact on patients, as 85% of the visits to the CPH ED occur between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM. Typically, the volume of patients seen in the CPH site ED during the overnight hours is very low, and in some cases there are no patients seen during this time.

As part of the analysis of options 3 and 4, HPHA explored the use of nursing agencies to keep the ED open 24/7, however, these resources were also not available.

The HPHA is committed to keeping all four of our sites strong and viable. This commitment at the CPH site is evidenced by the new inpatient tub and shower room and the upcoming installation of a new state-of-the-art digital X-ray suite.

“We are committed to providing Clinton and the surrounding community with safe and effective health care,” adds Dr. Loretta Seevaratnam. “In order to continue to do that, a temporary reduction in our emergency room hours is necessary at this time. We will continue to work diligently with the rest of the team at HPHA to ensure that safe, effective and excellent healthcare is available to our community.”

HPHA will provide more information over the coming weeks to ensure the Clinton community is informed about this decision, and ensure residents can make informed choices about their emergency health care.

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