

May 6, 2020

To the Chesley Community,

On September 21, 2019, the Emergency Department (ED) at the Chesley Hospital moved to reduced hours due to a nursing staff shortage, closing overnight, and operating from 8:00 AM-8:00 PM daily since that time.

Making this decision weighed heavily on our Board of Directors, as like you, we are community members that rely on having our hospital there for us when we need it. However, for the safety of our patients and staff, it was a necessary step.

In September, and again in January, we gathered for a public meeting at the Chesley Community Centre to explain the challenge we are facing – a need for Registered Nurses with ED experience that are confident in their skills and abilities to safely operate the department during the overnight hours when there are limited staff in the building. Our Leadership Team, alongside Dr. Jacqui Wong, Dr. Adam Winterton, and Bruce County EMS Director Steve Schaus, answered questions, heard your concerns, and outlined the efforts being made to find a solution to this problem. At the end of the January meeting, we committed to providing an update on our progress at another public meeting to be held in May.

As you can imagine, the events that have unfolded in the last two months have shifted the focus of the SBGHC team entirely. In response to this public health crisis, the efforts of our Leadership Team and Staff have been dedicated to ensuring that our four hospital sites are prepared to respond to the needs of our patients relating to COVID-19.

With our efforts focussed on protecting our communities from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have unfortunately not been able to dedicate the level of effort which is required to respond to the nursing shortage in Chesley. The challenges facing the Chesley ED last fall and winter have continued, and we are not yet in a position to reopen the ED to 24/7 service.

However, our commitment to ensuring that the Chesley ED returns to 24/7 service remains strong. At our February 2020 meeting, a motion was passed by our Board of Directors to have this issue as a standing agenda item, to ensure that it continues to be a top priority. Our President & CEO, Michael Barrett, is also meeting weekly with Arran-Elderslie Mayor Steve Hammell and CAO Bill Jones to keep them informed on the hospital's COVID-19 response efforts, and I know that Mayor Hammell continues to engage Michael on the reopening of the Chesley ED to 24/7 service.

Given the current restrictions in place regarding large public gatherings, we will be unable to hold a public meeting in May. However, when the time comes that we are able to hold the public meeting, we will. Until such time, we are here to answer your questions by email (patientrelations@sbghc.on.ca) or by phone (519-370-2400 ext. 2281). The questions and answers will be compiled and shared publicly.

Your patience and understanding is appreciated. Stay safe.

Sincerely,



John Gilbert
Chair, Board of Directors

c: Michael Barrett, President and CEO