



For Immediate release
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NS Health Authority Representatives Speak to Victoria County Council

NSHA reps commit to keeping Victoria County ERs open

(*Baddeck, N.S.*) Victoria County councillors peppered NS Health Authority representatives with questions about rural health care, ER closures and recruitment and retention issues during the municipal council session October 4.

The NSHA representatives spoke and answered questions for an hour. They were Madonna MacDonald, VP of Health Services for the Eastern Zone, Angela MacArthur, Director of Integrated Health for Rural Sites Eastern Zone, Brett MacDougall, Executive Director of Operations and Dr. Don Brien, Medical Executive Director Eastern Zone.

There are two hospitals in Victoria County – the Buchanan Memorial in Neil’s Harbour, a short-term care facility that serves the population north of Smokey and Victoria Memorial in Baddeck – also a short-term care facility that serves communities south of Smokey. Both have emergency departments that have recently been closed due to staff shortages. The Victoria Memorial Hospital was closed in September for more than two weeks.

Each councillor was provided time to ask three questions. The councillors’ questions ranged from inquiring whether rural areas should have an increased allotment of doctors, nurses & medical professional staff, why paramedics are being called from all across NS to cover doctor shortages and why a new doctor for Baddeck has been waiting since July to set up her practice (not an NSHA issue, but a licensing backlog).

Each NSHA rep took time to respond to questions and highlighted the challenges the health system has faced in recent years, especially during the pandemic. They highlighted the incredible benefit Victoria County communities provide to the Health Authority through very active hospital auxiliaries and foundations that assist in recruitment, finding housing and helping to ensure medical staff are welcomed.

Angela MacArthur, Director of Integrated Health for Rural Sites Eastern Zone committed to having operational emergency departments in each hospital and discussed the supports NSHA has provided by expanding the hours of Diagnostic Imaging services and extending clerical coverage to help nurses in the ER.

“It was good to hear the Health Authority reassure council that they are committed to having two operational ERs in Victoria County,” said Warden Bruce Morrison.

“The Baddeck hospital is struggling under the weight of ER closures in other areas and this impacts the level of service that our little hospital can provide. In Neil’s Harbour it is the distance people must travel to get medical help if their emergency room is closed. So, hearing that they are committed to making sure these vital services remain in Victoria County is both encouraging and a relief,” Morrison said.

Madonna MacDonald, VP of Health Services for the Eastern Zone promised to host community meetings to inform residents of plans for each facility and to engage the communities.

“It is important that our communities know the current status and the long-term plans for these facilities and all facilities in the Eastern zone, because what happens at one, can deeply impact those of us in rural communities,” said Warden Morrison.

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