

Worst wait times plague Outaouais ERs

By Anastasia Philopoulos

If you've ever thought the wait at the emergency room was ridiculous, well now you have the data to back your argument up.

According to research conducted by La Presse, the Outaouais finished second last in average emergency room wait times. The Lanaudière region came in dead last at an average 25-hour stay, while the Outaouais hit almost 22 hours.

Out of the six emergency

rooms across the Outaouais, four saw their wait times lengthen this year. The Wakefield Hospital came in fourth place and saw its average length of stay increase from 18-hours in 2013-2014, to 22 hours in 2014-2015.

According to Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de l'Outaouais (CISSSO) spokesperson Geneviève Côté, the size of the Wakefield Hospital is the biggest issue working against it. "There are four stretchers in the emergency and 16 beds in the care unit, thus, we rapidly become over loaded."

The regional health board is now working to redirect patients who don't need acute care away from the emergency room and towards other kinds of care. "We are also trying to create more places in CHSLDs and intermediate resources in order to answer needs in the area," Côté said.

For the past several years, the now defunct Des Collines health board has been pointing to the issue of space. Part of the business plan it proposed to the province in 2014 was to expand the emergency room and add

more spaces to local CHSLDs.

Former Des Collines health board member Marcel Chartrand adds adequate diagnostic tools and technology are other hurdles that keep the Wakefield Hospital working more like a dispensary rather than a hospital. "The doctors in Wakefield work 120 percent, they do the best they can with what they have," he said. "In Gatineau and Hull they have everything going for them, they have the doctors, they have the space, the technology, brand new emergency rooms, the government spent millions upgrad-

ing the [urban] hospitals...and in Wakefield, nothing."

Manager of the Wakefield clinic Holly Crouch says she's not surprised by the news. According to CISSSO data, there are almost 31,000 patients on a wait list for a family doctor in Gatineau and about 42 cent of patients served at the Wakefield Hospital are from Gatineau. "It's not that our patients in our territory are not being served," Crouch explained. "It's patients in Gatineau who are not being served and who are spilling over into Wakefield."

LD manager wins prestigious award at QCNAs

It was an evening of awards, steak, and selfies.

The 35th annual Quebec Community Newspaper Association's awards show and dinner on May 29 was one for the history books. And while many awards were won and tears wept (over how good the steak was), the most memorable moment of the evening, hands-down, was when the Low Down's General Manager, Liette Robert, accepted the Lindsay Cryslar Award for outstanding contribution to

the growth and development of community newspapers in Quebec. "Every person in this room wants someone like Liette in their newspaper office," read the emcee of evening. "She is the heart and soul of the operation."

The LD team was their rowdy selves at this year's event in Montreal, and cheered Robert emphatically (oh yes, there was some screaming) as she accepted the award. Reporter Anastasia Philopoulos also took home a few top prizes, the first being



for Best Business Feature for her story on Ferme et Forêt. Her second win of the night was Best Environmental Story for her article on an illegal dump left behind in the Petits Lacs region. Philopoulos also brought home second place for Best Feature Photo of Wendy Stephens at End of the Line Boutique. Former Low Down reporter Tyler Dawson brought home Best Feature Story for his work on the coura-

LD General Manager Liette Robert. Nikki Mantell photo

geous loon rescue on Pike Lake late last year (oh, the loon-acy of it all!). Another former reporter, Joel Balsam, brought home second place for Best Education Story for his spread on the opening of the new Wakefield Elementary School.

Finally, the Low Down was especially honoured that its table was singled out three times by the emcee for being too boisterous during the show - an increase from previous years. Woop woop!








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