

News

Bone surgeons cry foul over on-call pay cut

Fraser Health denies patient care will suffer

Jeff Nagel
Black Press

A move by Fraser Health to pay orthopedic surgeons less money to be on call at night has prompted those doctors to warn that patients with broken bones may not be treated as quickly.

Compound fractures need to be set fast for best results and delays can cause irreparable harm, according to B.C. Orthopedic Association co-president Dr. Peter Dryden.

But Fraser has reclassified the orthopedic surgeons to a less urgent on-call payment system that gives them \$164 less per night

spent on call and requires them to get to hospital within two hours if a patient needs treatment, instead of the previous 45 minutes.

Those surgeons now get \$452 for a night on call, down from \$616.

"We are going to adjust our service levels until we can come to an agreement with the government about returning to the original classification for the care of our patients," Dryden said.

He said the change – which has happened only at the Fraser and Interior health regions – means longer wait times and possible hospital transfers.

Dr. Peter Blair, Fraser's medical

director for surgery, said the surgeons are "understandably upset" about the pay cut but defended the change as one that should have been made years ago.

He said the 45-minute response time and accompanying stipend always should have been reserved for cardiologists and abdominal surgeons who deal with more urgent cases like heart attacks and gunshot wounds.

It's also rare that orthopedic surgeons are actually called in to hospital, he said, although it's still necessary to pay them to be at the ready.

Blair said the reclassification doesn't mean the surgeons won't show up for two hours after they're called.

He said they, like other doctors, are expected to continue to respond as quickly as possible to the more urgent and severe cases.

The reclassification saves the provincial health budget about \$60,000 per hospital.

Blair said the money isn't actually paid out by Fraser Health, although the region is charged with administering the payments to local doctors from the province's Medical On Call Availability Program.

"It's not money we're going to save and be able to pump into the region's health budget."

So far doctors in Fraser haven't taken specific job action.

Surgeons here had indicated they might collectively refuse to

be on call more often than one day out of five, starting April 15.

That might leave some nights uncovered at smaller hospitals, where fewer than five orthopedic surgeons share call duties.

If that happened, Blair said, patients needing emergency orthopedic treatment would be transferred to the regional trauma unit at Royal Columbian Hospital.

Abbotsford surgeon Dr. James Rose said patients need immediate attention when a broken bone or displaced joint constricts a vein.

"There are a number of clinical situations where rapid treatment is warranted and required to prevent long-term damage," he said, adding there are nearly 2,000 such cases in B.C. each year.

Cottages being fast-tracked to beat the HST

Jennifer Feinberg
The Progress

The developer of the new resort development called The Cottages at Cultus Lake is giving potential new buyers a chance to beat the HST deadline this summer.

Jon Van Geel of Cultus Country Investments told the *Progress* they've brought in 100 extra construction workers to fast-track the immediate construction of 20 to 30 additional cottages on spec.

Those who pre-register now to buy a cottage before July 1 will save about \$44,000, for example, on one of the top-end properties, priced at \$629,900.

"We found out in late November that recreational real estate would not qualify for the harmonized sales tax rebate," said Van Geel. "We thought we'd speed up the building effort to beat the deadline."

More than 90 units were snapped up on a pre-sale basis for phase one in October 2007, but none were sold in 2008 when the economy was tanking. The focus was on building that year.

Then another 35 cottages were pre-sold last year on the 45-acre site near Lindell Beach.

For the first time they're building cottage units on spec, which does pose some risk for the developers.

Van Geel said there is simply no comparable cottage development anywhere else on the Lower Mainland.

"We certainly have a niche product," he offered, suggesting a reason for their early sales success with the \$100-million project.

Consumer confidence was really low coming out of the worldwide economic slump but it's clearly been on the rebound of late. And it's infectious.

"We're more confident with the progress the economy has made



Jon Van Geel speaks about the new Cottages at Cultus Lake resort development on Wednesday.

JENNA HAUCK/ PROGRESS

in the past year, with lower interest rates, more job security and the fact that the global economy is no longer just doom and gloom," noted Van Geel.

Location is a factor, too.

"We have high demand for our cottages because of their location, proximity to the Lower Mainland, unique design and craftsmanship," says George Hare, president of the marketing firm, Higher Ground Project Marketing. "Because of this, we decided to provide an opportunity for buyers who have the desire to beat the HST and expected interest rate hikes."

The promotional efforts to date have targeted city dwellers within a two-hour radius of the Cultus Lake

area. The units measure from 1,000 square feet up to 2,220 square feet and they range from \$369,000 to \$629,900.

"Most of our market is from Metro Vancouver," Van Geel explained, like North and West Vancouver, Langley and White Rock, but there are also a couple of local buyers who purchased one of the colourful cottages.

Once completed the resort development will include 230 cottages, based on 15 different layouts and 30 colour combinations. Each has a front porch and a back deck, with vaulted ceilings and attic lofts.

The sprawling development will feature tennis courts, outdoor swimming pools, hiking trails, a two-

acre park and a 10,000-square-foot community amenity known as the Tree House, with a fireside lounge, theatre, fitness centre, hot tubs and family activity areas. The recently completed Tree House cost \$5-million to build.

As of July 1, the new HST, which combines PST and GST, will impact new resort properties.

"This developing recreational community is connecting and growing in ways we couldn't have imagined when we started building," said Van Geel. "It has been really exciting to watch."

Pre-register at www.cultuslakecottages.com.

jfeinberg@theprogress.com

RCMP's tactical vehicle used to access rural grow op

One of the tactical vehicles recently added to the RCMP's arsenal has been used in a drug raid close to Agassiz.

Last Tuesday, RCMP used their new Tactical Armoured Vehicle, or TAV, to gain access to a property on Fielder Road, between Agassiz and Harrison Mills.

Corporal Scott Stoughton says that the use of the vehicle is "a sign of the times" and that the public will notice the TAV being used regularly.

"I think the plan, from what I understand, is to use it frequently," the Agassiz RCMP member says.

The TAV is based in Chilliwack and will be used in high risk situations that "meet certain thresholds," he says.

Stoughton wasn't part of the raid on the grow op at 2061 Fielder Road, but he says that the TAV was needed to gain access to the property.

Police seized 924 marijuana plants at the property, a loaded .38 caliber hand gun and growing equipment at the property. They consider it a sophisticated operation, due to the value of the equipment and number of plants being grown.

Suspects in this case are also believed to have been stealing power from B.C. Hydro, by-passing the hydro meter.

Continued: TAV/ p9

ALL DAY COMFORT
AT EVERY LEVEL!

COMFORT - CLASS - STYLE - SELECTION



indigo

Payton & Buckle

45930 Wellington Ave.
Chilliwack
604-792-2375