



Photo by Giovanni Capriotti

A chilly job

Dressed for the weather, Paul Hardy sits on the corner of Sidney Street and Parkdale Drive Thursday. Because of this week's bad weather, many pedestrians walked on roads, making the daily commute to work a long journey as Canada braced for a week of continuously poor travel conditions. For a story and photos on the weather, see page 4.

Slow economic growth expected

Jobs and housing sales expected to increase over the next year

By Jeremy Mckay

Belleville will continue to see slow economic growth in 2015, according to an Economic Outlook report.

The report covers the Kingston-Pembroke economic region and was prepared by the Bay of Quinte Chamber of Commerce and Credit Unions of Ontario.

The report states the Kingston-Pembroke region will experience employment growth at 1.2 per cent in 2015, compared to the 1.4 per cent decline in 2014.

Housing sales declined in 2014, but are expected to pick up their year along with increased housing prices. As well as the private sector, investments are helping drive economic growth in the region this

year.

"The City of Belleville in general from what I understand has little or no growth right now," said Richard Courneyea, newly elected president of Belleville's Chamber of Commerce.

Courneyea was recently sworn in as Belleville's Chamber of Commerce president on Jan. 31 at the chamber's 150th anniversary celebration.

"Traditional methods for attracting growth in our community may not be quite as effective as we hoped," said

Courneyea. "We need to figure out collectively as a community as to how to satisfy growth and moving forward."

Unemployment took a jump in 2014 when Sears Canada close the Belleville call centre doors and restructuring its distribution centre, affecting 529 local jobs. Other small businesses were closed in the area as well that impacted residents.

In 2015, Belleville will see the creation of new jobs with the Strathcona Solar Initiatives expansion in the Belleville region, FedEx completing a new parcel centre,

Vision Transportation systems expanding their warehouse, and Belleville General Hospital's new education centre.

"The report outlines a series of mixed results providing examples of positive news while highlighting some downward trends," said Bill Saunders, chief executive officer of the Belleville and District Chamber of Commerce in a news release.

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Patient care co-ordinators out on strike

Hospital spokesperson says there's little backlog of patients waiting to be assessed

By James Paddle-Grant

Picketing continues outside the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) southeast region in Belleville as patient care co-ordinators have been on strike since last Friday.

The co-ordinators, along with the majority of Community Care Access Centres (CCAC) across the province, are currently withdrawing their services.

With picket lines along the road, the health-care professionals say they have been fighting to avoid yet another wage freeze, similar to what they were dealt in 2011.

The CCAC's southeast region has 212 members of the Ontario Nurses' Association currently on strike. The southeast region, covering from Brighton (west) to Brockville (east), serves approximately 13,500 patients daily.

"We have 12 CCAC co-ordinators who work in our hospital to help match patients as they're being discharged to services that are available in the community," said Quinte Health Care spokesperson Susan Rowe.

Rowe further added "the CCAC has put in contingency plans so the care co-ordination is still occurring.

"So at this point we are seeing a very small back up of people waiting a little bit longer than they normally would.

The Community Care Access Centre



Photo by James Paddle-Grant

Members of the Ontario Nurses' Association picket in front of the Bay View Mall Jan. 30. They are protesting a possible wage freeze.

provides and oversees home care services, which include nursing, personal support, therapies, equipment rental and IV medications. The services are given to those who are in need of care but are unable or unwilling to go to a hospital.

"There was a percentage increase given

to other nurses in hospitals and long-term care. We are not looking for the same rate of pay, but we are looking for the same percentage increase in wage that's on par with what they got," said a protester, who didn't want to be identified, on Friday.

"Just so we're valued as we contribute

to the health care system. We offer a lot and we need to be valued for what we offer," she added.

Both sides agreed that with the CCAC strike, if home services are not provided, it could slow down public health services for new patients.

"If someone needed IV medication every eight hours, instead of getting it at home, they would have to return to the emergency room every eight hours," said a second picketer who also chose not to be identified.

Rather than providing the healthcare services at home, patients will have to go to hospitals for further treatment. The upsurge of clients in hospitals leaves the chance of severely increasing the wait-time at hospitals, added the picketers.

Gary Buffett, southeast CCAC communications manager, said that despite anticipation that there would be delays in the system, they have been on top of things since the strike.

"We've been working with our hospital partners on contingency planning. So far, the system is moving okay. We're getting people out of the hospital with no backlogs yet," said Buffett.

Buffett noted that the organization has a team of managers who are regulated health professionals. They are processing deferrals, ultimately getting patients into the CCAC system.

"We have calls with the CCAC every second day to assist and monitor the situation and make sure that they're able to provide appropriate support in the hospital," said Rowe.

"So far it's working as best as it can in the situation. We do have some patients who are waiting for care co-ordination, but that number has been manageable," added the QHC spokesperson.

The doctors say they plan to continue to protest until further notice, although they hope to reach a settlement in the near future.