

Space prohibits extended stays: hospitals

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Markham Stouffville will receive an extra \$625,000 a year from the province to address the new policy — almost twice that of other York hospitals because it's been providing the shortest stay for so long.

But Maclean said that money won't cover the cost of extending stays to 60 hours.

"We don't know the exact number, but it's not enough. It covers a fairly good proportion of the cost, but the reality is we can't get to 60 hours yet. But we can get to 48," Maclean said.

He feels the hospital had a good program with the 24-hour stay. Follow-up support was provided to mothers who went home after a 24-hour stay.

But recent studies have been critical of sending newborns home too early. A report concluded that the earlier a baby is discharged from hospital, the more likely the child will need to be readmitted for complications such as jaundice or not eating properly.

Space will also be a problem at York County in Newmarket, where recent renovations moved the hospital toward the Markham Stouffville system, allowing mothers to labour, deliver and recover in the same room.

"Our biggest problem will be if everybody decides to stay for 60 hours, we'll be hardpressed for space," said Stella Wadsworth, manager of the maternal/child care unit at York County. "And we can't control how many deliveries happen in a day — it can be as few as

six and as many as 19."

York County will also need more money to extend stays to 60 hours.

But Wadsworth agreed the extra 12 hours will give new mothers time to adjust to the baby and become more comfortable with things such as breastfeeding.

Planned renovations at York Central Hospital's maternity department will go a long way toward allowing 60-hour stays, but that could be two years away.

And funding provided for the longer stays still won't meet the need because the hospital is growing so fast.

"There will be times when we're tight

because of the nature of obstetrics. If moms came in equal numbers each day, we'd be OK, but it comes in waves," said Ursula Manuel, director of the maternal/child program.

"But I think it's great news because the ladies who want to stay can stay and those who want to go home, can."

All three hospitals will have to hire more nurses to meet the new policy, but hiring is difficult because many hospitals are trying to hire back nurses laid off during the cutbacks of the early '90s.

Since the 60-hour stay promise was first made by Harris, expectant mothers have been calling hospitals in advance

of their delivery to book the longer stay.

"We have a very informed public," Maclean said. "But they may be disappointed when we can't offer it. Everybody will have to be a bit flexible."

Maclean pointed out not every mother will want to stay the full 60 hours. Many leave very soon after the delivery.

"Certainly there are different needs for different patients. Some people need more time. Even here, not everybody goes home at 24 hours," he said. "We feel our model is a good model and we hope we can accommodate those who want a longer stay."



DR. JIM MACLEAN

Grant might cover stays of up to 48 hours

Search on for missing woman

Those people wanting to lend a hand in this weekend's search for missing 20-year-old Tammy Lamondin-Gagnon are asked to meet at the Stouffville Recreation Centre at 9 a.m. today and tomorrow.

Volunteer searchers are also asked to contact Lamondin-Gagnon's mother first at (905) 898-4256. A story printed in Thursday's paper contained the wrong phone number.

Jacqueline Gagnon said she'll continue the search for as long as it takes but is worried about time running out as fall approaches.

She's hoping to organize an eight-person group which can search the Stouffville area weekdays as well.

Volunteers are reminded to wear long pants and shirts/sleeves, hats, and to bring a walking stick and water.

Lamondin-Gagnon vanished Friday, May 28 after being seen in a Newmarket bar with Pol Claassen, 27. The pair was also seen in Stouffville later that night, where a relative of Claassen lives. Claassen hung himself June 7.

A trust fund has been set up to help Gagnon offset expenses, including the cost of posters and long-distance calls.

Those unable to search may want to make a cash donation at any branch of the National Bank of Canada. Quote branch number 08781 and account number 0022529.

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