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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **24-hour shifts for nurses at North Bay hospital puts patients at risk, says the Canadian Union of Public Employees**

**North Bay, ON** - The North Bay Regional Health Centre is putting the health and safety of patients at risk by requiring nurses to work 24-hour shifts, says the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

“This is no way to deliver quality health care - it’s absolutely shocking,” says Michael Hurley, the president of CUPE’s Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU/CUPE). “We need health care workers to be alert on duty, especially when they are administering medication. Coercing nurses to work round the clock is inhumane and unsafe and it makes it virtually impossible for them to provide the quality of care that patients need. Who wants to be treated by a nurse who is exhausted because she’s been starved of rest?”

According to CUPE 139, the union that represents more than health care workers at the North Bay Regional Health Centre, there have been multiple times in the past two months when the employer has compelled nurses to work 24-hour shifts.

The union warns that nurses are already overworked due to years of chronic understaffing, which has contributed to a recruitment and retention crisis, with hospital job vacancies [rising by 19 per cent](#) over the last year. Heavy workloads are one of the main reasons why health care workers suffer the highest injury rates of any profession in Ontario.

According to CUPE, impossible and unsafe working conditions for staff and patients will only hasten nurses’ exit from the sector and further erode the quality of patient care.

“[Our research](#) shows that North Bay needs nearly 500 additional staff over the next four years to meet the pressures of an aging and growing population and to meaningfully improve the quality of care,” Hurley says. “But 24-hour shifts will only drive nurses away and intensify the hospital staffing crisis.”

The union is urging North Bay Regional Health Centre to engage in productive talks to find solutions that addresses working conditions and patient safety.

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