

News

Biz literacy overlooked

By Mike Chouinard
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As an economist, Craig Alexander might not be the first person you would expect to give a presentation on literacy.

That's fine with him, and if he had his way, the people in the audience at his presentations wouldn't be the ones you'd expect either.

As the deputy chief economist for TD Bank, he targets his presentations to the business community and will be speaking to local members in Chilliwack next week at city

hall at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 23. Alexander is part of the 2008 Literacy Speakers' Tour, organized by ReadNow BC in partnership with the B.C. Ministry of Education,



Craig Alexander

which aims to raise awareness of low literacy in the business community and leave each community business group with a better understanding of how to be part of the solution.

He has spoken to educators and others who work in the area of literacy before,

but he feels they already know the issues. Now he needs to get the message to the business community, something that wasn't happening when he began his literacy presentations.

"I didn't get any requests to go out and talk to local chambers of commerce or business groups," he says. "I'm not convinced the business community has bought into this as an issue."

Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. The program begins at 5:45 p.m. Reception to follow in the foyer. Admission is free of charge.

Cost of medevac flight \$37,000

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enough to travel back to B.C.

The problem is that Chapman was covered under the Medical Services Plan (MSP) in B.C., but he had no travel insurance, something B.C. residents should always get, according to Health Services Minister George Abbott.

The hospital bills piled up to the point where Chapman's parents estimate they might be close to \$2 million. Clearly they couldn't pay, and the hospital was successful in lobbying the State of California to pay the entire cost.

When it comes to B.C., Chapman is in a Catch-22 in that the province will not provide him with MSP coverage until he has been back home for three months, but he can't come home unless he has coverage as he needs care at a rehabilitation facility, such as G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre in

Vancouver.

So, how about the irony that a country criticized for its poor medical coverage has helped, while Chapman's home province, in a country with medical care lauded around the world, seems to have let him down?

"You can imagine what I have to say about that," Joan said. "From a personal level, I feel that we have been treated more kindly and generously by the state of California than by our own government."

The latest statement from Abbott was that he would work with the family to find some resolution. As of 10 a.m. yesterday, Joan said she hadn't heard from them, but a Health ministry spokesperson said things were underway.

"This is something dealt with at the clinical level," said Health Services ministry spokesperson Michelle Stewart. "These are generally

doctor-to-doctor transfers."

Joan said also that even if her son had MSP coverage tomorrow, she has been quoted \$37,000 to medevac him home, a cost they can't afford.

But Stewart said the ministry was involved and all the details surrounding getting Chapman home had not been figured out yet.

"First things first and we'll deal with those kinds of issues as we go along," Stewart said.