



February 21, 2011

Ref # 11797

Ms. Phyllis Bolton
Phyllis.Bolton@shaw.ca

Dear Ms. Bolton

RE: Saltspring Island Health Care

Thank you for providing me with a copy of the letter you addressed to Graham Hill, the Chair of the Capital Regional Hospital District.

In the letter, you make a number of allegations against Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) and its staff that must be corrected.

On behalf of the Vancouver Island Health Authority, I take significant offense at the language you have used with respect to the health care professionals that work daily to provide high quality services to all residents of Vancouver Island.

The review of Saltspring Island health care was undertaken by Grant Hollett, a senior and very experienced member of our staff who undertook extensive consultations with Lady Minto Hospital (LMH) stakeholder groups and physicians. 16 different Island stakeholder groups were consulted, which included a wide array of interests. To characterize this work as somehow "bogus" does great disservice to Mr. Hollett and his team.

As well, to allege that Mr. Hollett and his team somehow "manipulated" residents of Saltspring Island during his consultation does a great injustice to both Mr. Hollett and your fellow Saltspring Island residents whom you believe are being "manipulated" during a consultation process.

The review examined the health care needs of the entire Island including surgical services and made a number of recommendations that VIHA is now acting upon in order to provide high quality access to health care services at LMH and in the community.

As the Saltspring Island Health Review noted, the vast majority of surgeries for Island residents, other than endoscopy, were performed at hospitals other than Lady Minto. Major trauma and other emergent cases requiring surgery were never performed there, nor were the majority of other higher volume surgeries performed on Island residents.

I would like to address a number of other points you have raised.

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Executive Office

located at 2101 Richmond Avenue, Victoria, B.C., Canada V8R 4R7 • Tel: (250) 370-8699 • Fax (250) 370-8750
mailing address: 1952 Bay Street, Victoria, B.C., Canada V8R 1J8

Our Vision: Healthy People, Healthy Island Communities, Seamless Service

Dr. Roy Preshaw indeed resigned his privileges at Lady Minto Hospital. While I am not at liberty to share correspondence between Dr. Preshaw and VIHA, such correspondence exists and may be obtained from Dr. Preshaw should he wish to share it with you.

Dr. Preshaw announced his intention to withdraw his privileges to the medical staff at Lady Minto Hospital on January 8, 2008 and followed his announcement with correspondence to this effect.

With respect to the issue of the budget for surgical services at Lady Minto Hospital, I can confirm that there was no reduction during the period in which Dr. Preshaw was privileged to operate at the hospital. OR time is provided based on clinical volumes and referrals from physicians for procedures. If referrals for Island residents were being made to surgeons at hospitals other than LMH, OR time at Lady Minto would be adjusted accordingly.

As the Review noted, improvement is required in both the physical structure of Lady Minto as well as the services provided at the hospital.

To start, VIHA and the LMH Foundation have partnered to provide funding for a number of priority projects at the hospital that will be completed by March 31, 2011. This includes upgrades to the laboratory and extended care unit.

In addition, VIHA has committed to work with the Foundation on a number of other projects including the redevelopment of the emergency room and medical imaging area as well as the redevelopment of the annex.

As you may know, Bill Relph and his team successfully demonstrated the need for additional endoscopy volumes to be performed at Lady Minto. These volumes will rise from approximately 200 to 450 for the upcoming fiscal year. This will result in far fewer Island residents having to leave the Island in order to access an endoscopy.

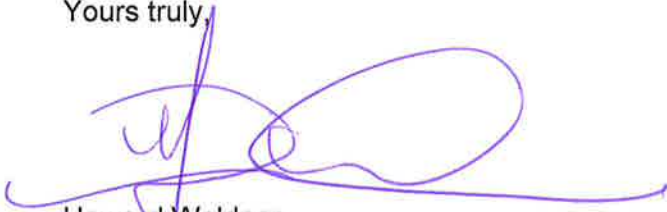
Finally, while we respect your views, and the views of your group, we must listen to our clinical leadership and the physicians on Saltspring Island. I have seen the letter signed by 15 Island physicians, including the President of the Medical Staff at LMH and the Chief of Staff, in which they categorically state their opposition to the reinstatement of surgical services at Lady Minto.

VIHA and our Board understand the frustration that some feel towards the decision to discontinue the search for a general surgeon. Funds were provided by both the Foundation and the CRHD to build and equip an operating room.

The majority of funds raised and expended went to the construction of the operating room area and this space will continue to be used to provide health care to Island residents, albeit not as originally intended, but in accordance with the wishes of our LMH medical staff as well as others who participated in the Review.

New staff have been hired and new services will be provided to the residents of Saltspring Island as a result of the Review and the shift of surgical funds to other priority areas as identified by fellow Island residents.

Yours truly,



Howard Waldner
President & Chief Executive Officer

cc: Graham Hill, Chair, CRHD
Don Hubbard Chair, VIHA Board of Directors
Michael Costello, VIHA Board of Directors
Brenda Nunns-Shoemaker, VIHA Board of Directors
Hans Van de Sande, VIHA Board of Directors
Ellen Godfrey, VIHA Board of Directors
Dave Kruyt, VIHA Board of Directors
Frank Carson, VIHA Board of Directors
Shelley Garside, VIHA Board of Directors
Vern Slaney, VIHA Board of Directors
Hon. Murray Coell, MLA, Saanich North and the Islands
Hon. Colin Hansen, Minister of Health Services
Geoff Young, Chair, CRD
Adrian Dix, MLA, Vancouver-Kingsway
Dr. Shane Barclay, LMH Chief of Staff
Bill Relph, Area Manager, Rural Health, VIHA