

Salt Spring Island Health Services Review Released

May 27, 2010

SALT SPRING ISLAND – Following an extensive community engagement process that has been underway since Salt Spring Island's surgeon retired in 2008, the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) today released its report into health services on Salt Spring Island.

"This is one the most extensive community engagement processes and reviews regarding health care services that has ever taken place on Salt Spring Island," said Grant Hollett, Director, Planning and Community Engagement, VIHA. "VIHA's review recommends increased health services for seniors and more programs for those living with mental health issues by establishing mental health nursing capacity and enhancing rehabilitation services at Lady Minto Hospital. The review also calls for maintaining endoscopy procedures at the hospital, improving the hospital's infrastructure and finding new and creative ways to address the shortage of GPs on the Island."

As is the case elsewhere in VIHA, the population of Salt Spring Island is growing and aging; in fact, the Gulf Islands local health area has the second highest average age in VIHA. While it is getting older, the population is generally in very good health.

"The health care needs of Salt Spring Island residents are those we most often associate with aging," said Dr. Shane Barclay, Chief, Medical Staff, Lady Minto Hospital. "These needs include convalescence – recovery and rehabilitation from illness and injury – and the associated services of physio and occupational therapy."

VIHA's review also identified a strong need for increased mental health services. Over the past three years, Lady Minto Hospital has experienced a high volume of mental health cases. The hospital currently does not have a mental health nurse and there is only limited mental health nursing services in the community. Enhancement of mental health nursing services would improve quality of care and care outcomes for mental health clients.

The review recommends that general surgery cease at Lady Minto Hospital, but also recommends that endoscopies – which are the majority of procedures performed by specialists on the Island – be maintained. "With an average of only 150 surgeries per year for the past 18 years, Lady Minto is not a high volume surgical site," said Barclay. "Such a low volume poses significant challenges, and by focusing on endoscopies, we can continue to provide the interventional procedure most needed by Island residents, while also improving access to other services that Island residents need locally."

The health review also found the physical infrastructure of Lady Minto Hospital to be aging. More space is needed for the laboratory, medical imaging and the emergency departments. Space planning is already underway for the laboratory, with planning for medical imaging and emergency to follow.

"The Lady Minto Hospital Foundation has been a long time supporter of the hospital and health care services on Salt Spring Island," said David Feitelberg, President, Lady Minto Hospital Foundation. "Our fundraising will continue to benefit local high priority health care services in the hospital. This report provides us clarity of direction for future fundraising initiatives in meeting community needs."

The Salt Spring Island Health Review is available at www.viha.ca/about_viha/news/publications/ssi_health_review.htm. VIHA will hold a community presentation on Salt Spring Island in mid-June to present the recommendations and answer questions.

Backgrounders attached (2):

- [Salt Spring Island Health Review Process \(PDF\)](#)
- [Salt Spring Island Health Review Recommendations \(PDF\)](#)

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