

Former Lady Minto Hospital surgeon calls for health manager's resignation

Gulf Islands Driftwood

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An email comment made by Lady Minto Hospital's site manager Bill Relph last summer has poured gasoline on the proverbial fire surrounding the hospital surgery closure, prompting a former surgeon to call for Relph's resignation.

Relph made the comment in a short email message to Vancouver Island Health Authority communications officer Shannon Marshall dated Aug. 20, 2009. In the message he asked Marshall to review articles in the Driftwood regarding the operating room closure issue, noting the "[Save Our Surgery] committee is still active and looking for ways to continue with surgical services."

Relph stated in the email that continuing surgery at the hospital was "not the direction we want to go in." He then concluded about the committee, "It would sure be nice if they would float away."

Former Lady Minto Hospital surgeon Dr. Roy Preshaw, who was forced to retire from his position two years ago, and members of SOS have interpreted that comment as being dismissive of community needs.

"This low-ranking official is suggesting the SOS committee is something like garbage floating in the water," Preshaw said. "That's not something we expect someone paid by taxpayer money to produce."

According to Preshaw, that is grounds for Relph's resignation, something he will elaborate on during a CSFI radio interview with Darlene Steele on Thursday.

Preshaw noted that according to VIHA's website, Relph is paid close to \$90,000 per year as rural health manager for Salt Spring and the Southern Gulf Islands.

SOS committee chair Phyllis Bolton obtained the Aug. 20, 2009 email as part of a freedom of information request made to VIHA last fall. The committee received the information last week, although Bolton says the deadline for delivery was the end of January 2010.

Relph is on holidays until the middle of July, according to Lady Minto Hospital staff.

http://www.bcclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_south/saltspringislanddriftwood/news/97022724.html