

Letter - Bamboozled by VIHA - Published: December 01, 2010 10:00 AM

I am writing to express my disappointment at the superficial and misleading article in the Nov. 17 Driftwood regarding the closure of the LMH surgical facility. ("Hospital board asks VIHA to halt dismantling of operating room.")

VIHA's vice president of communications was quoted as being "disappointed with the CRHD response" and that "we have a very good relationship with the CRD" and he "understands the board's desire to have such investments carried out properly." What nonsense!

Had the Driftwood attended the CRHD meeting, they would have heard a very different story from CRD board members, one of whom, after VIHA's obvious misrepresentations were exposed by the Save Our Surgery delegation, exclaimed that "VIHA should be ashamed of itself."

Other CRHD board members are on public record expressing dismay, even incredulity, that VIHA had not bothered to inform them about the closure of our surgery. They became aware of it only when SOS first attended their meetings. As former CRD director Gary Holman put it in his remarks to the board, "VIHA is here because SOS is here."

Are we being too hard on VIHA? Consider for yourself statements VIHA staff made at the meeting. They provided statistics reflecting the declining use of the surgical facility that were primarily the result of funding cuts, cuts VIHA denied making. They characterized the withdrawal of Dr. Roy Preshaw's hospital privileges by local administrators as a "resignation."

They dismissed written offers by Drs. Preshaw and Sira to provide locum services for an 18-month period to allow resumption of the search for a permanent replacement because it was not a "formal application." Incidentally, VIHA refrained from posting locum positions, a legal necessity.

This community and its local taxpayers, after contributing \$3 million to upgrade a service that has existed for decades, deserve better.

It is time for the Driftwood to take this matter seriously and to get responses from both sides of the issue.

Further, it should recognize that this is not an either/or situation but a simple matter of ethics. We are being bamboozled by bean counters whose last priority is patient care and who do not seem to mind how they achieve their goals.

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