

**Letter - Growing elephants and VIHA – Driftwood - Published: October 27, 2010 10:00 AM**

Surely I'm not the only one who notices it. Because it's definitely there. At first, it was quite small and unassuming, but in the last year or so, Salt Spring's baby elephant in the room grew up. 'Way up.

By now in fact it's huge, and this big bull elephant may be getting restive.

Until quite recently, Salt Spring's elephant was reasonably content with living in Lady Minto's former operating room. But I have a hunch it's now contemplating moving in with the rest of us — home and property owners, the business community, boaters who visit on a regular basis — in short, everyone with a stake in Salt Spring or elsewhere in the Southern Gulf Islands.

Until late last spring, the elephant in Lady Minto's former operating room seemed satisfied with munching on our health concerns. Some of us even got used to it, in a wary sort of way. But my hunch tells me this new growth spurt is not only about health. It's also about money.

For example, late last May, I recall reading there were 400 houses for sale on Salt Spring. I happened to mention this to a realtor friend in mid-June and she replied, "Make that 440, now." Add to this the fact that several friends who've had houses for sale since early this year, or longer, are still waiting for lightning to strike (in a good way). In addition, a connection with my own experience is hard to ignore.

Briefly, my husband and I moved to Salt Spring late in 1992, after his doctor confirmed Paul was in remission from leukemia. However, we understood this illness could recur, so it was literally the presence of Lady Minto that determined Salt Spring as our new home. Minus Her Ladyship, this wonderful island wouldn't even have been on our wish list.

And our situation was far from unique. Though Paul's hometown was Calgary and mine Victoria, we moved here from Thunder Bay where we'd lived for 26 years, quite typical Ontarians in search of warmer winters.

I don't have a solution in the case of Save Our Surgery vs. the forces of VIHA, but I'm convinced it can't be found by pretending the problem, and its many ramifications, do not exist. Surely, protecting our investment in our lives here demands participation by the whole community, because this battle is not only about health. It's also about money, and a certain elephant which could become very expensive indeed.

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