

Letter - Operating room - Driftwood - Published: December 15, 2010 10:00 AM

The following is an open letter to MLA Murray Coell:

When you ran for office you promised that the Lady Minto Hospital would be protected and enhanced. Stakeholders, no doubt partly in response to your promise, gave generously for the expansion of the operating room. Many understood that it was to have a 15-year life expectancy. Why then are you in agreement with the Vancouver Island Health Authority's decision to close our operating room?

The statistics on which VIHA is basing their decision are suspect. We were told by VIHA that obtaining such data was too difficult. They would not provide us with raw data to verify their argument. VIHA claimed that there was an insufficient number of operations to justify our OR's continued existence. But numbers were dropping because surgical services had been limited. Neither a surgeon nor an anesthesiologist has been given privileges to work at Lady Minto. Consequently even visiting specialists cannot offer services to continue their visits.

As president of the Lady Minto Hospital Auxiliary, I am appalled with the current philosophy that is bound to cause unnecessary hardship to Salt Spring residents. Medical emergencies frequently do not occur at convenient times. Our weather can prevent helicopters from flying and ferries from sailing, just when our hospital is most needed. Would you feel comfortable in your golden hour of need waiting for a break in the weather?

In your latest flyer you state: "The recommendations are under review and supported by stakeholders on the island." To the best of my knowledge this is not true. Many on Salt Spring are not cognizant that there is no surgeon on call at Lady Minto Hospital. Nor are they aware that in VIHA's own emergency plan the first step in the procedure is to call the surgeon. How do you explain this obvious disconnect?

Our state-of-the-art operating room is of little use. Now what? That equipment so lovingly donated by our residents will be shipped where?

Consequently we will have the privilege, no doubt, of attending a local private clinic currently being established with VIHA-certified doctors. We do not agree with this privatization. We need a working hospital with staff capable of handling emergencies to trauma patients, to obstetrical patients and others. There are many routine operations needed for a community of 12,000.

In conclusion I would like to quote an observation of Ralph Waldo Emerson: "God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please; you can never have both."

Victoria Woodman,
President,
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