

Lady Minto invited to make a public appearance for July 15 surgery protest

By [Elizabeth Nolan - Gulf Islands Driftwood](#)

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Opponents of Lady Minto Hospital's surgery closure are hoping a day of melodrama will get the results that public meetings have failed to do so far.

Salt Spring resident Ken Lee is organizing a protest and political street theatre event, set for Thursday, July 15 at 11 a.m at Centennial Park.

The group is acting in support of the Save Our Surgery Committee, which still hopes to convince the Vancouver Island Health Authority to reverse its decision to close the operating room.

VIHA's position has not changed despite considerable negative feedback at a public meeting held in June.

"Basically there's still a lot of frustration," Lee said.

"At the high school a few weeks ago, people felt they were being treated in a very cavalier way."

Lee is a veteran protester who has employed street theatre to good result in the past.

He organized the Fulford Tea Party in 1988 to protest increased fares on BC Ferries.

With support from Robert Bateman and the Raging Grannies, and coverage from media as far afield as the Miami Herald, B.C.'s premier announced two days after the protest that fares would be frozen for two years.

Lee was also deeply involved in the protests against the logging of Texada Land Corporation property on Salt Spring. He describes enacting "a few Michael Moores," including highjacking a Toronto meeting of Texada financier Manulife for an hour.

Arvid Chalmers and Shilo Zylbergold joined him in Victoria's Bastion Square for another theatre event, all of which he believes helped form Texada and Manulife's desire to bring the matter to a quick close.

For the upcoming VIHA protest, Lee will bring Lady Minto herself back from the past.

She'll travel by horse and carriage and thank the local citizens for their donation of \$800,000 to improve the operating room.

"I don't think the issue is dead yet," Lee said about the operating room.

"When you look at it in the light of day it's the same as the HST . . . A lot of the province is getting tired of government flip-flops."

Jo Twaites, who is acting as hospital site manager while Bill Relph is on holiday, said there is no date set for dismantling or repurposing the operating room, which is still being used for endoscopies.

"An expert on spatialization is being consulted because there are issues on space in almost every department, so we're waiting for his advice," Twaites said.

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