

Letter - Not rolling over

Gulf Islands Driftwood

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I have to admit that I was dismayed by this past week's editorial ("Community pulse").

The person who wrote it must have been taken in by the pretty graphs and the largely irrelevant information given in the Salt Spring Island Health Review. A careful read will show that the review is one of those exercises (such as denying global warming) written to support the ideas of the writer, not to provide an independent perspective.

There was only one commitment, to eliminate the surgery, and everything else was couched in weasel words: recommends, top concerns, enhance. Nowhere is there a single promise. And who would argue with the need for better mental health services? Certainly not the Save Our Surgery committee.

VIHA has avoided its responsibility to provide the Save Our Surgery committee with the requested statistics, now three months over the required time limit. If the information requested were supportive of their perspective, surely it would have been provided. These figures did not figure in the review.

Ours was the only "public" group consulted; we have been told that in at least one other case the people consulted were required to agree to secrecy before their interview with the VIHA representative.

Careful reading and we see that the author of the review barely acknowledges (and perhaps the newly arrived physicians should be reminded) that Lady Minto Hospital in one form or another is virtually a century old and exists because we live on an island and getting away on short notice can be difficult or occasionally impossible. That is why our predecessors and older residents were deeply involved in the building, maintaining, financing and supporting of this facility and its furnishings. That is often why Salt Spring was chosen over other islands by people who came here.

There are many stories that illustrate how lives have been saved or enhanced because of our surgery. With the closure of the general surgery, travel, accommodation, absence from work and related costs are now downloaded on families.

That is why hospital volunteers, Raging Grannies and others felt so reinforced by the guest speaker and local contributors at last Tuesday night's public meeting. And the 1,000-plus community members who have already signed their concern will not be rolling over. Just watch us.

- Irene Wright, SOS committee member