

Letter - Surgery should not be closed

Gulf Islands Driftwood

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This is a second clarion call to the residents of Salt Spring Island re: surgical services at Lady Minto Hospital.

I have reviewed the report entitled Salt Spring Island Health Review and am very concerned about its conclusion. As an operating room nurse who worked at Lady Minto in the '70s and '80s, I must reject this report's findings.

What do we stand to lose on Salt Spring Island? We have "always had a resident surgeon at Lady Minto and there has always been sufficient work for a competent individual looking for this type of practice. This statement is fully supported by Drs. Preshaw and Sira, both surgeons who practised here for a number of years.

The population of Salt Spring has increased steadily since the '70s and is now four times what it was at that time. The VIHA proposal to siphon off all the endoscopies performed at LMH to a specific physician who will not perform other necessary interventions does not meet our requirements and is an obvious deterrent to finding the appropriate suitable person.

One of the requirements to solve our difficulties is the full support of the medical staff in that all cases that can be carried out here be referred here, and not to other already overcrowded facilities off island.

Dr. Ray Dykstra from White Rock met with the medical staff to ensure his acceptability to them, but VIHA still refused to accept his proposal.

We were fortunate enough to have two excellent anaesthetists willing to provide service with much shorter delays than required in this type of community.

One of them has already left the community and will be hard to replace if no surgical procedures are being carried out at LMH. Other physicians have also left and will prove equally difficult to replace. The individual at the head of the operating table is a vital part of the team.

Salt Spring Island and Lady Minto Hospital cannot afford this dismantlement of an efficient, admirable-for-this-type-of-community health care system built up over the years with the most generous, consistent support of the community and the entire hospital staff.

It may be you or a member of your family who needs emergency surgery in the middle of the night and must wait to be transferred off island for immediate necessary surgery while our own "state-of-the-art" operating room sits idle.

Stand up and be counted!

JOYCE HARTWIG,