

Letter - Hospital should be for us

Gulf Islands Driftwoor Published: **February 23, 2011 10:00 AM**

Updated: **February 24, 2011 1:43 PM**

We live in a truly wonderful place with a strong commitment to our community.

What is community? It is a clear sense of place and of people with a commitment to both.

This community has evolved over 150 years with strong mutual support. Very early in the settlement period one-room schools were built by neighbours who hired the teacher. Later in the '40s the schools were amalgamated when student transportation became possible. Even the new school for all grades in Ganges was largely built with volunteers because it was for the community. The school belonged and still belongs to the community, not the teachers, not the administrators, but the community — and that means residents, and includes parents and children. From time to time governments have stepped in to try to replace community, but the community speaks up when this happens. We have instances in our history that illustrate this.

For over 100 years Salt Spring has taken care of its own with the creation of a hospital. Year after year women gave birth, and doctors mended broken bones, removed tonsils and appendixes, comforted the sick and dying, and generally did what was needed. The hospital was a creation of community. It belonged to the community, was built by the community, staffed at the call of the community, supported by the community. It did not and does not belong to the doctors and nurses. Our retired doctors and those who have lived here for many years get it. Some even do house calls.

Neither of these community creations was meant to be entrepreneurial but to serve the needs of all of us. Of course, with the increase in specialization we need off-island support, but we need as much as ever to have and hold what is ours by historic right.

With the advent of VIHA we have seen a change in attitude. VIHA seems to think that our community hospital belongs to them and to a lesser degree to some local doctors. They fail to recognize that they are our servants. They are paid by our taxes and should be directed by our advice and needs. They should realize that we are not Crofton with a 15-minute drive to a hospital at any hour of the day. Ferry schedules and costs may keep us apart from the support of our family members when we have to go off-island for procedures. This is particularly unfair when the procedure could be done here.

If the current decision makers continue in this vein we shall end up with a hospital with only three functions: triage, convalescence and extended care. This is so disrespectful of the thousands of people who have contributed to our hospital.

A number of the doctors on Salt Spring Island recently signed a letter that stated very simply that they do not agree with the position taken by the Save Our Surgery committee. I challenge them to review who they are, whom they serve, where they live, and why.

Irene Wright,

Salt Spring

http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_south/saltspringislanddriftwood/opinion/letters/116748739.html