

Letter - Preserve hospital services

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With the greatest respect for the doctors who signed the letter published on page A13 in the Jan. 19 Driftwood, it is important to note that some of our longest tenured and most respected doctors did not sign the letter. As well, three of the doctors who did sign the letter are specialists who are not directly involved with surgical services.

Some of the doctors who signed the letter are new to Salt Spring Island and were not in practice here when the operating room was successfully running at full capacity. Perhaps they do not perceive the difficulty islanders experience when, without a surgical facility at home, they are forced to go off-island and must deal with the trauma, cost and inconvenience that is entailed with repeated trips to Vancouver Island.

The basic ingredients of a hospital are doctors, nurses, acute care beds and operating rooms. If you take one of these things away you no longer have a hospital. You have a lesser facility. When you take away the operating rooms you don't just take away the ability to do surgery; you downgrade other services including laboratory, radiology and emergency services and completely lose services like anaesthetic and visiting specialist services.

Anaesthetists are required in emergencies to save the lives of patients suffering an acute crisis, e.g. acute asthmatic attack, emphysema, choking, a newborn with respiratory insufficiency, severe allergic reaction or any other situation that involves difficulty with the airway.

The visiting gynecologist and urologist no longer come to the island. Their practice was to see patients who had been referred to them for consultation and examination. If a surgical procedure was indicated they booked the OR to do the procedure on their next visit to the island. Without operating room and anaesthetic services they are unable to do their work. These patients now have to go over to Vancouver Island for the consult and wait in line for the already overcrowded hospitals there to do the surgical procedure.

The islanders, many of whom donated to the construction of the new operating room, deserve better. They deserve to have the state-of-the-art operating theatre restored as a fully functioning facility to serve their surgical needs. This situation is beginning to look more and more as though it's not just "save our surgery," it's "save our hospital."

Phyllis Bolton,

Chair, Ad Hoc Save Our Surgery Committee

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