

# New building needed to cope with GP shortage, says local chief of staff

By [Sean McIntyre - Gulf Islands Driftwood](#) Published: **October 12, 2011 8:00 AM**

The chief of staff at Lady Minto Hospital says more health clinic space on the island is needed to cope with an increasing doctor shortage on Salt Spring Island.

Dr. Shane Barclay's comments came during Thursday's local Trust committee meeting where trustees received preliminary information about an application to rezone land at 154 and 164 Kings Lane.

He said residents can expect the availability of general practitioners to become more scarce as at least four physicians intend to leave their island practices within the next three to four years. Two of those have recently confirmed their intention to close their practices within the next nine months, Barclay said.

Clinic space, Barclay added, is the preferred setting for new physicians due to convenience, practicality and more readily available relief.

"Clinics are the only way that young physicians are going to come here," he said. "If we can get a rezoning and get another clinic we can probably, hopefully attract another physician to the island because there is going to be a massive shortage of GPs."

The Kings Lane clinic has proven "wildly successful" since it opened its doors in 2009. "We've outgrown the clinic already," Barclay said.

The 3.4 acres (1.39-hectare) site, which hosts a medical clinic, a small garage, bowling alley, restaurant and residential unit, is currently split-zoned C5-R6. A zoning change to permit community facilities is needed to "have five buildings matching the new Kings Lane Medical Centre, all of which would be used for various healthcare-related uses," according to the staff report presented at Thursday LTC meeting.

According to applicant Myles Wilson, it's hoped the property will eventually support a combination of residential, medical, retail and office space.

"We're trying to look into the future as to what the island is going to need," he said. "At this time, we're going to do one more building, see how it goes and go from there. I'm not going to build them and have them sit. I don't need an eyesore and neither do the neighbours."

He said the first phase of the project, if approved, will entail construction of a new 555-square-metre (6,000-square-foot) medical building.

Trustee Christine Torgimson acknowledged the application will "take a while to come through" and certainly not in her term, but she flagged parking, traffic and sewer issues as "thorny pieces" that future trustees may want to consider.

The application has been referred to the Islands Trust's Agricultural Advisory Committee, Advisory Planning Commission, the Ganges Sewer Local Services Commission, the Ministry of Transportation and the Salt Spring Island Transportation Commission for further review.

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