

Stakeholders remain divided over Lady Minto Hospital surgery closure

By Elizabeth Nolan - Gulf Islands Driftwood Published: January 19, 2011 10:00 AM

While Salt Spring's Save Our Surgery committee has been working hard on its campaign to keep Lady Minto's operating room equipped and staffed for its original purpose, other island groups are speaking up to voice related concerns.

Salt Spring's physicians are the latest to weigh into the debate. In a letter to the editor published in this week's Driftwood, Manya Sadouski, president of Lady Minto's medical staff, and 14 other doctors state that they do not share the opinion of the SOS committee or believe that surgical services should be reinstated at the hospital.

Most, but not all, of the island's physicians signed the letter.

Another group that has stayed quiet for most of the campaign has ended its silence with a nod to the other side, however. The Lady Minto Hospital Auxiliary asked its members earlier this month to write letters to MLA Murray Coell, following the publication of a story outlining the struggle in The Globe and Mail.

Auxiliary president Victoria Woodman said the organization decided to act "because the surgery is the heart of the hospital.

"It's not the only part, but without it so much else doesn't take place."

Woodman explained the auxiliary membership has been discussing some different approaches to what SOS is doing because the two groups have different mandates to fulfill.

One thing the auxiliary wants is a face-to-face meeting with VIHA authorities to talk about the situation.

"I think in some ways we have more pull because of our contact with VIHA," Woodman said.

The Capital Regional Hospital District is another high-profile body to throw in its opinion during the last few months.

A motion passed by the board on Nov. 10, 2010 asks VIHA to suspend operating room repurposing activities, including selling off equipment and renovating, until it provides the board with more information about its decision.

Robert Lapham, general manager of CRD Planning & Protective Services, said the motion was passed because the capital project the CRHD invested in hadn't been fully realized.

The CRHD contributed \$1.1 million to a state-of-the-art renovation to the operating room.

"The hospital district is concerned that if the health district is participating in a capital project that the commitment is being advanced," Lapham said.

"If we build a hospital, we want to make sure it is being used."

VIHA's position on the CRHD's motion has been that it won't respond until it receives an official request from the board, which it hasn't so far.

Lapham said he would check into the situation, but his understanding was VIHA would act on the information presented at the Nov. 10 meeting.

"VIHA was at the meeting when the motion was passed, so they're very much aware of the position," he said.

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