

Galiano Health Care Centre News

Referendum is approved overwhelmingly. But VIHA has removed funding for our weekend on-call nurses. To help reverse this move please speak out with letters and emails (for names and addresses see reverse side)

The Galiano Health Care Society is very grateful to islanders for the strong support shown for the community's Health Care Centre in the recent referendum. Thanks to 815 out of 909 voters approving the Capital Regional District (CRD) property tax requisition bylaw, the Society will be able to operate and maintain the Health Care Centre for years to come. We will continue to have a high quality facility for the health care professionals who provide such important service to the community.

The Vancouver Island Health Authority (also known as "Island Health") employs or contracts most of the health care professionals who practice at the Centre, using funding provided by the Province. However Island Health has consistently refused to provide funding for the operation and maintenance of the Centre itself. This is why the Society requested the CRD to conduct the referendum, to ask islanders to support the Centre through a property tax.

Unfortunately the good news of the very large "yes" vote on Nov. 15 was tempered by a public announcement from Island Health two days later. As of the end of November, funding has been cut for the nurses who have provided emergency on-call services to the Galiano community on two weekends per month for the last several years. **This short-sighted move will leave Galiano residents and visitors without any weekend emergency care provided by an on-island medical professional, except for the one weekend each month when our resident physician is on-call.**

What the cut to weekend on-call nursing means

Galiano's BC Ambulance crew and the first responders from island fire departments will continue to respond to 911 calls in the case of life-threatening emergencies. However islanders with other urgent medical problems who call the clinic on most weekends and dial the designated pager number, **will now receive a call back from an off-island physician, who is not able to meet the patient at the clinic if immediate treatment or dispensing of medications is needed.** In addition to causing unnecessary stress to these patients, loss of on-call nurse coverage on weekends puts more pressure on BC Ambulance and fire department first responders in the case of serious life-threatening emergencies.

It is likely that Island Health's removal of on-call nurse coverage will **end up costing the provincial government more money in increased costs for medical evacuations by water taxi and helicopter.** Less urgent cases will be left untreated unless the patients make their own way off-island.

Objection from Galiano Health Care Society

The Galiano Health Care Society has strongly objected to Island Health's cut to weekend on-call nursing services. We are also frustrated with the misleading way that Island Health announced the cut -- in a news release Nov. 17 characterizing it as "realigning nursing services on Galiano Island to better meet the needs of the residents." The health authority uses the news release to boast they are increasing home care nursing as requested by the community, while acknowledging they are removing the funding for weekend on-call nursing. **Adding home care nursing hours cannot make up for removal of weekend on-call nursing, because they are two different services.**

The funding that the Health Care Society will receive beginning in 2015 as a result of the referendum passing **can only be applied to overhead, management, and maintenance costs for the Health Care Centre building, and cannot be used to fund medical services.**

To reverse this cut your voice is needed

If you wish to express your views about Island Health's decision to cut weekend on-call nursing for Galiano, please send a letter or email to any or all of the names on the reverse side, and copy the Health Care Society (908 Burrill Rd, Galiano, BC, V0N 1P0, or galianohealth@shaw.ca). Thank you.

Please write or email

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