

TIMES COLONIST

Provide enough staffing for islands' health care

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Re: "Lack of nurses unsafe: petition," March 11.

According to Island Health's Suzanne Germain, three permanent physicians and two nurse practitioners provide primary health care on Galiano and Mayne Islands. That is not correct. Galiano has one full-time physician and one full-time nurse practitioner; Mayne has one part-time physician and one part-time nurse practitioner.

Our two islands combined have the equivalent of just over three primary care providers, not five. And the nurse practitioners' contract doesn't allow them to be on call after hours.

Germain said that Island Health's recent decision to eliminate our on-call weekend nursing service provided by registered nurses was because it "was not used much." This is also not correct.

The decision to eliminate this service effectively reduced on-site medical coverage from three weekends a month to one, which is covered by the resident physician on each island.

If Island Health does not know the number of primary-care practitioners providing services on our islands, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that its decision to eliminate our on-call nurses was made without knowing how frequently the service was used and how much it is needed.

Over the years, Galiano and Mayne residents have donated millions of after-tax dollars to build, equip and expand our health care centres.

Homeowners on our islands are also levied an annual tax to maintain this infrastructure.

All we ask is that Island Health provide the staffing necessary to support reasonable access to the health-care services we need.

Michael Hoebel, president

Galiano Health Care Society

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