



Hospital board rejects VIHA's plan for a North Island regional hospital

Community coalition lobbied hard for upgrades to existing facilities

Thanks in part to the efforts of a local coalition, Citizens for Quality Health Care – of which HEU members are a part – the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District Board rejected the Vancouver Island Health Authority's plan for a regional hospital on the North Island by a vote of 14 to six on February 7.

HEU workers from St. Joseph's Hospital in Comox, Campbell River General Hospital (CRGH) and other Island facilities joined community public health care activists to extensively lobby civic politicians, hospital board representatives and MLAs, organize public forums and petitions, and make presentations at health authority board meetings since VIHA first floated its regional hospital scheme almost two years ago.

Citizens for Quality Health Care have worked with North Island health care workers, including nurses and physicians, to promote a previous recommendation that VIHA upgrade St. Joseph's and CRGH.

The regional hospital, projected to cost \$300 million, would likely have been a public-private partnership (P3) because the provincial government has mandated that infrastructure projects of that magnitude must use the P3 model. Its location was to be in the remote and undeveloped area of Dove Creek in the Comox Valley.

The hospital board had voted to support the project in September 2006, but rescinded the motion in the February 7 vote.

The regional hospital board also wants VIHA to upgrade and expand Campbell River General and St. Joseph's "as soon as possible", according to media coverage of comments made by board chairperson Fred Bates. And the board says that the provincial government should pay for the much-needed improvements with the \$180 million it would have spent on a regional hospital.

"Ever since VIHA launched the idea of a regional hospital, the people of the Comox Valley and Campbell River have rejected it and called for improvements to their existing hospitals," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

...2



“The Citizens for Quality Health Care formed to ensure that the public’s voice would be heard. Their efforts have been successful and we congratulate them.

“The group organized several town hall meetings in the two communities and each one drew more than 200 people and garnered significant media coverage. Their petitions in support of upgrading and expanding Campbell River General and St. Joseph’s carried more than 18,000 signatures and were presented in the legislature,” adds Darcy.

“Now that the regional hospital board has rejected VIHA’s regional hospital plan, it’s time for the health authority and government to listen to the public and invest in the existing facilities without further delay.”

February 8, 2008