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HEALTH CARE

Input needed on specialist care

Survey aims to streamline services

BY ELIZABETH NOLAN
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Salt Spring residents who have travelled off the island to receive specialized health care are being asked to complete a survey that could help improve how such services are accessed in the future.

The Effective Access to Specialists working group is a joint initiative of SharedCare BC and the Salt Spring Chapter of the Division of Rural and Remote Family Practice. The Shared Care Committee is itself a collaborative partnership of the B.C. Ministry of Health and Doctors of BC. Its purpose is to support family physicians and specialist physicians in working together to improve the flow of patients from primary to specialist care.

Salt Spring patients who have

seen a cancer specialist/oncologist, geriatrician, physiatrist, cardiac rehabilitation specialist or orthopedic surgeon in the past year are asked to fill out a survey about their experiences.

"To see a specialist, patients on Salt Spring must often travel off island, usually requiring several trips for medical appointments and to complete tests," SharedCare notes on its website. "There are a small number of visiting specialist physicians but gaps in services remain, and the burden on the patient for costs and time to travel make accessing specialist care difficult."

Janine Gowans, chapter coordinator for the Salt Spring Island Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice, said the working group collaborated with local physicians to create a matrix of around eight variables to determine exactly which types of specialist care to focus on. Impact on mobility, difficulty of access and

changeability of appointments were some of the variables considered.

Gowans said the process really breaks down to the simple question of "Can we put people on boats less?" The answer might be using education and tele-health to avoid some off-island appointments and perhaps bringing specialists to the island in other cases.

"We've got a lot of ideas about the different modalities and how to streamline them," Gowans said. "Hopefully that will make service better."

Data from the surveys will be collated with information the EAS group has already gathered from two families, who volunteered to allow their entire patient journeys to be mapped.

Paper copies of the survey can be found at local GP offices. It can also be filled out online at surveys.divisionsbc.ca/EAS-Patient-Survey.aspx. The closing date for participation will be early November.

HOUSING

Galiano tackles affordable housing

Draft bylaws propose legal suites and larger cottages

BY SEAN MCINTYRE
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Galiano Island trustees are moving ahead with plans to legalize cottages and secondary suites to meet the housing needs of island residents.

"We are trying to make it as easy for the homeowner as possible," said George Harris, a member of the Galiano Island Local Trust Committee.

Harris and Galiano trustee Sandy Pottle met on Oct. 5 to give first and second readings to proposed bylaws that will enable homeowners to offer suites and cottages as rental housing. The draft bylaw dealing

with secondary suites will also enable property owners to use secondary suites as short-term vacation rentals.

A public hearing on the draft bylaws is slated for Nov. 2 at the Galiano Community Hall. Changes require amendments to Galiano Island's land-use bylaw and official community plan.

"We're just moving ahead."

GEORGE HARRIS,
Galiano Island Local Trust Committee member

Harris said making sure islanders can access affordable and adequate housing was a priority following the 2014 local elections. The bylaws are intended to

offer property owners more options to provide quality rental housing to islanders.

"We're just moving ahead," he said. "It's really been great. It seemed like nothing was happening for so long, and now we're getting somewhere."

According to draft bylaws 254 and 255, homeowners will be allowed to construct secondary suites that occupy up to 40 per cent of their home's floor space so long as the unit does not exceed 640 square feet. According to draft bylaws 242 and 243, cottages can be up to 750 square feet and up to 30 feet in height.

All units must meet conditions set out in the Capital Regional District's building bylaw. Owners of all secondary suites will need to install a water catchment cis-

tern with a capacity of at least 16,000 litres before the unit can be occupied.

Trust staff noted the possibility that legal STVRs in secondary suites could create a conflict between lucrative tourism accommodation and stable rental housing designed for islanders.

"The intent for secondary suites on Galiano Island is to address affordable housing either by long-term rental or for family members," reads a staff report presented at the Oct. 5 Galiano LTC meeting. "This differs from STVRs or visitor accommodation as secondary suites provide rentals greater than 30 days (generally monthly) and would provide housing for Galiano residents and/or family members."



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