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Dear Mr. Mayor and the Richmond City Council Members:

Re: Richmond Hospital Sleep Laboratory

Thank you for this opportunity to address you.

I am writing to solicit your support for the Richmond Hospital (RH) Sleep Laboratory. It is being planned to move this lab to UBC Hospital for reasons that are not good enough.

The Richmond Hospital physicians unanimously rejected the idea of moving the sleep laboratory out of Richmond in a motion passed in in our quarterly medical staff meeting in January.

Instead of moving the sleep lab to another part of Richmond Hospital (RH), it is being discussed/planned to move it completely out of Richmond to Vancouver. This would be akin to closing or moving ambulatory care, radiology, endoscopy, gynecology or another clinical/surgical service without any discussion with the citizens of Richmond.

Two of our extremely skilled and bright surgeons worked hard to start a weight loss (bariatric) surgery program in Richmond Hospital recently. This is one of 2 centers in BC approved by the Provincial Ministry of Health. Much like the sleep laboratory it has increased recognition for the Richmond Hospital. As we work to develop the Richmond hospital into a centre of excellence, it is important that we retain the programs that we have worked hard to build. The growing bariatric surgical program at the hospital works closely with the sleep lab as most bariatric patients have sleep apnea and have to be tested. The hospital's ability to service these needs of the bariatric program will be severely compromised if the sleep lab is moved out of Richmond.

Forcing the Richmond citizens go to UBC Hospital will pose great hardship for most of these patients. The distances involved and traffic on the road will end up discouraging patients from having the necessary testing.

I have been a citizen of Richmond for 25 years. I am a Sleep Medicine specialist, Internist and Psychiatrist. I have been practicing medicine in Richmond since March 1989. I helped establish the sleep laboratory in the Richmond Hospital. This sleep lab was founded in 1991 with private donations from the Richmond citizens and other sources. It is located on the ward 3 North in Richmond Hospital.

The sleep laboratory helps diagnose and treat serious sleep disorders that may lead to early death if not addressed quickly and appropriately by qualified physicians.

Since its inception 22 years ago this sleep laboratory has helped thousands of Richmond citizens stay healthy and has helped prevent heart attacks, strokes and road and other accidents. It has helped patients

with high blood pressure, depression and diabetes become more responsive to their treatment. It has helped prevent marital issues and sexual dysfunction. It has helped our heart failure and chronic pain patients (on narcotic medicines) so that they don't stop breathing in their sleep and live longer. It has helped patients with sleep apnea live healthier and productive life. A large segment of Richmond population is especially vulnerable to obstructive sleep apnea.

The Richmond Hospital was like a cottage hospital when I first came here in 1989. We were routinely asked to move patients to Vancouver that could otherwise be easily treated here. It took a lot of dedicated work by the hospital staff, physicians and administrators to change this hospital to a first class operation. Losing any service from this hospital should be totally unacceptable. We do not want to become a cottage hospital again.

We certainly don't want to be turned into a cottage hospital by blinkered people in Richmond Hospital who started a secretive negotiation to move the sleep laboratory with no input from anybody outside a small circle sitting in a backroom. Just remember the fate of Delta Hospital where the decisions to downgrade the facility were seemingly made by people other than the citizens. The hospitals are just too important to leave their fate to a group of nameless faceless people.

It is also an unfortunate reality that over the last many years the top administrators of this hospital seemingly have had no real vested interest in the betterment of this hospital. They seem to take jobs in this hospital with a goal to find another position downtown as soon as they can. They use Richmond Hospital as a stepping stone to advance their careers and end up serving the goals that may not be in Richmond's best interest.

Any reasonable person with Richmond's best interest would reject the plan to close any service out of hand. The Richmond Hospital should expand and not shrink its services. This is why the Richmond Hospital physicians unanimously rejected the idea of moving the sleep laboratory out of Richmond our last quarterly staff meeting. The idea and the process of moving the sleep lab sets a very bad precedence for the future and may encourage others to act dismember the Richmond Hospital arbitrarily. The opaque process of moving sleep lab out of Richmond can easily be seen as a hostile act towards this hospital.

The Richmond Hospital (RH) needs to expand the number of acute care beds on 3 North. Since the sleep laboratory occupies two 4-bed rooms on 3N it is being planned to move the lab from this floor.

There is enough space available in RH to relocate the lab, e.g., 5 North or Rotunda. These were clinical spaces and a plethora of offices and meeting rooms now. All we need is 1000 to 1200 square feet space. There is a lot more space available that can be freed up in Richmond Hospital.

This important 22 year old mature clinical service surely takes precedence over offices that are presently occupying clinical space.

I should also add here that the sleep lab has been financially self-supporting and generated very significant amounts of much needed revenues for this hospital over the last 22 years. It has the potential to substantially increase these revenues.

Respectfully submitted by Dr. Avinder S Minhas