



**An Open Letter to the Residents of South Muskoka:  
“Act Like Your Life Depends on It: Continuing the Good Fight”**

October 1, 2024

Dear Resident and Neighbour:

We write with shocking and disappointing news concerning our community’s fight to save South Muskoka Hospital. The Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee (SSMHC) is informed that Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) is submitting to Ontario Health for a wholly inadequate 36-bed hospital at the South Muskoka site within days.

South Muskoka does not support this submission. The MAHC Made in Muskoka healthcare model is resoundingly rejected by the local physicians and the residents.<sup>i</sup> In a recent assessment, SSMHC has identified that the Made in Muskoka model jeopardizes the health, safety and well-being of the residents of South Muskoka.<sup>ii</sup>

The blame for this debacle lies with MAHC. MAHC refuses to hear the reasoned and experienced voices of our physicians. MAHC ignores the voices of South Muskoka community stakeholders, such as SSMHC. MAHC rejects the guidance of our elected representatives, including Mayor Rick Maloney and the Honourable Graydon Smith, MPP, who has reasonably called for a submission only after the development of a model that is workable across the region.<sup>iii</sup>

By proceeding with this submission, MAHC is yet again in breach of the public’s trust. MAHC is certainly aware that its actions are outrageous, insulting and intolerable to South Muskoka. And with no direct accountability to the public, MAHC has sought to steamroll the hospital redevelopment: no detailed submission timelines with little to no advance notice of its actions, no workable framework for collaboration with stakeholders, and no sharing of material information to support an informed consultation.<sup>iv</sup> Of further note, MAHC has grossly deviated from its 2019 submission to the province which previously highlighted the importance of community support as a centre-piece of its proposal.<sup>v</sup> MAHC cannot assert community support this time around. And all this despite the efforts of so many in South Muskoka to find a solution focused on equitable healthcare for the entire hospital catchment.

It is now clear that MAHC has no intention to change its course. There is no good faith dialogue in MAHC’s one-sided discussion. It is time that the Made in Muskoka model is stopped. Our elected officials and this community must now rely upon the Care Close to Home model that is unanimously supported by the local physicians. This model would have 60 acute care beds at the South Muskoka site with sufficient services to attract and retain physicians to serve the entire region. Importantly,

the Care Close to Home model respects the realities of life in Muskoka while addressing the critical healthcare principals that support hospital care in South Muskoka into the future.<sup>vi</sup> South Muskoka will not accept anything less.

Now, dear resident, a crucial date is on the horizon: on Monday, October 21, the District of Muskoka is set to revisit the \$77M local share contribution of municipal tax dollars to the hospital redevelopment. These are local tax dollars from a general levy that will be collected through to 2037.<sup>vii</sup> Should this funding proceed at the District, South Muskoka will be paying for the majority of this tax – to add insult to injury.

SSMHC demands that the District local share funding not proceed. This District Council must be bold: District Council must insist on a redevelopment plan that will not jeopardize the health, safety and well-being of the residents of South Muskoka. South Muskoka is depending on our District Councillors to safeguard the future of South Muskoka Hospital.

To our friends, neighbours and fellow residents, it is crucial that South Muskoka continues to stand up for South Muskoka Hospital along with our physicians between now and October 21. SSMHC is encouraging the following steps:

- Residents of Muskoka Lakes, Lake of Bays and Gravenhurst must continue to raise their concerns with municipal councillors and the District Chair. Concerningly, SSMHC is of the view that District councillors from these area municipalities may support MAHC's Made in Muskoka model despite its many faults.
- Residents in Bracebridge must demand that the Town withhold the \$10M local share contribution. Further, residents must also demand that Town Council stop the transfer of land to MAHC for a hospital site that will not properly serve the community.
- South Muskoka must demand advocacy support from our South Muskoka municipalities. SSMHC is aware of other municipalities in the province that have taken on an advocacy role in support of their respective local hospital.<sup>viii</sup> There remains opportunity for this to occur in South Muskoka.
- Residents must support and advocate for the Care Close to Home model.<sup>ix</sup> SSMHC strongly supports the Care Close to Home model as part of an overall equitable, two acute care hospital solution for Muskoka which would include 60 acute care beds at a future South Muskoka hospital site.

Additionally, SSMHC is calling on the residents of South Muskoka to share their concerns directly with the Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Doug Ford, by emailing [premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca).

It has been said that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. It is clear that the same price is required for access to hospital care close to home in South Muskoka. Speak up now to protect access to hospital care for yourself, your loved ones and your neighbours. Lives depend on it.

Sincerely,

The Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee

## About the Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee:

The Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee is a grassroots non-profit corporation dedicated to advocating for two mid-sized, equitable hospitals in both South Muskoka and Huntsville. The SSMHC tagline, “Keep the Promise!” refers to the commitments made by the District of Muskoka, the Town of Huntsville, the Town of Bracebridge, and from MAHC to the people of Muskoka to pursue the strategy for healthcare at two acute care sites in Muskoka.

SSMHC membership is open to grassroots volunteers who are passionate about advocating for local, accessible, equitable and high-quality healthcare delivery at two acute care hospital sites.

To get involved, show support or learn more:

- Sign up to become a Community Member in support of SSMHC at <https://forms.gle/pNPpKVBSX3Fo5UQK7>
- Sign our current petition targeting the \$77M local share from the District of Muskoka, details can be found at <https://ssmh.ca/petitions/>
- Contact local municipal and provincial politicians, and the MAHC board indicating your concerns and calling for them to keep the promise of two acute care hospitals in both Huntsville and Bracebridge. A list of contacts can be found here: <https://ssmh.ca/government-and-mahc-contacts/>
- Reach out on our contact page to acquire a lawn sign as a visible show of support: <https://ssmh.ca/contact/>
- Donate to our committee: <https://ssmh.ca/donations/>
- Connect with us:
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559377176594>
  - Website: [www.ssmh.ca](http://www.ssmh.ca)
  - Email: [ssmh@ssmh.ca](mailto:ssmh@ssmh.ca)

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.mymuskokanow.com/135471/featured/keep-the-promise-memorial-park-in-bracebridge-packed-with-concerned-residents/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://ssmh.ca/recommendation-for-a-healthcare-delivery-model-and-acute-care-beds-at-the-future-south-muskoka-hospital-site/>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://graydonsmithmpp.ca/letter-from-mpp-graydon-smith-to-mahc-requesting-withdrawal-of-motion-to-proceed-with-current-hospital-redevelopment-plan/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://ssmh.ca/mahc-working-groups-another-fiction-in-a-broken-collaborative-process/>

<sup>v</sup> Refer to MAHC 2019 Executive Summary Letter – currently unavailable on MAHC website as of September 29, 2024. [https://madeinmuskokahealthcare.ca/about/planning-timeline/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Stage-1-Proposal-Executive-Summaries-Part-A\\_B.pdf](https://madeinmuskokahealthcare.ca/about/planning-timeline/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Stage-1-Proposal-Executive-Summaries-Part-A_B.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> SSMHC Position Statement 3, Recommendation for a Healthcare Delivery Model and Acute Care Beds at the Future South Muskoka Hospital Site. <https://ssmh.ca/recommendation-for-a-healthcare-delivery-model-and-acute-care-beds-at-the-future-south-muskoka-hospital-site/>

<sup>vii</sup> Refer to District of Muskoka Report 19(2023)-3, Funding for Local Share and Health Care Facilities (October 16, 2023) <https://muskoka.civicweb.net/document/40646>.

<sup>viii</sup> Two current well-known examples of this include the Town of Whitby: <https://www.whitby.ca/en/town-hall/a-new-hospital-in-whitby.aspx> and West Grey: <https://www.westgrey.com/en/news/state-of-emergency-for-the-municipality-of-west-grey-may-28-2024.aspx>

<sup>ix</sup> Care Close to Home (V2) available here: [Care Close to Home V2 August 27 2024 310pm \(ssmh.ca\)](https://ssmh.ca/Care-Close-to-Home-V2-August-27-2024-310pm)