



## POSITION UPDATE FROM THE SAVE SOUTH MUSKOKA HOSPITAL COMMITTEE

October 18, 2024

The Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee (SSMHC) is writing to clarify its position. This position update is warranted given the sudden events that transpired last week with the announcement of 10 additional beds at the future South Muskoka site. While the SSMHC is encouraged by and supportive of the increase in beds, there remain **ongoing, urgent and significant issues** concerning the hospital redevelopment plans.

Issues concerning MAHC's accountability, transparency and proper community consultation remain outstanding. Although an increase to 46 acute care beds is a significant improvement, it still does not meet the expectations of the community. We have been waiting for over eight months for material questions to be answered with transparency, such as, the choice of site, transportation issues, ALC service enhancement and the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals as key elements of the hospital redevelopment.

Until these legitimate concerns are satisfactorily addressed, there remains significant opposition in South Muskoka to the Made in Muskoka model. Last week, the Chambers of Commerce of both Gravenhurst and Muskoka Lakes issued resolutions opposing the Made in Muskoka model and supporting a minimum 60-bed hospital for South Muskoka as set out in the Care Close to Home V2 model.

We are informed that the Made in Muskoka submission will go forward to the Ontario Ministry of Health as part of the Stage 1.3 capital redevelopment submission for further review later this fall. We are disappointed that MAHC intends to proceed without clear community support, however, we believe that at the provincial level, there remain opportunities for public concerns to be registered and for important revisions and enhancements to be included in the hospital redevelopment plans.

It is critical to note that previously in October 2023, MAHC represented to the District of Muskoka Council that additional beds over the existing 67 bed count would be included at the future South Muskoka site. Instead, under the current Made in Muskoka model, the future South Muskoka site will have nearly 1/3 fewer beds than it does today, without accounting for the current daily over capacity situation, and while the population of South Muskoka will increase by thousands more by the time these hospitals are built. These changes were made by MAHC without notice to the District or the community.

We would encourage **MAHC to pause** with the submission of the plan to the province until such time as the report facilitated by the District Chair, Jeff Lehman, to the District of Muskoka Council has been received. There must be time for thoughtful reflection and consultation with the community. There remains an opportunity at the District level to ensure the local funding contribution of \$77M is not advanced until appropriate safeguards concerning the future of South Muskoka hospital are included.

It is critical that the District of Muskoka adopt conditions to be attached to the local share contribution so as to ensure that the hospital redevelopment process remains subject to public oversight. For instance, Niagara Region developed a policy to ensure that hospital local share contributions from the ratepayers of that municipality is measured against five parameters<sup>1</sup>:

- Fairness and equity across the local municipalities;
- Financial certainty and predictability for annual and long-term capital and operating budgets at the municipality;
- Demonstrated benefit for all residents;
- Alignment with regional goals and priorities; and
- Municipal contribution as part of a larger community-wide effort.

At best, it is unclear that key conditions such as these are satisfactorily addressed by the Made in Muskoka model. It remains the concern of the SSMHC that if South Muskoka will not have an equitable, full-service, acute care hospital in the future, that this result will have a lasting negative impact on the ability of South Muskoka to attract business, new residents and healthcare professionals and, in turn, negatively impact real estate demand and values in our community.

The SSMHC remains committed to the Care Close to Home V2 Model. This model calls for 60 acute care beds along with increased ALC capacity in our community. This model supports an equitable, two-site hospital which respects the realities of life in Muskoka while addressing the critical healthcare principles that will effectively support hospital care for all of Muskoka into the future.

We will continue to strongly and respectfully advocate at the local and provincial levels for an equitable long-term solution on behalf of South Muskoka and for our healthcare professionals. The SSMHC has specifically asked residents to email the Premier, the Honourable Doug Ford, directly with their concerns.

We continue to appreciate the hard work and support of our elected officials, volunteers and the community on this important cause.

Signed,

***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>
- 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/>
- 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> See [Microsoft Word - Niagara Region hospital funding matrix - long form explanation.docx \(escribemeetings.com\)](#)