



SAVE SOUTH MUSKOKA HOSPITAL COMMITTEE

January 24, 2025

Mr. Jason Cole
Chair, SSMHC

VIA EMAIL

Hon. Premier Doug Ford
(premier@ontario.ca)

Honorable Ms. Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health
(sylvia.jones@ontario.ca)

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Dear Premier Ford and Hon. Ms. Jones:

Re: Required Changes to the Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare's Capital Redevelopment Functional Plan Submission (Stage 1.3) to the Ministry of Health

I write to you as the Chair of the Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee (SSMHC) and on behalf of this healthcare advocacy group with over 200 active members in Muskoka. Specifically, **the SSMHC is requesting a meeting with the Minister of Health to advise on significant changes to the hospital redevelopment plan submitted by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) to the Ministry.** We have grave concerns about the process that MAHC has advanced. Taxpayers in Ontario and Muskoka should not be burdened with an expensive hospital redevelopment (estimated >\$1.3 Billion) that does not address healthcare for the identified population and demographics of South Muskoka.

In response to the affront by MAHC to both common sense and the core principles of healthcare planning through its Stage 1.3 (Functional Planning) approach, the SSMHC was formed. **The SSMHC has no confidence in MAHC's approach or its plans.** The SSMHC has gathered more than 14,000 citizens' signatures and have aligned support from the local Chambers of Commerce. We are advocating for the below changes and ask for your assistance to ensure accountability over MAHC's submission during the Stage 1.3 review:

- 1. Increased Acute Care Beds in South Muskoka:** Number of acute care beds at the future South Muskoka site to at least 60 beds
- 2. Care Close to Home:** elimination of mandatory transfer to the Huntsville site for any condition requiring six or more days of inpatient care
- 3. Physician Recruitment and Retention:** Input from local physicians must be obtained and respected in the planning process
- 4. Equitable allocation of ALC:** Allocation of all ALC beds to Huntsville site is short-sited relative to other concerns raised in this list



5. **Site Selection Re-evaluated:** MAHC's selected site in Bracebridge is a retired quarry, with identified poor soil conditions. Remediation costs are grossly unreasonable and this will also impact future expansion possibilities at this site
6. **Transportation Plan (for the Realities of Muskoka):** Ontario Health must mandate MAHC to produce a workable transportation plan that reflects realities of life in Muskoka (i.e. remote communities with high levels of wealth inequality and lack of public transit) in order to support a primary hospital in the northern part of Muskoka away from the majority of the population
7. **Realistic Analysis and Further Public Consultation Concerning Transfer Rates to Huntsville Site:** Additional disclosure, consultation and planning to address transfer rates between hospital sites for public's awareness

As both Hon. Graydon Smith, MPP and Mayor Rick Maloney of Bracebridge can attest, MAHC has shattered community trust. The hospital redevelopments do not provide for sustainable healthcare in South Muskoka. During the Stage 1.3 planning, MAHC ignored reasonable community concerns, including demands for additional transparency and applied reckless disregard for crucial substantive issues as set out in the list above.

As set out in the Province's Hospital Capital Planning and Policy Manual, Ontario Health has the role during to scrutinize MAHC's plan and to ensure that the plan makes sense in accordance with the identified Planning Principles. Further, your government has the deciding authority to approve or deny the costs to construct. The Province and your government must be made aware of MAHC's poor conduct, the unmitigated price tag for these builds, and the rampant concern and opposition in South Muskoka. MAHC's model is premised on grossly inequitable healthcare services and will be highly detrimental to the health, safety and well-being of South Muskoka residents and cottagers alike.

We ask that the province and your government now take a firm stance against permitting MAHC's flawed plan to proceed without substantial changes. Be assured that MAHC lacks broad community support, its process is flawed, and in substance, its plan will bring about worse patient outcomes and will erode healthcare delivery in South Muskoka. The public in Muskoka is engaged on this issue and the SSMHC will continue to ensure that the public is aware of the response to this important appeal. We would ask that you please advise of your availability to meet with myself and other selected delegates of the SSMHC. It would be most helpful if you could please respond before January 31, 2025.

Sincerely,

p.p. 

Mr. Jason Cole
Chair – Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee

- CC:**
- Hon. Graydon Smith, MPP
 - Mayor of Bracebridge, Rick Maloney
 - Mayor of Gravenhurst, Heidi Lorenz
 - Chair Jeff Lehman, District of Muskoka
 - Mayor of Muskoka Lakes, Peter Kelley