



## SAVE SOUTH MUSKOKA HOSPITAL COMMITTEE

For Immediate Release

### Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee Hosts Successful Public Forum

#### Candidates Endorse Review of South Muskoka Hospital Redevelopment Plans to “Get it Right” With Fairness

**Bracebridge, ON – February 25, 2025** – The Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee (SSMHC) successfully hosted a Public Forum on Saturday that provided an invaluable platform for local candidates in the provincial election to engage with the community. The event, which drew an enthusiastic crowd and online presence from across the region, allowed candidates to address respective healthcare platforms and the Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) hospital redevelopment plans for the two new hospitals in Muskoka. A recording of the event remains in high circulation with over 5,000 views on social media.

In attendance at the event was Matt Richter of the Green Party and Jim Ronholm of the New Democratic Party. The SSMHC invited and offered accommodations to all of the main political parties in the riding to ensure a balanced and fair platform. Graydon Smith, the Progressive Conservative candidate, and David Innes, the Liberal candidate, each declined to attend.

As a critical election issue, the public forum focused on healthcare across the riding, including healthcare sustainability, transparency and structure of hospital boards, infrastructure improvements, hospitals and local economic vitality, and doctor recruitment and retention. Particular concerns around the MAHC Made in Muskoka model were also addressed, including the site selection, transportation concerns, access to acute care, and the serious challenges that the model poses for patient outcomes to residents and visitors alike in South Muskoka.

The candidates each expressed their strong commitment to South Muskoka Hospital and to reviewing the current redevelopment plans to ensure that the healthcare needs of the growing community are properly supported locally. Significantly, each candidate committed to a review of the number of beds allotted to the future South Muskoka Hospital, with Jim Ronholm supporting the plan proposed by the local doctors of having at least 60 acute care beds in South Muskoka. The candidates were critical of the current government and the incumbent MPP, Graydon Smith, in terms of how healthcare has been managed. Matt Richter advised attendees that he, not Mr. Smith, was the community leader that advocated for action on the hospital capital redevelopment plans in 2022 while the plans otherwise lay dormant.

The candidates identified that the provincial funding for the hospital redevelopments is secure and that this funding commitment is not at odds with taking the time to ensure that the MAHC redevelopment model is subject to further review to address the community’s concerns. Each candidate offered guidance to attendees that adjustments to the MAHC model will need to come through a solution for all of Muskoka, as supported by the public, and based in fairness. Each recommended that the discussion avoid a divisive north vs. south approach, to applause from the audience.



"We are encouraged by the positive responses and thoughtful discussions that took place today for the community to hear from the candidates so they could make an informed decision when they cast their vote," said Jason Cole, Chair of the SSMHC. "This event has shown that healthcare is a top priority for our community, and it's clear that the future of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is in good hands with leaders who are dedicated to supporting its growth and ensuring it continues to serve our community for years to come."

"We're thrilled to have created an open space where residents could engage directly with the candidates," said Cole. "Today, we've strengthened the voices of our community and sent a clear message that the preservation and enhancement of South Muskoka Hospital is not just a priority, but a necessity."

SSMHC would like to thank Matt Richter and Jim Ronholm for their participation, as well as the local residents, volunteers, and event sponsors who made this forum possible. Special recognition is due to the Norwood Theatre (Brian & Gina) for the generous use of the venue. SSMHC remains dedicated to advocating for the ongoing support and expansion of the South Muskoka Hospital, ensuring it remains a cornerstone of healthcare in our region.

For more information about the SSMHC and its ongoing initiatives, please visit [ssmh.ca](http://ssmh.ca). For those who wish to view the public forum recording, please visit our [Facebook page](#).

### **About the Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee:**

The Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee (SSMHC) is a non-profit corporation comprised of local residents, healthcare professionals, and community leaders advocating for the preservation, improvement, and expansion of South Muskoka Hospital. SSMHC advocates for two mid-sized hospitals offering equitable access to care for residents in both South Muskoka and Huntsville.

SSMHC membership is open to volunteers who are passionate about advocating for local, accessible, equitable and high-quality healthcare delivery at two acute care hospital sites that provide essential services and meets the growing healthcare needs of the region.

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