



SAVE SOUTH MUSKOKA HOSPITAL COMMITTEE

June 2, 2025

RESPONSE TO MAHC'S UPDATE ON THE CLOSURE OF THE OBSTETRICS (CHILD BIRTHING) UNIT AT SOUTH MUSKOKA HOSPITAL

Last week, Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) updated the public on its process to address the closure of obstetrical (OB) delivery services at the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital.¹ In March, the OB unit was closed and OB services consolidated at the Huntsville Hospital site. The Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee (SSMHC) remains deeply concerned about this critical situation and the risks for year-round and seasonal residents and visitors to South Muskoka. **MAHC's recent announcement provides no firm details on its progress for a plan or timeline as to when the OB delivery services will resume** despite the seriousness of this situation. This is yet another step backwards for equitable access to care in our region.

MAHC's decision to remove OB delivery services from South Muskoka is not only short-sighted - it is dangerous. Removing OB delivery from South Muskoka forces expectant mothers to travel greater distances to access care at a time when every minute matters. This closure disproportionately impacts rural families and communities, low-income residents, and those without reliable transportation, creating unnecessary health risks for mothers and newborns alike.

Local healthcare professionals are also frustrated and the offering of only "emergency obstetrical" services is not an acceptable alternative. This band-aid approach does little to mitigate the **serious and significant risks, including mortality, that are now at an all-time high** for mothers and children without ready access to specialized obstetrical care. This approach places Emergency department staff at higher risk of burnout and exposure to unnecessary emotional trauma.

The public's trust in MAHC is further eroded: there was no consultation with the community prior to the removal of OB delivery services, and MAHC has again ignored the many community voices who have advocated passionately for robust OB services. **The public has repeatedly underscored the importance of access to OB delivery services in South Muskoka.** SSMHC continues to assert that it has no trust that MAHC will reinstate the OB unit in South Muskoka and we would encourage our community representatives, elected officials and the public to demand that MAHC apply its "best efforts" for the prompt return of OB services in South Muskoka without delay in recognition of the importance of these vital lifesaving services.

SSMHC calls on MAHC to **reverse this decision as a top organizational priority** and to provide full details of its commitment to restore and maintain full obstetrical services in South Muskoka without further delay as part of a sustainable, equitable healthcare system for all of Muskoka.

- Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee

¹ www.mahc.ca/news/post/mahc-obstetrics-program-planning-ongoing-with-system-partners/