



SAVE SOUTH MUSKOKA HOSPITAL COMMITTEE

March 19, 2026

Promises Versus Reality: Confirmed Major Gaps Between MAHC's Public Promises and Recently-Obtained FOI Planning Documents

On behalf of the Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee (SSMHC), I am writing to share public access to key official planning documents that confirm what the SSMHC have warned about since January 2024: **the Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) hospital redevelopments are planned to proceed far short of the public commitments.** These documents, recently obtained through Freedom of Information, provide technical proof of serious deficiencies that the SSMHC has long flagged. Specifically, SSMHC was provided the Stantec Reportⁱ concerning the proposed South Muskoka hospital site and the "Made in Muskoka" Stage 1.3 Functional Plan submission by MAHC to the Ministry of Health.

These documents were obtained through a formal Freedom of Information request and subsequent appeal to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, following a year long process that has been resisted by MAHC. Although partially redacted - an issue we continue to assess and pursue with MAHC - they nevertheless provide critical insights that MAHC has refused to share with the public for months, even as community members repeatedly asked for transparency.

In the interest of public awareness and informed decision-making around the proposed hospital redevelopments – Muskoka's largest public infrastructure project ever - we are providing these documents for public access. We strongly encourage reviewing these materials carefully. These documents would not be public if it were not for a forced process and the efforts of the SSMHC.

A. Promises versus Reality: Major Gaps Analysis



Our ongoing analysis has identified several significant discrepancies between public statements and the technical plans. These findings confirm the concerns raised with MAHC months ago – concerns that have been dismissed or minimized. The points below are based on what the documents actually say:

1. No Preservation of Obstetrics (OB) Services at South Muskoka Hospital (SMMH)

MAHC publicly committed to preserving obstetrical services at SMMHⁱⁱ. However, the Stage 1.3 Functional Plan submission indicates something very different. Instead, it proposes a single Labour, Delivery, Recovery, and Postpartum (LDRP) room located adjacent to and supported by the Emergency Department, without a dedicated unit or staff based at the South Muskoka site. This represents a substantial reduction in specialized maternity care for the South Muskoka community – and is a direct contradiction of MAHC's public assurances that OB services would be preserved going forward.

2. Significant Infrastructure Needs and Site Viability Concerns (300 Pine Street)

The Stantec Report outlines several critical infrastructure challenges associated with the proposed Pine Street site that MAHC has not adequately addressed and which would require additional taxpayer expenditure, including:

- Required Pumping Station Upgrades at Multiple Sites
- Substantial grading requirements, including to support sewer infrastructure
- Deficient water supply for required fire-mitigation flow, with the ongoing cost of additional onsite mitigation facilities

Additionally, less than half of the proposed site is usable. That is, only about 22 of the 47 acres at the Pine Street location appear to be developable due to the presence of a deep gravel pit and the site's topography will require extensive preparation. These factors raise fundamental concerns regarding the financial feasibility and suitability of the proposed location – questions that SSMHC has raised publicly and which remain unanswered by MAHC. For instance, it is now clear that the site poses limits on any future hospital expansion due to the substantial cost of remediating the deep gravel pit.

3. Broader Planning and Hospital Sustainability Concerns

Further key points confirmed in the FOI documents include:

- Disregard for local physician concerns: Local physicians identified OB servicers as essential to maintaining a sustainable South Muskoka hospital, however, MAHC's removal of this service undermines the professional judgment and ongoing support of the very doctors on whom the viability of this South Muskoka hospital depends
- Insufficient acute care bed capacity to meet projected population growth in South Muskoka
- South Muskoka site relegated to short-stay, ambulatory care, diagnostics and emergency care facility – **services that will face systemic pressure for staffing and resources by an unbalanced, larger hospital in Huntsville** and resulting patient-sought access to robust services out of the MAHC system in facilities to the south, undermining the sustainability of the South Muskoka hospital long-term
- Complete removal of all longer-stay beds outside of South Muskoka, including transitional care and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) patients – **eliminating continuity of care for vulnerable seniors and others**
- Unreasonable reliance on ambulance transfers without demonstrated feasibility
- Reference to a clear need for a transportation system for patients and families, with no clear plan regarding responsibility, implementation, or funding

These findings confirm serious deficiencies about the long-term sustainability, accessibility, and equity of healthcare services in our region. This is not the comprehensive healthcare plan the community was promised.

B. Access to FOI Records – SSMHC Website

Transparency and access to accurate information are essential to maintaining public trust. MAHC has withheld these documents; we are releasing them today. Only with the factual and technical information can the public make decisions about the future of healthcare in Muskoka in the best interests of the community — and hold leadership accountable for the promises that have been made and the reality revealed by the planning documents.

The reports are proof. We were right to ask questions. We were right to push for transparency. The reports can be accessed on the SSMHC website using the link identified.

SSMHC has created a special campaign and website to highlight the identified major gaps in the MAHC “Made in Muskoka” redevelopment plans

www.ssmh.ca/FOI

C. Engagement and Next Steps

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these findings further and we are available to answer any questions about both the content of the reports and the process through which they were obtained. This is not over - this is our moment to ensure the community’s legitimate concerns reach decision-makers locally, at the Ministry of Health, and at Queen’s Park. We continue to encourage direct engagement with the Premier’s office on these issues (premier@ontario.ca). With substantial public funds at stake and resulting significant impacts on South Muskoka’s health and economic well-being, these plans warrant the urgent attention of our senior leaders.

Please plan to attend our next public gathering on Saturday, May 23, 2026 at 10 a.m. at the Norwood Theatre in Bracebridge to coordinate next steps.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to equitable healthcare for Muskoka.

Sincerely,

Jason Cole

Chair, Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee

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P.S. – MAHC has had these documents for over 18 months. They knew about the public interest. They chose not to share them. Ask yourself: What else is MAHC not telling us?

ⁱ Stantec Consulting Services Inc., *Stantec USI – Stage 1.3 Site Selection Report (Redacted, March 2, 2026)*. Prepared for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (May 9, 2023) (the “Stantec Report”)

ⁱⁱ Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, April 8, 2024, “MAHC Announces Changes to Future Hospital Plans” (online) <https://madeinmuskokahealthcare.ca/news-updates/2024/04/08/mahc-announces-changes-to-future-hospital-plans/>