2026 Municipal Election
Candidate Questionnaire Results

Bracebridge

About these results

The Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee (SSMHC) invited municipal election candidates to state their positions on issues affecting the future of hospital care in South Muskoka. Candidate responses are presented to help residents understand where candidates stand. Written comments are reproduced as submitted; SSMHC has not interpreted or paraphrased candidates' positions.

At-a-glance key: Yes - No - Undecided / Need more information - Written response - Statement provided. 'Written response' means the candidate supplied a narrative response rather than selecting one of the offered choices. 'Statement provided' means the candidate did not complete the questionnaire but supplied a written statement for publication.

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Candidates Who Did Not Submit a Response

The following candidates were invited to complete the SSMHC 2026 Municipal Election Candidate Questionnaire but did not submit a completed questionnaire or written statement by the stated deadline.

Bracebridge

Ward 1 Councillor

Brian Koehn

Debbie Vernon

Ward 2 Councillor

Barry Hammond

Ward 4 Councillor (Draper)

Laura Craig

Ward 5 Councillor

Barb McMurray

Bracebridge

Bracebridge - At-a-Glance

Mayor

Issue	Norm Raynor	Rick Maloney
1. Equitable access	Yes	Written response
2. Minimum 60 acute-care beds	No	Written response
3. Local acute-care services	Yes	Written response
4. Equitable ALC resources	Yes	Written response
5a. Fully functioning obstetrics	Yes	Written response
5b. Obstetrics affects support	Yes	Written response
6. Population & seasonal demand	Yes	Written response
7. Transparency & disclosure	Yes	Written response
8. Pine Street site demonstrated	No	Written response
9. Municipal funding if plan inadequate	No	Written response
10a. Active municipal advocacy	Yes	Written response
10b. Support municipal resolutions	Yes	Written response
11. Current MAHC model adequate/equitable	No	Written response

District Council

Issue	Brenda Rhodes	Christian McEachran Morin	Don Smith	Tatiana Sutherland
1. Equitable access	Written response	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Minimum 60 acute-care beds	Written response	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. Local acute-care services	Written response	Yes	Yes	Yes
4. Equitable ALC resources	Written response	Undecided / Need more information	Undecided / Need more information	Yes
5a. Fully functioning obstetrics	Written response	Undecided / Need more information	Yes	Yes
5b. Obstetrics affects support	Written response	Undecided / Need more information	Undecided / Need more information	Yes
6. Population & seasonal demand	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7. Transparency & disclosure	Written response	Yes	Yes	Yes
8. Pine Street site demonstrated	Written response	Undecided / Need more information	Undecided / Need more information	Undecided / Need more information
9. Municipal funding if plan inadequate	Written response	No	No	Undecided / Need more information
10a. Active municipal advocacy	Written response	Yes	Yes	Yes
10b. Support municipal resolutions	Written response	Yes	Yes	Yes
11. Current MAHC model adequate/equitable	Written response	Undecided / Need more information	Undecided / Need more information	Undecided / Need more information

Municipal / Ward Council

Issue	Andrew Struthers Macaulay Ward	CINDY WATERS Draper Ward	Donna Kearney Macaulay Ward
1. Equitable access	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Minimum 60 acute-care beds	Undecided / Need more information	Yes	Undecided / Need more information
3. Local acute-care services	Yes	Yes	Yes
4. Equitable ALC resources	Undecided / Need more information	Yes	Yes
5a. Fully functioning obstetrics	Yes	Yes	Yes
5b. Obstetrics affects support	Yes	Yes	Yes
6. Population & seasonal demand	Yes	Yes	Undecided / Need more information
7. Transparency & disclosure	Yes	Yes	Yes
8. Pine Street site demonstrated	Undecided / Need more information	No	Undecided / Need more information
9. Municipal funding if plan inadequate	No	No	No
10a. Active municipal advocacy	Yes	Yes	Yes
10b. Support municipal resolutions	Yes	Yes	Yes
11. Current MAHC model adequate/equitable	Undecided / Need more information	No	No

Bracebridge - Detailed Candidate Responses

Candidates are grouped by office sought. Responses below are reproduced from the submitted questionnaire. Email addresses, timestamps and the candidate declaration are not included in this public presentation.

Mayor

Norm Raynor

Mayor

1. Equitable Access to Hospital Care

Do you believe residents of South Muskoka should have equitable access to acute hospital care comparable to residents elsewhere in Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

MAHC has already removed obstetrics from South Muskoka, they also plan to remove ALC beds. This is not acceptable considering the fact our population is increasing and they do not supply any logical or medical reasons for this. If you can have a baby in Huntsville then why not Bracebridge? MAHC has never used fact based evidence in these decisions.

2. South Muskoka's Future Acute-Care Capacity

Do you support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital to better address current utilization, projected population growth, seasonal demand and future healthcare needs?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

I will advocate for more than 60 beds, especially since our population will keep growing. We have access to 1billion dollars. West Lincoln Memorial opened last year with 55 beds at a cost of $250 million. Do the math.

3. Access to Hospital Services Close to Home

Do you believe the future hospital model should provide South Muskoka residents with appropriate acute-care services locally and minimize routine transfers to Huntsville that occur because of limitations in South Muskoka's capacity or allocation of services?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Clearly hospital management is Huntsville focused, and is intentionally depleting service at SMMH.

4. Transitional / Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Do you support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities rather than concentrating these resources at one site?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

MAHC has totally ignored the fact that people in ALC are old and their loved ones are old. How easy is it for an elderly person from Kilworthy to get to Huntsville? People in ALC will nor get better any quicker in Huntsville, they are waiting to get to a retirement home. plain and simple.

5. Obstetrical Care

Do you support maintaining a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital so that South Muskoka families are not routinely required to travel elsewhere for maternity care?

Selection: Yes

Would the absence of a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital affect your support for the proposed redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

No need to explain!

6. Population Growth and Seasonal Demand

Do you believe the capacity of the future South Muskoka hospital should account for projected permanent population growth, Muskoka's aging population, significant seasonal population increases and anticipated future healthcare demand?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

No need to explain

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

Do you believe MAHC should publicly disclose the information, assumptions and supporting evidence used to make major decisions regarding hospital capacity, allocation of services between the two sites, site-development requirements and costs, and projected patient transfers — and provide meaningful opportunities for public questions and input before major decisions are finalized?

Selection: Yes

8. Pine Street Site and Future Expansion

Do you believe MAHC has adequately demonstrated that the selected Pine Street site can accommodate the proposed hospital, necessary site-development requirements and reasonable future expansion in a financially responsible manner?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

MAHC did not select Pine Street, the Town of Bracebridge selected the site, which they bought from Fowler Contruction. It is not serviced and it will need an exceptional amount of work to make it usable as a hospital site. Why did the town not fight to have the hospital stay where it is?

9. Municipal Taxpayer Funding

Would you support committing municipal taxpayer funding to the hospital redevelopment if you were not satisfied that the final plan provides adequate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

I will not support paying the same amount as Huntsville for less hospital. The cost per bed and services would have to be calculated by beds and services.

10. Municipal Advocacy & Action

If elected, will you actively advocate throughout your term to MAHC, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Province of Ontario for a hospital redevelopment model that provides equitable access to acute hospital care for South Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Would you support municipal resolutions, where appropriate, calling upon MAHC and/or the Province of Ontario to address concerns regarding the hospital redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate response / actions:

I will call MAHC back to the table to demand a more equitable plan.

I will contact the Minister of Health and explain the serious flaws in MAHC's plans

I will be in discussion with the other south Muskoka municipalities to have them get on board with our concerns.

11. Do You Support the Current MAHC Redevelopment Model?

Based on the information currently available to you, do you believe the proposed MAHC redevelopment model provides adequate and equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

No explanation needed

Rick Maloney

Mayor

1. Equitable Access to Hospital Care

Do you believe residents of South Muskoka should have equitable access to acute hospital care comparable to residents elsewhere in Muskoka?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

Equitable access means residents receive appropriate hospital care regardless of where they live. It doesn't require identical services at both sites. Stage 1.3 is a physician-supported model providing 46 inpatient beds and 27 emergency-department treatment spaces in Bracebridge; a 145% increase in emergency capacity. We are positioned to receive more than half a billion dollars in investment for a new hospital in Bracebridge, equivalent to more than seven Muskoka Lumber Community Centres. We must continue advocating for the best possible services while protecting this once-in-a-generation opportunity for South Muskoka.

2. South Muskoka's Future Acute-Care Capacity

Do you support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital to better address current utilization, projected population growth, seasonal demand and future healthcare needs?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

I support hospital capacity based on population growth, seasonal demand and clinical evidence, not simply a predetermined number. South Muskoka physicians concluded that 46 acute-care beds could meet basic needs and supported moving Stage 1.3 forward, while emphasizing future expansion. We are at the front of the line for a new Bracebridge hospital representing over half a billion dollars in investment. I don't want South Muskoka pushed to the back of that line. We must protect this opportunity while continuing to advocate for sufficient capacity and flexibility to meet future needs.

3. Access to Hospital Services Close to Home

Do you believe the future hospital model should provide South Muskoka residents with appropriate acute-care services locally and minimize routine transfers to Huntsville that occur because of limitations in South Muskoka's capacity or allocation of services?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

Residents should receive appropriate acute care close to home, with unnecessary transfers minimized. Stage 1.3 evolved significantly following physician and community input and ultimately received the support of South Muskoka physicians. The Bracebridge site will remain an acute-care hospital within a coordinated two-site system. Some transfers for specialized services will remain necessary, as they are today. My focus is ensuring South Muskoka has strong local hospital services, supported by our physicians, while securing this historic investment in our community.

4. Transitional / Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Do you support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities rather than concentrating these resources at one site?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

I support appropriate access to transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) services within an integrated Muskoka health-care system. The priority must be ensuring patients receive the right care in the right setting while protecting acute-care beds for those who need them. This requires collaboration among MAHC, the District, community health-

care providers and the Province. As redevelopment progresses, these services must continue to be evaluated to meet the needs of our growing and aging population.

5. Obstetrical Care

Do you support maintaining a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital so that South Muskoka families are not routinely required to travel elsewhere for maternity care?

Selection: Written response

Would the absence of a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital affect your support for the proposed redevelopment model?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

I strongly support obstetrical services at the future South Muskoka hospital. MAHC has assured the Town that Stage 1.3 includes an obstetrical unit in Bracebridge. Families should have access to maternity care close to home whenever safely possible. I also support restoring currently suspended obstetrical services as soon as staffing permits. With redevelopment still years away, continued physician involvement and community engagement will be essential to protecting and strengthening these services.

6. Population Growth and Seasonal Demand

Do you believe the capacity of the future South Muskoka hospital should account for projected permanent population growth, Muskoka's aging population, significant seasonal population increases and anticipated future healthcare demand?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

Hospital planning must recognize permanent and seasonal population growth, an aging population and changing health-care needs. South Muskoka physicians supported Stage 1.3 while emphasizing the importance of future expansion. We must ensure the new hospital can adapt as our community grows. We also have an opportunity to strengthen health care today through physician recruitment, expanded primary care and the transformation of the former Georgian College campus into a Muskoka Health and Wellness Centre. We need to plan for tomorrow while improving access to care today.

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

Do you believe MAHC should publicly disclose the information, assumptions and supporting evidence used to make major decisions regarding hospital capacity, allocation of services between the two sites, site-development requirements and costs, and projected patient transfers — and provide meaningful opportunities for public questions and input before major decisions are finalized?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

I have always believed in open dialogue, and I have never turned down a meeting with Save South Muskoka Hospital. I worked to bring our South Muskoka physicians and MAHC together to address concerns and find a path forward. More recently, at Save South Muskoka Hospital's (SSMH) request, I arranged and will facilitate a meeting with MAHC leadership and SSMH so that SSMH concerns can be discussed directly. I respect the commitment of residents advocating for our hospital, even when we disagree. Meaningful engagement, transparency and continued dialogue are essential as this important project moves forward.

8. Pine Street Site and Future Expansion

Do you believe MAHC has adequately demonstrated that the selected Pine Street site can accommodate the proposed hospital, necessary site-development requirements and reasonable future expansion in a financially responsible manner?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

The Muskoka Beach Road site would have required substantially greater municipal investment in roads, sidewalks, active transportation and transit connections than the Pines Street site. That's $8 to $12 million that would fall to the Bracebridge taxpayer. MAHC's site-selection process considered accessibility, servicing, environmental and technical requirements, and costs. Additional due diligence examined geotechnical, hydrogeological and environmental conditions. MAHC selected 300 Pine Street as its preferred location. My focus is ensuring this site can accommodate a modern hospital that meets South Muskoka's needs today, allows for future expansion and represents a responsible long-term investment in our community.

9. Municipal Taxpayer Funding

Would you support committing municipal taxpayer funding to the hospital redevelopment if you were not satisfied that the final plan provides adequate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

The Town's $10-million commitment is conditional and capped, recognizing the significant benefits a new hospital will bring to Bracebridge. Council can reconsider that commitment if there is a substantive change to the project's scope or structure. This municipal contribution will help secure an unprecedented provincial investment in local health care, bringing modern facilities, improved services and significant economic benefits to our community. Our responsibility is to protect residents' interests, ensure value for our investment and help move this once-in-a-generation project forward.

10. Municipal Advocacy & Action

If elected, will you actively advocate throughout your term to MAHC, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Province of Ontario for a hospital redevelopment model that provides equitable access to acute hospital care for South Muskoka?

Selection: Written response

Would you support municipal resolutions, where appropriate, calling upon MAHC and/or the Province of Ontario to address concerns regarding the hospital redevelopment model?

Selection: Written response

Candidate response / actions:

> I will continue working with our physicians, MAHC, SSMH and the Province to secure the best possible hospital for South Muskoka. I'm the only South Muskoka mayor who has met regularly with the SSMG Committee, and I remain committed to constructive dialogue. We are at the front of the line for a new hospital in Bracebridge that representing more than half a billion dollars in investment. I don't want our community pushed to the back of that line when there are more than 50 other municipalities in Ontario who are advocating for new hospitals. We must keep moving forward, advocate for future capacity and strengthen health care today through expanded primary care, physician recruitment and community health services like the Muskoka Health and Wellness Centre will offer in the former Georgian College Campus.

11. Do You Support the Current MAHC Redevelopment Model?

Based on the information currently available to you, do you believe the proposed MAHC redevelopment model provides adequate and equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

The original redevelopment models lacked South Muskoka physician support. Stage 1.3 is substantially different, providing 46 inpatient beds (a 360 % increase from MAHC's first public submission) and increasing emergency treatment spaces from 11 to 27—a 145% increase. Our physicians concluded that this 73-total bed plan could meet basic acute-care needs, with future expansion options. I supported their recommendation to move forward. We are

now at the front of the line for a new hospital representing over half a billion dollars in investment in a new hospital for Bracebridge. I won't risk losing that opportunity, but I will continue advocating for the services and capacity South Muskoka needs.

District Council

Brenda Rhodes

District Council

1. Equitable Access to Hospital Care

Do you believe residents of South Muskoka should have equitable access to acute hospital care comparable to residents elsewhere in Muskoka?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

While many of these questions fall outside municipal jurisdiction, ensuring we avoid duplication, embrace innovation, and that we have a plan for the future is my focus. I firmly believe all Muskoka residents deserve access to quality hospital care, delivered through a model that keeps as many services as possible right here in Muskoka. Families should be able to get the care they need close to home, without having to travel to communities outside our district.

2. South Muskoka's Future Acute-Care Capacity

Do you support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital to better address current utilization, projected population growth, seasonal demand and future healthcare needs?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

In Ontario hospitial planning relies on provincial formulas, using Ministry of Finance data, to determine bed numbers. when MAHC Board members presented to council, we questioned those figures, and they shared our concerns, committing to monitor the situation and advocate for adjustments with the Ministry if needed. The Mayor and I remain engaged in open, constructive dialogue with all stakeholders to track progress and address concerns - assuming I return to this role. The physicians concluded that 46 acute car beds and 27 emergency beds in Bracebridge woudl work and I support their expert opinions.

3. Access to Hospital Services Close to Home

Do you believe the future hospital model should provide South Muskoka residents with appropriate acute-care services locally and minimize routine transfers to Huntsville that occur because of limitations in South Muskoka's capacity or allocation of services?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

While transfer and transportation logistics between the two hospitals still need to be worked out - and there is time, MAHC has assured us they will minimize transfers under the two-site model. Decisions will be made case by cae: a patient who is only a day from discharge would stay put, while someone needing extended rehab could be sent to Huntsville for full rehabilitation, helping them return home sooner. I'm encouraged that, at our last District meeting, staff confirmed conversations with the hospital about transportation are already underway.

4. Transitional / Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Do you support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities rather than concentrating these resources at one site?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

Creating centres of excellence in specific disciplines makes great sense. It helps us attract and retain health care professionals by allowing them to focus on the areas they are most passionate about. My priority is bringing more services that work for all of Muskoka right here to Muskoka, including a reactivation centre that offers rehabilitation and support so people can return to their homes - like what is proposed in this new model. Collaboration among

MAHC, the District, and other providers is already reducing the number of ALC patients in our hospital. I firmly believe peole deserve care in the right setting.

5. Obstetrical Care

Do you support maintaining a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital so that South Muskoka families are not routinely required to travel elsewhere for maternity care?

Selection: Written response

Would the absence of a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital affect your support for the proposed redevelopment model?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

I strongly support obstetrics services at the South Muskoka site. The Mayor and I have met with MAHC and physicians to discuss this directly, as we have been assured that the model includes obstetrics in Bracebridge, along with a specialized women's clinic. As we have done throughout this term, we will keep meeting with all stakeholders and listen to the community as we await the Province's response to the 1.3 submission and aas we move forward over the years.

6. Population Growth and Seasonal Demand

Do you believe the capacity of the future South Muskoka hospital should account for projected permanent population growth, Muskoka's aging population, significant seasonal population increases and anticipated future healthcare demand?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Yes, as noted in my answer to question two. As community leaders, we must keep seeking partnerships, like the one we have built at the former Georgian College site, and attract auxiliary services that support the hospital and care for people in more appropriate, economical settings. In about 18 months, that site will become home to turnkey doctors' offices, a family medicine training centre (about 70% of students stay in the community where they train), a dentist, a pharmacy and a snack shop, with room to grow. Attracting services like these are essential to our communities health and wellbeing, especially as we grow.

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

Do you believe MAHC should publicly disclose the information, assumptions and supporting evidence used to make major decisions regarding hospital capacity, allocation of services between the two sites, site-development requirements and costs, and projected patient transfers — and provide meaningful opportunities for public questions and input before major decisions are finalized?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

Transparency and open communication are always my top priorities in this role. As with some Council matters, some elements of a plan can't be discussed publicly until the specifics are finalilzed. The Mayor and I have held numerous meeting with all stakeholders and will continue to listen and facilitate discussion. MAHC is an independent Board that operates with autonomy, guided by provincial regulators like the Ministry of Health and the Hospital Capital Planning and Policy Manual. I'm committed to keeping the conversation open with our community and stakeholders as this plan unfolds over the years ahead.

8. Pine Street Site and Future Expansion

Do you believe MAHC has adequately demonstrated that the selected Pine Street site can accommodate the proposed hospital, necessary site-development requirements and reasonable future expansion in a financially responsible manner?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

As noted aboe, MAHC is an independent Board that has been working with the Ministry of Health on the 1.3 submission. They independently selected 300 Pine Street, a site of about 45 acres, as the most appropriate location. The new hospital, including the main building, outpatient clinics, emergency access bays, utility infrastructure and surface parking, is expected to use under half the site, leaving ample room for future expansion. The Province will also evaluate the site as part of the submission. From our perspective, this location requires significantly less municipal investment in sidewalks, transit and active transportation, since linkages are already closer.

9. Municipal Taxpayer Funding

Would you support committing municipal taxpayer funding to the hospital redevelopment if you were not satisfied that the final plan provides adequate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

If the project's scope or structure changes substantively, Council should revisit and debate our commitment. Our $10 million contribution has helped secure a major provincial investment in local health care, including 73 beds. The result will be more services close to home and a real boost for our small businesses, restaurants and shops. An opportunity this size is rare, and we must work, within reason, to find a way forward that protects it.

10. Municipal Advocacy & Action

If elected, will you actively advocate throughout your term to MAHC, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Province of Ontario for a hospital redevelopment model that provides equitable access to acute hospital care for South Muskoka?

Selection: Written response

Would you support municipal resolutions, where appropriate, calling upon MAHC and/or the Province of Ontario to address concerns regarding the hospital redevelopment model?

Selection: Written response

Candidate response / actions:

> As noted above, I will continue, together with the Mayor (if re-elected to the same position), to meet with MAHC, stakeholders and community members, listening closely and helping build understanding and a shared path forward. I will advocate for a model that avoids duplication and embraces innovation, one that works for South Muskoka and for Muskoka as a whole, both as a health care solution and as an economic driver. I have given more than three actions above.

11. Do You Support the Current MAHC Redevelopment Model?

Based on the information currently available to you, do you believe the proposed MAHC redevelopment model provides adequate and equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents?

Selection: Written response

Candidate comments:

I fully support the one hospital, two sites model. It creates exciting opportunities for services we don't have today and invites new, innovative ways of working. Technologies like wearable biosensors, robotic assisted surgery, AI early warning systems and virtual care are already reducing the need for long stays, and with years until our hospital opens, the next breakthrough is hard to imagine, but is coming. Change can be scary when it comes to our health, but a new flexible facility that is ready and built for advancements is what we need to ensure we meet our community's future needs.

Christian McEachran Morin

District Councillor

1. Equitable Access to Hospital Care

Do you believe residents of South Muskoka should have equitable access to acute hospital care comparable to residents elsewhere in Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Acute health care should be accessible and equitable for all members of a public health care system. I'd go as far as to say it should be one of the foundations of public health care.

2. South Muskoka's Future Acute-Care Capacity

Do you support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital to better address current utilization, projected population growth, seasonal demand and future healthcare needs?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Without other factors coming into play, I don't see how less beds would better serve a larger population. I understand there is a plan to transfer patients to Huntsville regularly, but I am not sold on the transportation plan yet. I think that needs to be sorted out before we move ahead with the final bed count.

3. Access to Hospital Services Close to Home

Do you believe the future hospital model should provide South Muskoka residents with appropriate acute-care services locally and minimize routine transfers to Huntsville that occur because of limitations in South Muskoka's capacity or allocation of services?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

I am concerned about the transportation plan and would prefer to see 2 self-sustaining hospitals in Muskoka. Time spent in transit is additional risk for the patient, and if EMS is operating at capacity and cannot spare an ambulance for transfers, or the highway is closed due to snow, then patients would not be able to be transferred.

4. Transitional / Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Do you support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities rather than concentrating these resources at one site?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

Alternate Level of Care resources are needed due to the reality of having ALC patients. However, ALC patients do not need hospital care and should be moved to appropriate care elsewhere. I'd rather we invest in community para-medicine and long term care in order to reduce the reliance on ALC beds in the two hospitals.

5. Obstetrical Care

Do you support maintaining a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital so that South Muskoka families are not routinely required to travel elsewhere for maternity care?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Would the absence of a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital affect your support for the proposed redevelopment model?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

I am neither a health professional nor capable of giving birth so I hesitate to opine on obstetrics. That said, I have heard 2 points of view on it from health professionals and mothers while door knocking. The first point of view is that obstetrics is a basic hospital service and we need it. The second is that births are generally planned, so planning for a longer drive to Huntsville is fine, and Bracebridge's emerg will still be able to handle emergency births if needed. I lean more towards the first point of view, but would defer to those with more experience than myself.

6. Population Growth and Seasonal Demand

Do you believe the capacity of the future South Muskoka hospital should account for projected permanent population growth, Muskoka's aging population, significant seasonal population increases and anticipated future healthcare demand?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Madeinmuskokahealthcare.ca indicates that research was done into population growth, aging, and seasonal fluctuation, and should be reflected in the stage 1.3 plan. It feels inconsistent to propose a reduction in beds when faced with population growth though. Again, it seems the plan is reliant on transfers, and I am not yet sold on the transportation plan.

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

Do you believe MAHC should publicly disclose the information, assumptions and supporting evidence used to make major decisions regarding hospital capacity, allocation of services between the two sites, site-development requirements and costs, and projected patient transfers — and provide meaningful opportunities for public questions and input before major decisions are finalized?

Selection: Yes

8. Pine Street Site and Future Expansion

Do you believe MAHC has adequately demonstrated that the selected Pine Street site can accommodate the proposed hospital, necessary site-development requirements and reasonable future expansion in a financially responsible manner?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

Madeinmuskokahealthcare.ca does not include financial information in their "Questions Answered - Site Selection" section. The Stantec report indicates that the Pine St location scored worse in terms of capital redevelopment cost than the Muskoka Beach Rd location. I would like more financial details to assess the fiscal responsibility of the site selection.

9. Municipal Taxpayer Funding

Would you support committing municipal taxpayer funding to the hospital redevelopment if you were not satisfied that the final plan provides adequate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

The proposed hospital plan must satisfy the needs of all of Muskoka's taxpayers before we commit their money to the plan. South Muskoka has voiced concerns over the lack of obstetrics and reduction of beds in Bracebridge. North Muskoka has voiced concerns over cancer treatment and ambulatory care moving to Bracebridge. There is still a disconnect between the services residents expect from their hospitals, and the plan that has been proposed.

10. Municipal Advocacy & Action

If elected, will you actively advocate throughout your term to MAHC, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Province of Ontario for a hospital redevelopment model that provides equitable access to acute hospital care for South Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Would you support municipal resolutions, where appropriate, calling upon MAHC and/or the Province of Ontario to address concerns regarding the hospital redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate response / actions:

I would support advocating to the province via letters from the District and Townships to our MPP and the Minster of Health & Infrastructure.

I would support motions calling on MAHC to address resident concerns in the redevelopment model with clear information.

I would maintain contact with residents throughout the process to ensure my advocacy reflects the residents who rely on our 2 hospitals.

11. Do You Support the Current MAHC Redevelopment Model?

Based on the information currently available to you, do you believe the proposed MAHC redevelopment model provides adequate and equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

The transportation plan is not complete but the stage 1.3 submission relies on transportation between the 2 sites. Reliance on a plan that's not there yet is not adequate for residents of South or North Muskoka. Once the transportation plan is worked out, I'd like to re-asses the overall redevelopment plan.

Don Smith

District Councillor

1. Equitable Access to Hospital Care

Do you believe residents of South Muskoka should have equitable access to acute hospital care comparable to residents elsewhere in Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

While needs may vary for individuals based on their personal circumstances (such as location of residence, age, specific health needs), every effort should be made to treat each resident fairly and reasonably, and with respect.

2. South Muskoka's Future Acute-Care Capacity

Do you support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital to better address current utilization, projected population growth, seasonal demand and future healthcare needs?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

While advocating for more acute care beds should always be a consideration, any advocacy would be better informed if we had a clear indication of the Province's position with regard to the hospital's Stage 1.3 submission and what share of the billion-dollar investment is slated for each site. The longer it takes to come to this position the greater the concerns become in the community.

3. Access to Hospital Services Close to Home

Do you believe the future hospital model should provide South Muskoka residents with appropriate acute-care services locally and minimize routine transfers to Huntsville that occur because of limitations in South Muskoka's capacity or allocation of services?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Providing acute care services locally whenever possible is more convenient and provides greater opportunity for family and family doctor support.

4. Transitional / Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Do you support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities rather than concentrating these resources at one site?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

While I support an equitable allocation of resources, ALC does not necessarily need to be provided in an expensive hospital setting. Steps have already been taken to provide some ALC outside of the hospital in South Muskoka. Our population is aging and will likely outstrip the capacity of both hospital sites to provide this level of care. We need to support the many options that are available, both inside and outside of a hospital setting. Hospitals provide a very high level of ALC which is not required by all ALC patients.

5. Obstetrical Care

Do you support maintaining a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital so that South Muskoka families are not routinely required to travel elsewhere for maternity care?

Selection: Yes

Would the absence of a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital affect your support for the proposed redevelopment model?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

That's a difficult question for me. From personal experience, we would have risked one of our children being born at the side of the road had we needed to travel to Huntsville. However, I would not want to see a new hospital build curtailed because of one service not being provided. Either way, I will continue the strong advocacy that saw the obstetrics service included in the hospital's 1.3 submission to the province. As mentioned previously, a clear indication from the Province as to their position with regard to the hospital's Stage 1.3 submission needs to be released now.

6. Population Growth and Seasonal Demand

Do you believe the capacity of the future South Muskoka hospital should account for projected permanent population growth, Muskoka's aging population, significant seasonal population increases and anticipated future healthcare demand?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

These factors are all key considerations in determining future healthcare needs in Muskoka.

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

Do you believe MAHC should publicly disclose the information, assumptions and supporting evidence used to make major decisions regarding hospital capacity, allocation of services between the two sites, site-development requirements and costs, and projected patient transfers — and provide meaningful opportunities for public questions and input before major decisions are finalized?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Lack of openness and clarity by the hospital with the community on its plans and its submission proposal have been an issue from the outset. This has bred distrust. While there may well be requirements that prevent some items from being made public due to legal negotiations or other constraints, the community is being asked to make a substantial investment through its local share commitment and is deserving of more information.

8. Pine Street Site and Future Expansion

Do you believe MAHC has adequately demonstrated that the selected Pine Street site can accommodate the proposed hospital, necessary site-development requirements and reasonable future expansion in a financially responsible manner?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

While I personally support the selection of the Pine Street site, I believe more information needs to be shared with the public for transparency and to build community trust.

9. Municipal Taxpayer Funding

Would you support committing municipal taxpayer funding to the hospital redevelopment if you were not satisfied that the final plan provides adequate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

Neither the Town nor the District have taken a blank cheque approach to their local share commitments. From my perspective, it is important to see the Province's position on the hospital's Stage 1.3 submission and the future unfolding of plans before any funds are advanced.

10. Municipal Advocacy & Action

If elected, will you actively advocate throughout your term to MAHC, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Province of Ontario for a hospital redevelopment model that provides equitable access to acute hospital care for South Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Would you support municipal resolutions, where appropriate, calling upon MAHC and/or the Province of Ontario to address concerns regarding the hospital redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate response / actions:

Attend public information sessions.

Continue advocacy with the Province.

Continue advocacy at the Town and District.

11. Do You Support the Current MAHC Redevelopment Model?

Based on the information currently available to you, do you believe the proposed MAHC redevelopment model provides adequate and equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

The first and most important piece of information we need is the Province's position regarding the hospital's Stage 1.3 submission. Until then, we won't have clarity on what the plans are for the future. The provision of healthcare is changing on an almost daily basis. Likewise, the estimates of population growth in the District see nearly 50% more permanent residents in Muskoka by the early 2050s. While it's important to move forward with the very substantial investment in new hospitals at both sites, it's equally important that we continue to advocate for the best we can get in South Muskoka.

Tatiana Sutherland

District Council

1. Equitable Access to Hospital Care

Do you believe residents of South Muskoka should have equitable access to acute hospital care comparable to residents elsewhere in Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Yes, absolutely. I believe residents of South Muskoka deserve equitable access to high-quality acute hospital care, regardless of where they live.

Equitable access does not necessarily mean that every hospital must offer identical services, but it does mean that residents should not face diminished access to essential care because of their geography.

I continue to have outstanding concerns about whether the proposed hospital redevelopment model will adequately meet the needs of South Muskoka, both today and as our population grows and ages.

I believe those concerns deserve meaningful answers, and I remain committed to advocating for a healthcare system that serves our entire community.

2. South Muskoka's Future Acute-Care Capacity

Do you support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital to better address current utilization, projected population growth, seasonal demand and future healthcare needs?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Yes. I support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital, provided that this capacity is supported by current utilization data and credible projections of future need.

Hospital planning must account for more than permanent population figures. South Muskoka serves a growing and aging population, as well as significant seasonal demand.

We have an obligation to ensure that the hospital we build today can meet the needs of our community for decades to come. I believe the proposed capacity deserves further scrutiny, and I support continued advocacy to ensure South Muskoka receives the acute-care resources it needs.

3. Access to Hospital Services Close to Home

Do you believe the future hospital model should provide South Muskoka residents with appropriate acute-care services locally and minimize routine transfers to Huntsville that occur because of limitations in South Muskoka's capacity or allocation of services?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Yes. I believe South Muskoka residents should have access to appropriate acute-care services as close to home as possible. While some transfers will always be necessary for specialized treatment, patients should not be routinely transferred to Huntsville simply because essential services or sufficient capacity are unavailable in South Muskoka.

These transfers can place significant burdens on patients and families, particularly seniors and those without reliable transportation.

The future hospital model must reflect the needs of the communities it serves. I believe minimizing avoidable transfers and maintaining meaningful acute-care capacity in South Muskoka should be fundamental priorities in planning our healthcare future.

4. Transitional / Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Do you support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities rather than concentrating these resources at one site?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Yes. I support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities.

I believe strongly in equality of access to healthcare, but that does not necessarily mean an identical allocation of resources. Both North and South Muskoka residents deserve the same standard of care, with resources distributed according to demonstrated needs, population, patient demand and clinical requirements.

For patients who no longer require acute hospital treatment but cannot yet return home, remaining close to family, caregivers and community supports is particularly important.

My position is that neither community should be disadvantaged by how services are distributed. The goal must be equal opportunity to access appropriate care, with sufficient resources in both communities to meet their needs.

5. Obstetrical Care

Do you support maintaining a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital so that South Muskoka families are not routinely required to travel elsewhere for maternity care?

Selection: Yes

Would the absence of a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital affect your support for the proposed redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Yes. I support maintaining obstetrical services at the future South Muskoka hospital, with the staffing, resources and clinical supports necessary to provide safe, reliable maternity care.

Families should be able to access routine obstetrical care close to home, without routinely travelling to another community to give birth. At the same time, patient safety must remain paramount, and some higher-risk pregnancies will require specialized care elsewhere.

I believe the future hospital model must recognize the importance of local maternity services and ensure that South Muskoka families have meaningful, dependable access to them.

6. Population Growth and Seasonal Demand

Do you believe the capacity of the future South Muskoka hospital should account for projected permanent population growth, Muskoka's aging population, significant seasonal population increases and anticipated future healthcare demand?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

The future South Muskoka hospital must be designed to serve the community we are becoming, not simply the community we are today.

That means accounting for permanent population growth, an aging population, significant seasonal increases and changing healthcare needs over the coming decades.

A hospital is a generational investment. We need to ensure that the decisions made today do not leave future residents facing inadequate capacity or costly expansions that could have been anticipated through responsible long-term planning.

I believe our hospital planning must be forward-looking, evidence-based and sufficiently flexible to accommodate future demand.

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

Do you believe MAHC should publicly disclose the information, assumptions and supporting evidence used to make major decisions regarding hospital capacity, allocation of services between the two sites, site-development requirements and costs, and projected patient transfers — and provide meaningful opportunities for public questions and input before major decisions are finalized?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Decisions of this magnitude must be supported by transparent, publicly accessible evidence. Residents deserve to understand not only what decisions are being made, but how and why they are being made.

This includes the assumptions behind hospital capacity, service allocation, development costs and anticipated patient transfers.

Meaningful public consultation must also be more than an opportunity to comment on decisions that have effectively already been made. Questions deserve substantive answers, concerns must be taken seriously, and public input should have a genuine opportunity to influence outcomes.

Transparency and accountability are not obstacles to good decision-making. They are essential to it, particularly when public confidence and the future of our healthcare system are at stake.

8. Pine Street Site and Future Expansion

Do you believe MAHC has adequately demonstrated that the selected Pine Street site can accommodate the proposed hospital, necessary site-development requirements and reasonable future expansion in a financially responsible manner?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

A project of this magnitude requires clear, publicly accessible evidence that the selected site can accommodate not only the proposed hospital, but the infrastructure, servicing and future expansion that will be required.

I believe residents deserve a transparent accounting of site-development costs, potential constraints and the assumptions underlying long-term expansion plans.

The hospital we build must serve South Muskoka for generations. Before major decisions are finalized, we need confidence that the selected site is both financially responsible and capable of meeting our community's evolving healthcare needs.

9. Municipal Taxpayer Funding

Would you support committing municipal taxpayer funding to the hospital redevelopment if you were not satisfied that the final plan provides adequate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

No, not without satisfactory answers to those concerns. I strongly support investment in modern healthcare infrastructure for Muskoka, but municipal taxpayer funding comes with a responsibility to ensure that the investment will adequately serve the communities contributing to it.

Before committing public funds, I would expect clear evidence that the final plan provides appropriate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka, along with transparency regarding costs and long-term financial implications.

I recognize the importance of moving this redevelopment forward, but the urgency of the project should not prevent us from asking difficult questions or insisting on accountability.

Supporting our hospitals and protecting the interests of municipal taxpayers are not competing responsibilities. We have an obligation to do both.

10. Municipal Advocacy & Action

If elected, will you actively advocate throughout your term to MAHC, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Province of Ontario for a hospital redevelopment model that provides equitable access to acute hospital care for South Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Would you support municipal resolutions, where appropriate, calling upon MAHC and/or the Province of Ontario to address concerns regarding the hospital redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate response / actions:

Advocate directly with MAHC and the Province.

Use my position at District Council to demand transparency and accountability

Strengthen meaningful public engagement

11. Do You Support the Current MAHC Redevelopment Model?

Based on the information currently available to you, do you believe the proposed MAHC redevelopment model provides adequate and equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

Based on the information currently available, I am not yet satisfied that the proposed model has adequately demonstrated equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents.

I continue to have concerns about acute-care capacity, the allocation of services between the two hospitals, and whether the proposed model sufficiently accounts for the long-term needs of our growing and aging population.

That does not mean I oppose redevelopment. I recognize the importance of moving forward with modern hospital infrastructure, and I also recognize the considerable work that has gone into developing the proposal.

However, I believe outstanding concerns deserve clear, evidence-based answers before we can have confidence that the final model will serve both hospital communities equitably.

My position remains one of constructive engagement, continued scrutiny and a commitment to ensuring South Muskoka receives the healthcare services it needs.

Municipal / Ward Council

Andrew Struthers

Macaulay Ward Councillor | Ward: Macaulay

1. Equitable Access to Hospital Care

Do you believe residents of South Muskoka should have equitable access to acute hospital care comparable to residents elsewhere in Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Patient outcomes are proven to be better with local family and support. Local services in all seasons and weather is critical. With out a plan for how family / care givers will be provided reliable transport all year in all weather, acute care must be local.

2. South Muskoka's Future Acute-Care Capacity

Do you support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital to better address current utilization, projected population growth, seasonal demand and future healthcare needs?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

I support our South muskoka doctors. If our doctors stand behind 46 beds, then I can not argue, I am not a medical expert, if our Doctors say more are needed, then I stand with them on this demand.

3. Access to Hospital Services Close to Home

Do you believe the future hospital model should provide South Muskoka residents with appropriate acute-care services locally and minimize routine transfers to Huntsville that occur because of limitations in South Muskoka's capacity or allocation of services?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Yes, I believe that patient outcomes are better with less transfers. I also believe patients in Huntsville should not have to travel to South muskoka for basic day treatments. Full services should be available at both centers where ever possible. But I stand behind our doctors knowledge and professionalism.

4. Transitional / Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Do you support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities rather than concentrating these resources at one site?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

While I do support this, I also understand the fiscal realities and the challenges of hiring specialized professional staff. As much as is feasible, services should be at both facilities, but if it's a choice of one facilities or no facilities, I understand the challenge. The province is ultimate deciding body and we need to continue to fight for the best South Muskoka outcome.

5. Obstetrical Care

Do you support maintaining a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital so that South Muskoka families are not routinely required to travel elsewhere for maternity care?

Selection: Yes

Would the absence of a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital affect your support for the proposed redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Obstetrical care must be at every hospital. South Muskoka babies should be born in South Muskoka. The dangers to a mother and baby in a breach or other emergency are too great to have to drive to Huntsville or Orillia!

6. Population Growth and Seasonal Demand

Do you believe the capacity of the future South Muskoka hospital should account for projected permanent population growth, Muskoka's aging population, significant seasonal population increases and anticipated future healthcare demand?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Accounting for seasonal surge demand is a challenge, but one that needs to be considered. Seasonal residents pay taxes and deserve a proper hospital.
Regular services need to consider the aging population but also new and innovative treatment models, robotic surgery, influences of AI, and be ready for anything that happens in the next 40-50 years.

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

Do you believe MAHC should publicly disclose the information, assumptions and supporting evidence used to make major decisions regarding hospital capacity, allocation of services between the two sites, site-development requirements and costs, and projected patient transfers — and provide meaningful opportunities for public questions and input before major decisions are finalized?

Selection: Yes

8. Pine Street Site and Future Expansion

Do you believe MAHC has adequately demonstrated that the selected Pine Street site can accommodate the proposed hospital, necessary site-development requirements and reasonable future expansion in a financially responsible manner?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

Without seeing the documents, I can only say that if Provincial auditors are happy, it should be on side. BUT I believe everything should be fully public and fully accountable. We have amazing talent in Muskoka that wants to be involved for the best solution. Being transparent also allows new ideas and new solutions to come forward.

9. Municipal Taxpayer Funding

Would you support committing municipal taxpayer funding to the hospital redevelopment if you were not satisfied that the final plan provides adequate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

Municipal funds are only another tax on top of what we already pay the province for health care. Municipalities should not be involved, but through downloading have been forced to be involved. As mentioned earlier, I will be happy when the doctors are, and only supported municipal contributions after the doctors supported the plan. If the doctors come out publicly or privately with different information, it will greatly change my mind on this.

10. Municipal Advocacy & Action

If elected, will you actively advocate throughout your term to MAHC, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Province of Ontario for a hospital redevelopment model that provides equitable access to acute hospital care for South Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Would you support municipal resolutions, where appropriate, calling upon MAHC and/or the Province of Ontario to address concerns regarding the hospital redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate response / actions:

Push council to continue this as a top item for AMO delegations

Push council to request the Minister of Health and local MPP Smith to appear at council

Push for more regular public meetings including council leadership, town staff, MAHC leadership, and provincial representation.

11. Do You Support the Current MAHC Redevelopment Model?

Based on the information currently available to you, do you believe the proposed MAHC redevelopment model provides adequate and equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

I need an updated position from South Muskoka doctors, who we trust with our lives and health, I 100% stand behind our local medical doctors in terms of the services and model. I also require publicly released and peer reviewed financials and engineering models. An independent peer review by external doctors and professionals should be required before any decisions are made. I don't claim to be an expert in hospitals, but I do stand behind South Muskoka.

CINDY WATERS

Councillor | Ward: Draper

1. Equitable Access to Hospital Care

Do you believe residents of South Muskoka should have equitable access to acute hospital care comparable to residents elsewhere in Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Without equal access to acute care, some residents would need to travel in what can be unsafe conditions. There is no plan in place to transport patients. Families could need to travel extensively. I see their plan as unsafe for the majority of people in Muskoka.

2. South Muskoka's Future Acute-Care Capacity

Do you support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital to better address current utilization, projected population growth, seasonal demand and future healthcare needs?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Both of our Muskoka hospitals run over capacity now. There is no plan to alleviate it. The doctors put together a plan "Care Close to Home", which was well thought out and advocates for a minimum of 60 beds, but it was rejected by MAHC Board despite the expertise that went into it.

3. Access to Hospital Services Close to Home

Do you believe the future hospital model should provide South Muskoka residents with appropriate acute-care services locally and minimize routine transfers to Huntsville that occur because of limitations in South Muskoka's capacity or allocation of services?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Transferring patients isn't in their best interest physically, mentally, emotionally or monetarily. Cutting services at one hospital to move them to another hospital is not well thought out. We should be listening to our health professionals and Care Close to Home.

4. Transitional / Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Do you support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities rather than concentrating these resources at one site?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Patients do better when their supports are close to them. Many people in Muskoka can't drive the distances that the current plan demands. There seems to be a concentration on the style of the buildings proposed over the care patients will receive.

5. Obstetrical Care

Do you support maintaining a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital so that South Muskoka families are not routinely required to travel elsewhere for maternity care?

Selection: Yes

Would the absence of a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital affect your support for the proposed redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

I don't support the redevelopment model. I don't understand why it is proposed as a viable plan since I don't believe it improves on what we have now. The people in the planning committee were not listened to. In October of 2023 there was a meeting where the then Board stated what the plan would be. Members of the hospital staff who didn't agree were told to stay quiet and threatened with discipline if they spoke out. Some of our best people in South Muskoka have moved on to Orillia and other hospitals because of the toxic workplace at South Muskoka. I continue to believe the Board needs to be dissolved to return to 2 Boards.

6. Population Growth and Seasonal Demand

Do you believe the capacity of the future South Muskoka hospital should account for projected permanent population growth, Muskoka's aging population, significant seasonal population increases and anticipated future healthcare demand?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Absolutely. Our community will thrive and grow if we have the services to support it. It seems that we are losing services with every passing day under the current administration. From Rehab services to OB, ALC beds and more. The shifts are not equal and the changes have a negative effect on both north and south.

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

Do you believe MAHC should publicly disclose the information, assumptions and supporting evidence used to make major decisions regarding hospital capacity, allocation of services between the two sites, site-development requirements and costs, and projected patient transfers — and provide meaningful opportunities for public questions and input before major decisions are finalized?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

I worked at SMMH for close to 14 years and I've lived in Muskoka for most of my life. I've seen and felt the pressures of not having enough space for patients and not having transport for them when they need specialized care outside of our hospitals. It isn't responsible to simply say "patients will be transported" without a solid plan for it to happen. There needs to be evidence that the changes are positive. It hasn't happened. I believe the numbers are very muddy now since so many services have been sent North already. They should use numbers prior to 2023 which are more true.

8. Pine Street Site and Future Expansion

Do you believe MAHC has adequately demonstrated that the selected Pine Street site can accommodate the proposed hospital, necessary site-development requirements and reasonable future expansion in a financially responsible manner?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

All reports and evidence should be used. There shouldn't be any question about the validity of the site selection and there are still many. There is a pit on the site selected that will need to be remediated which in my opinion should have been completed before the land was purchased by the Town. I understood there is Provincial legislation demanding that pits and quarries are required to meet specific standards to bring them back to usable land? There is a question about the ability to provide fire services to the site. If these have been well thought out, the people need to see the actions taken and any still outstanding.

9. Municipal Taxpayer Funding

Would you support committing municipal taxpayer funding to the hospital redevelopment if you were not satisfied that the final plan provides adequate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

The people deserve representation that considers best health outcomes. I seek to represent the people of Draper Ward and I don't believe they are best served with the current plan that has no OB and Care Close to Home beds.

10. Municipal Advocacy & Action

If elected, will you actively advocate throughout your term to MAHC, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Province of Ontario for a hospital redevelopment model that provides equitable access to acute hospital care for South Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Would you support municipal resolutions, where appropriate, calling upon MAHC and/or the Province of Ontario to address concerns regarding the hospital redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate response / actions:

Advocate for fair regional representation — petition the Province to review how the MAHC Board is selected so communities across Muskoka have meaningful representation in decisions about local health care.

Tie municipal support to accountability — where municipal funding or financial support is within Council's authority, seek clear conditions demonstrating that residents across Muskoka will have equitable access to essential hospital services.

Demand transparent measurement with our doctors on side— establish regular public reporting on hospital services, changes, access and travel impacts across Muskoka so Council and residents can see whether decisions are providing equitable care throughout the region.

11. Do You Support the Current MAHC Redevelopment Model?

Based on the information currently available to you, do you believe the proposed MAHC redevelopment model provides adequate and equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

The plan submitted does not allow for equitable access to hospital care. There is no planned Obstetrics unit in South Muskoka and there are no beds for patients requiring more than six days in hospital. Although the plan is heavily reliant on transporting patients, there is no plan to alleviate that pressure.

Donna Kearney

Macaulay Ward | Ward: Macaulay

1. Equitable Access to Hospital Care

Do you believe residents of South Muskoka should have equitable access to acute hospital care comparable to residents elsewhere in Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Everyone in Muskoka deserves equitable access to all types of healthcare. Acute care denotes a relatively complex or serious illness or injury where various treatment options can be available and where hospitalization may be several days to weeks. Equitable access is mandatory.

2. South Muskoka's Future Acute-Care Capacity

Do you support advocating for a minimum of 60 acute-care beds at the future South Muskoka hospital to better address current utilization, projected population growth, seasonal demand and future healthcare needs?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

Part of the problem in our current hospital is the high rate of Alternate Level of Care clients, combined with the lack of access for about 12,000 people in south Muskoka to a primary care provider. Both of these problems lead to overcrowding of hospital but are not acute care problems. If these 2 issues are resolved then 46 beds may be adequate, especially since population growth will likely consist of younger people.

Access to primary care will prevent usage of the hospital for primary care needs and will keep people healthier in the community through regular screening and preventative treatments.

Reduction of ALC rates in hospital can be done through using other services to keep people out of hospital, such as hospice for end-of-life care, where we have reduced palliative ALC by 88%. LTC ALC reductions are being seen through partnerships with LTC and Retirement Homes in the community. These partnerships should continue to grow so people are cared for in the right place if they do not require acute level services.

3. Access to Hospital Services Close to Home

Do you believe the future hospital model should provide South Muskoka residents with appropriate acute-care services locally and minimize routine transfers to Huntsville that occur because of limitations in South Muskoka's capacity or allocation of services?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

People should be cared for close to home so loved ones can visit regularly and safely, especially during winter months when driving can be treacherous. If transfers must be done to Huntsville for specialized care such as stroke management then that is reasonable, just as transfers to Barrie or Orillia are for services not offered in Muskoka.

Hospitals in our region must avoid duplication of services where ever possible because that will lead to future closures. The system cannot afford duplications of specialized services, which is why each hospital will have specialized services not found in the others unless there is clear evidence of need across multiple sites, for example dialysis.

4. Transitional / Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

Do you support an equitable allocation of transitional and Alternate Level of Care (ALC) resources between the two hospital communities rather than concentrating these resources at one site?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

Yes, both communities need adequate ALC beds but those beds should not be contained in a hospital setting unless they are for a defined period of rehabilitation where specialized equipment is required. ALC is a result of our baby boom population aging out.....this is a limited time problem that will age out over the next 20 years. Building a hospital to accommodate this will not be affordable on the other side of the boomer generation and could lead to closures.

ALC solutions, as described above, should be developed in partnership with other organizations. For example more hospice and LTC Home beds will be needed in for the next 20 years but then those beds can be repurposed to retirement homes, rehab centres, crisis centres, shelters, etc.

5. Obstetrical Care

Do you support maintaining a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital so that South Muskoka families are not routinely required to travel elsewhere for maternity care?

Selection: Yes

Would the absence of a fully functioning obstetrical service at the future South Muskoka hospital affect your support for the proposed redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

This hospital is being built for the future; not for current needs. Once the boomers pass through the system who will live here and be served here? Young people and families presumably, who will be able to buy a home and grow their families in Muskoka. Obstetrical services must be available if we are going to attract them to south Muskoka. This is consistent with the South and West Muskoka vision for future growth. Young people are the future of Muskoka so we need a health system that will meet their needs.

6. Population Growth and Seasonal Demand

Do you believe the capacity of the future South Muskoka hospital should account for projected permanent population growth, Muskoka's aging population, significant seasonal population increases and anticipated future healthcare demand?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

My view is that our hospital has been the only source of healthcare for many residents for the past 10 or more years. The hospital has been used as a catch all for everything when it was only designed to provide acute care. Fixing primary care access, which the government is focused on now, will lead to the correct use of the hospital in the future. Looking for ALC support with community partners, as already described will fix the ALC issue.

7. Transparency and Public Accountability

Do you believe MAHC should publicly disclose the information, assumptions and supporting evidence used to make major decisions regarding hospital capacity, allocation of services between the two sites, site-development requirements and costs, and projected patient transfers — and provide meaningful opportunities for public questions and input before major decisions are finalized?

Selection: Yes

Candidate comments:

The public should be treated as the investors in the system; because that's what we are....we invest through our taxes and through our donations. As such, it is the hospitals responsibility to share information to keep investors informed and satisfied, whatever that may look like.

8. Pine Street Site and Future Expansion

Do you believe MAHC has adequately demonstrated that the selected Pine Street site can accommodate the proposed hospital, necessary site-development requirements and reasonable future expansion in a financially responsible manner?

Selection: Undecided / Need more information

Candidate comments:

I know very little about the site selection process. I think more information and opportunity for discussion would be helpful to ease the communities concerns. At the end of the day the hospital needs community financial support so if there is a better site with a higher price tag, at least put it in front of the community so they have an opportunity to weigh in.

I, personally am concerned that a hospital located on the highway at the Pine Street location becomes a hospital to serve external populations and is less about serving local populations. I see this as a risky proposition for the future of donations from the community.

I would rather see the hospital located on the Fife Farm location which was a consideration but was dropped off the list because the cost to purchase was too high. I would have liked more community discussion because funding the right site is top of mind. That site offers walkability, accessibility and opportunity for staff housing options close by. It is also close to overnight accommodations, library, restaurants, etc for visitors as needed.

9. Municipal Taxpayer Funding

Would you support committing municipal taxpayer funding to the hospital redevelopment if you were not satisfied that the final plan provides adequate and equitable acute-care capacity and services for South Muskoka?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

The hospital plan will never satisfy everyone but it should satisfy most. I think there are a few major decisions to be made before that can happen; one being the proposed location and one being the availability of obstetric services. If those two items were brought back to the table I would support the rest of the re-development plan as presented.

10. Municipal Advocacy & Action

If elected, will you actively advocate throughout your term to MAHC, the District Municipality of Muskoka and the Province of Ontario for a hospital redevelopment model that provides equitable access to acute hospital care for South Muskoka?

Selection: Yes

Would you support municipal resolutions, where appropriate, calling upon MAHC and/or the Province of Ontario to address concerns regarding the hospital redevelopment model?

Selection: Yes

Candidate response / actions:

I would ask key partners to come back to the table to talk about the major issues and find ways to gain consensus. I fear the redevelopment of our hospital is at risk of being shelved by the province if we don't find a way forward soon.

I would want MAHC to highlight the community partnerships they currently utilize and identify future partnerships to address non-acute population needs in the community.

I would like the site selection choices to be reviewed publicly to see if the public has a preferred site they are willing to contribute funds to.

11. Do You Support the Current MAHC Redevelopment Model?

Based on the information currently available to you, do you believe the proposed MAHC redevelopment model provides adequate and equitable access to hospital care for South Muskoka residents?

Selection: No

Candidate comments:

I like much of what the hospital is proposing, I don't think the number of beds (46) is problematic because the ALC and non-acute instances are being addressed through other mechanisms. I like the idea of us being the diagnostic and day surgery centre because that is the future of healthcare.

I firmly believe we need obstetrics - potentially led by the midwives of Muskoka who have expertise in this area. We need to attract younger people to south Muskoka, which aligns with Town planning, so obstetrics must be available.

I also believe the site selected is problematic and leads our hospital to serve external populations to a larger extent than south Muskoka residents. Communities fund hospitals and the South Muskoka community is generous and supportive of our hospital.....that needs to be respected and considered thoughtfully. I think alternate locations need to be presented again.

I think when someone requires acute level of care their families need and want to be close to that person so they can visit often and assist in the care needs as appropriate. When they need to be transferred for speciality level care to another hospital that is understandable and in the best interest of the patient.