



SAVE SOUTH MUSKOKA HOSPITAL COMMITTEE

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS REGARDING SITE SELECTION FOR FUTURE SOUTH MUSKOKA HOSPITAL AT 300 PINE STREET, BRACEBRIDGE

Introduction

Save South Muskoka Hospital Committee (SSMHC) **Position Statement #4** addresses concerns with the site selection for the future South Muskoka Hospital as chosen by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC).ⁱ This summary sets out SSMHC's concerns and calls for action around the selection process.

Background

- MAHC continues to advance its “Made in Muskoka” two-site redevelopment for new hospitals in Bracebridge (South Muskoka Memorial Hospital) and Huntsville (Huntsville District Memorial Hospital) despite strong and persistent community concern
- In December 2023, MAHC selected 300 Pine Street for the Bracebridge locationⁱⁱ
- Several other sites were shortlisted, including lands on Muskoka Beach Road as the original preferred site – also known as the “Muskoka Royale” lands – and lands on Muskoka Road 118Wⁱⁱⁱ
- 300 Pine Street is an approximate 44-acre parcel with a former quarry and deep gravel / sand pit (being about one-third of the site), it has challenging topography and limited buildable lands
- 300 Pine Street was purchased by the Town of Bracebridge in June 2023. The lands were transferred to MAHC in May 2025. The value of the land is part of the Town's \$10M contribution to MAHC^{iv}

SSMHC Concerns with the Lands at 300 Pine Street

- **Expensive Site Preparation Costs:** The site remediation costs are between **\$50–\$180 million**.^v This could be up to 20% of the total redevelopment budget.
- **Unsuitable Terrain:** One-third of the site is unusable due to a deep gravel and sand pit. MAHC has refused to release the consultant reports (Urban Strategies Inc. and Stantec) despite repeated requests and criticisms concerning MAHC's lack of transparency.
- **Adjacent Lands to be Purchased:** MAHC is currently pursuing additional lands adjacent to the site - east of the site (near Highway 11), north (Catholic school board land), and south (Bracebridge Fairgrounds) without disclosing this information publicly, no matter the cost to taxpayers. MAHC has failed to justify that 300 Pine Street is appropriate for a build larger than the originally-planned (and since rejected) 14-bed hospital. SSMHC questions whether MAHC is now purchasing additional lands to support the site selection, regardless of this prior plan folly.
- **Restricted Expansion:** The Province requires that the site be suitable for future expansion. However, 300 Pine Street does not permit expansion without significant remediation costs to taxpayers. This poses a major constraint to future expansion that has not been properly considered.
- **Utility Cost Comparisons Not Properly Explained to Public:** The cost to service 300 Pine Street (i.e. water, sewer, gas) has not been properly disclosed and other sites would likely incur a more reasonable and less expensive service connection cost for taxpayers.

- **Landfill Use Proposed for Gravel Pit:** MAHC administration has considered the use of the deep gravel pit as a potential landfill site – despite proximity to a proposed operating hospital.^{vi} This raises significant environmental, logistical, and community impact concerns.
- **Waived Due Diligence by Town of Bracebridge:** SSMHC questions why the Town of Bracebridge refused to proceed with secondary due diligence on the purchase of the 300 Pine Street Lands from Fowler Construction Company Ltd. for \$1.3M in June 2023. The Town was advised by MAHC at that time that 300 Pine Street would be shortlisted as a suitable site, however it remains unclear whether that representation was based on the assumption of a 14-bed hospital concept and, if so, if this material assumption was properly disclosed to the Town by MAHC.

SSMHC Calls for Immediate Action

- ☑ **New Site Selection Process:** Given the changed hospital size since MAHC selected the site, a new site selection process must occur to ensure that the site will meet all requirements for sizing, location, reasonable cost mitigations, and future expansion opportunity.
- ☑ **Additional Transparency:** MAHC's engineering reports must be released. Additionally, we call for the release of the detailed site selection assessment. Lastly, we call for further clarity from MAHC on its current efforts to obtain additional lands adjacent to 300 Pine Street.
- ☑ **Independent investigation by Province:** Province must review the selection process, including MAHC's questionable decision making and withholding from the public of critical information.
- ☑ **Local Inquiry Given Local Tax-Dollar Contributions:** The District of Muskoka and the local municipalities must immediately inquire further into this issue for clarity and understanding given the significant pledge of public funds through the local share commitments – the largest public project in Muskoka's history.

Closing

MAHC applied a deeply flawed process to select 300 Pine Street: Despite continued calls for transparency, the public lacks clarity about the site, key reports are withheld, and legitimate alternatives have been dismissed outright. MAHC has failed to engage the community, provide for informed consultation, and has controlled the process at the expense of public trust and taxpayer concern.

Despite our clear request for more public scrutiny, as of May 2025, MAHC has now acquired the site from the Town of Bracebridge, notwithstanding the lack of assurance that this location may be provincially approved or otherwise support the future of local healthcare in South Muskoka.

300 Pine Street is a Bad Choice: 300 Pine Street is not suitable due to the site's deep pit, challenging topography, inadequate buildable area and limits on future expansion. Without public disclosure, MAHC is now searching for additional lands. Further, MAHC has refused to provide its detailed records that it properly considered the recommendations and cost implications of remediating the deep gravel pit.

ⁱ Position Paper #4 is currently in development; it will be made available on our website ssmh.ca when completed.

ⁱⁱ The site selection occurred prior to the public release of the original 14-bed model in January 2024 (subsequently rejected and amended). SSMHC questions whether the site remains appropriate for the proposed 46-bed hospital.

ⁱⁱⁱ SSMHC does not advocate for a particular site – only that site be suitable and that the selection process be transparent.

^{iv} Town of Bracebridge, General Committee, November 5, 2024 (as carried at Town Council, 24-TC-131 on November 13, 2024)

^{v, vi} Admitted by MAHC on July 22, 2024 in a meeting with SSMHC (including MAHC CFO, Alasdair Smith)