



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

August 28, 2020

Cameron Renwick, Board Chair
Natalie Bubela, Chief Executive Officer
Muskoka Algonquin Health Care

Via email: board.chair@mahc.ca
Via email: Natalie.Bubela@mahc.ca

Dear Mr. Renwick and Ms. Bubela:

Re: Closure of COVID-19 Test Centre in Huntsville

I am writing to reiterate my position, and that of our Council, in relation to your unilateral decision to close the COVID-19 Test Centre in Huntsville. It is entirely unacceptable and leaves our community and those to the north and east of us vulnerable and potentially unsafe during the current pandemic. This is particularly so when children in our community are going back to school on September 8th and when Provincial health officials are concerned about a surge in the COVID-19 virus this Fall.

Our Council has worked closely with local and Provincial officials to ensure our community is as safe as possible during these stressful and uncertain times. Your decision to close the Testing Centre in Huntsville has been in the works since sometime in July. Yet, although we have had regular meetings where MAHC was present, one of which was August 11th, there has been no consultation, communication, or any attempt to work with the Town to find a solution. We were kept in the dark. The first we learned of this decision was through a third party on August 18th. This too is unacceptable.

You have told me that the decision to close the COVID-19 Testing Centre here, and only have that service available in Bracebridge, was only related to resources and staffing. Testing is a vital part of controlling the curve of this virus and local accessibility to this service is essential. With all of the financial resources being made available by Provincial and Federal agencies during this pandemic, there has to be a way for MAHC to keep the testing facility open in Huntsville. Instead of favouring one community to the detriment of the other, equitable solutions should be implemented such as testing in both Bracebridge and Huntsville say, two days per week.

As you are aware, residents of Huntsville and East Parry Sound have had reservations over the past several years concerning the depth of MAHC's commitment to an acute care hospital in this community. This most recent decision to close an important health care facility in Huntsville during a time of crisis only increases that concern. Is this decision simply one more thrust in 'death by a thousand cuts' when it comes to health care services in Huntsville?

Your decision to close the COVID-19 Testing Facility in Huntsville is a very bad one for the people of North Muskoka and East Parry Sound. For the sake of safety and equity, I am calling upon Muskoka Algonquin Health Care to join the Town of Huntsville at the table to find a more equitable solution.

Sincerely,



Karin Terziano
Mayor

CC: Members of Huntsville Council
Premier Doug Ford
Health Minister Christine Elliott
Norm Miller, M.P.P.
Scott Aitchison, M.P.
John Klinck, District Chair