

# Deficit Recovery Plan

## Results of Public Consultation

Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) released a Deficit Recovery Plan to balance its operating budget last June. In keeping with its commitment to open, transparent communications and legislative requirements, MAHC implemented a public consultation process that included:

1. Open houses in six communities in Muskoka and East Parry Sound; and
2. An online survey on a dedicated web site that explained the issue and contained details of the Deficit Recovery Plan.

The following summarizes the results of the consultation process.

### Open Houses

A series of open houses was held between June 22 and June 29. The open houses were attended by a total of about 250 residents across six communities. MAHC Board members and senior staff attended each open house to discuss the Deficit Recovery Plan individually with residents and answer any questions. The meetings were advertised in local newspapers. Attendance at each community meeting is detailed below:

Community	Attendance
Burk's Falls	150
Huntsville	20
Dwight	0
Bracebridge	50
Gravenhurst	15
Port Carling	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>

Residents attending the meetings were asked to send letters or emails to CEO Barry Lockhart with any comments or concerns. To date, eight emails and six letters have been received.

Of those, all but four were focused on the closure of the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre. The majority of those concerns focused on the fact that the decision to close Burk's Falls was made before the Northern and Rural Healthcare Task Force had a chance to complete its work. Three other concerns were raised regarding the closure of the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre:

- The future of the Meals on Wheels program in Burk's Falls which now depends on the kitchen in the Health Centre for meals;
- The distance to the closest hospital in Huntsville and the potential impact that distance might have in cases of sudden illness or serious injury; and
- The need for care close to home for terminally ill patients.

Of the remaining emails and letters:

- Three expressed concern about the loss of physiotherapy services; and
- One focused on staff morale.

### **Online Survey**

In total, 20 people responded to the online questionnaire between June 19 and July 31. The online survey was advertised in local media and a link to the survey site was created on MAHC's web site, which receives about 3,700 hits a month. To date, 179 visitors to MAHC's web site have read the story that was posted on the Deficit Recovery Plan which had a link to the survey.

### **Profile of respondents**

All respondents to the online survey had lived in the Muskoka East Parry Sound area for more than five years and half of the respondents were life-long residents. All but two respondents entered their postal codes. Based on postal code information, respondents were from the following communities: Huntsville, Dwight, Gravenhurst, Bracebridge, Port Sydney, Emsdale and South River.

Eighty per cent of the respondents were over age 35, with 40 per cent of respondents in the 36-60 age group and one quarter over age 65. Only four respondents were age 35 or less. Three said they worked for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) and four said they had relatives or family members who worked for MAHC.

### **Understanding of the Issues and the Deficit Recovery Plan**

A total of 75 per cent of respondents said they were very or somewhat familiar with the issues being addressed by MAHC. Of the seven people who said they were very familiar with the issues, three were the MAHC employees. Two of the four respondents who had a relative or family member employed at MAHC said they were somewhat familiar with the issues and the remaining two said they were not very familiar with the issues. No one said they were not familiar with the issues.

When asked to rate their understanding of the plan, two thirds of respondents said they had a fair or poor understanding of the overall plan and 10 per cent had no opinion.

Elements of the plan respondents said they had a very good or good understanding of were:

- Closure of the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre (42.2%)
- Forgiveness of interest on provincial working capital loans (47.4%)

However, there was only fair or poor understanding of other key elements of the plan including:

- Reductions in clinical services (68.4%)
- Administrative efficiencies (66.6%)
- Surgical services efficiencies (65%)
- Solution to Alternate Level of Care Patients now in hospital (61.1%)

### **Suggestions for changes to the recovery plan**

When asked for comments on what should have been considered as part of the Deficit Recovery Plan, 10 responses were received. Of these, six focused on management compensation.

When asked for additional suggestions, eight people responded with suggestions, which ranged from reducing management, board members and administrative staff to consolidating Bracebridge and Huntsville into one site. Stronger public support for the hospital, including a more prominent position in the LHIN, was the focus of three of the suggestions.

### **Additional information and comments**

Ten respondents requested additional information including information including:

- More information on top salaries and reducing those salaries;
- Capital needs of all MAHC sites;
- Impact that the changes will have on nursing jobs;
- Percentage of the deficit that was brought to Huntsville with amalgamation with Bracebridge; and
- How cutting beds and staff is a good thing.

Other comments ranged from the need to improve the home care situation to concerns about cut backs in beds and services which one respondent said were too valuable to lose in this area.