

Ref No. 2021-020

August 17, 2021

Honourable Dorothy Shephard
Minister of Health
HSBC Place
P. O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1

Re: Regional Mayors Support Sackville Memorial Hospital

Dear Minister Shephard,

We are writing to you with a common voice today, as a sign of regional support for the Sackville Memorial Hospital. As you well know, we are deeply concerned about the closures of the Sackville Emergency Department.

The Mayors of Dorchester, Memramcook, Port Elgin and Sackville had the opportunity to meet on July 14, 2021 to discuss issues of common concern. The issue at the forefront was the Emergency Department closures at the Sackville Memorial Hospital.

While the hospital is located in Sackville, it serves the whole region and the summer closures impact all of us. We have also recently seen additional closures during the week with the Emergency Department being closed Tuesday night August 10, 2021 from 7pm to 8am. Moreover, the weekend closures have also been extended, including additional closures all weekend from August 14 to 15, 2021. These most recent closures have taken place with little advanced warning, which is also worrying. Compounding the staffing issue is the recent loss of another physician, Dr. Corey Long. The departure of another physician has the potential for additional shortages, and Sackville is about to welcome back 2,300 students at Mount Allison University in just a couple of weeks. There is an urgent need that immediate steps be taken to ensure that additional closures are avoided.

The reductions in service at our hospital will undoubtedly have significant impacts on Mount Allison University and its students. Many students do not have vehicle access to travel to Moncton for medical services. The Mount Allison Students Union is equally concerned about the emergency department closures and their impact on students well-being and have added their support to this letter. As you know, Mount Allison is an essential asset for our region.

Through recent meetings with yourself and Horizon Health, we have a better understanding of the struggles taking place at the Sackville Memorial Hospital when it comes to filling the employment vacancies. The Memramcook-Tantramar Community Task Force has established a Rural Health Action Group, which has the full support of our regional Mayors and Councils. This group is looking to take immediate action on issues such as recruiting, advocacy, marketing efforts and capacity building with regional stakeholders and to work closely with Horizon Health to find solutions to the current challenges.

We, the regional Mayors, would like to formally request a meeting with you to discuss the province's plan to address the hospital. This is urgent, as the future of our municipalities, along with the entire rural region and Mount Allison University, will require a long-term commitment to 24/7 healthcare.

We trust that our hospital is a priority and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,



Shawn Mesheau
Mayor, Town of Sackville



Maxime Bourgeois
Mayor, Memramcook



Debbie Wiggins-Colwell
Mayor, Dorchester



Jason Stokes
Mayor, Port Elgin



Charlie Burke
President, MASU



cc: Sackville Town Council
Mayor Maxime Bourgeois, Memramcook
Mayor Debbie Wiggins-Colwell, Dorchester
Mayor Jason Stokes, Port Elgin
Charlie Burke, President, Mount Allison Students Union
MLA Megan Mitton