

Dear Minister Piccini,

On behalf of ACO Port Hope, I am writing to ask you to dissuade your government from issuing a Minister's Zoning Order that would allow Southbridge Care Homes to build a high-rise long-term care facility on the designated heritage property at 65 Ward Street here in Port Hope. This property resulted from a gift by a homeowner in 1912 to build a hospital. Erected in 1916, these old hospital buildings have stood as a symbol in Port Hope of outstanding health care since WWI.

In a letter written to Port Hope Council in September 2021, ACO Port Hope stated that the ACO strongly supports the urgent need in Port Hope for new, up-to-date long-term care homes. We argued, however, that Southbridge's proposed new facility would be too massive for the site and the neighbourhood, and that the 7 storeys and lack of green space would be inhospitable for long-term care residents. We recommended, instead, that the project be relocated to a more suitable site through a land swap with the Municipality. This, we believed, would allow Southbridge to lessen the impact of their facility on any surrounding neighbourhood, create a more warm and inviting home and ensure that Southbridge's current long-term-care facility residents would not need to live within a construction site while the new facility is being built. It would also mean that the heritage attributes on the designated property would continue to be protected, thereby maintaining confidence in and conformance with the Ontario Heritage Act.

Other groups and individuals in Port Hope also expressed concerns regarding Southbridge's proposed new facility. Most of the people who made written submissions to the Municipality shared our concerns about the size and scale of the proposed building, the loss of green space and the detrimental impact that this building would have upon the surrounding historic neighbourhood of small homes and low-rise apartment buildings. There were also many complaints that such a massive, high-rise structure with limited outdoor space was a dated model for a new long-term care home and would constitute the 'warehousing' of seniors.

Fortunately, the Municipality took residents' concerns regarding the proposed building's height and design seriously. On February 15, 2022, Port Hope Council denied the zoning amendments required for this facility by a vote of 6 -1. Ever since, our political leaders have encouraged Southbridge to accept a land-exchange, and ACO Port Hope has made contact with financial interests who might be interested in adaptively re-using the 1916 Hospital for modest-priced housing that our town needs and the province urgently promotes.

A decision to now issue a Zoning Order that favours the demands of a long-term care facility developer that deservedly received criticism during the pandemic, over the benefits of the above responsible outcomes to the Port Hope community would certainly seem arbitrary. Indeed, such an order would result in the decline of a long established Port Hope neighbourhood, and the construction of an unsuitable long-term care facility. This MZO would also set a dangerous precedent for other developers by sanctioning the loss of a designated Port Hope landmark.

Yours truly,

Ian MacKay
Chair, ACO Port Hope