

To whom it may concern,

July 11, 2025

As a resident first and Mayor of the Town of Ste. Anne, I feel compelled to raise serious concerns about the lack of support for our local hospital and its impact on health care access for residents of southeastern Manitoba.

Despite a reduction in emergency department hours in recent years, Ste. Anne Hospital continues to see approximately the same amount of patients annually. This number has not declined because, once a patient arrives, the staff stay until everyone has been seen. Whether the emergency room is open 8, 12, or 24 hours a day, the demand for care remains high—and unwavering.

The bigger concern, however, is the toll this situation is taking on our residents. We are increasingly hearing of patients who are much sicker than they should be, simply because they waited too long to seek care—often avoiding longer wait times in other hospitals, or because they lack transportation to reach them. These delays not only put lives at risk but also lead to greater long-term costs for the health system. Preventable issues are becoming emergencies.

No one should be punished for living in rural Manitoba. Health care should not be a privilege of geography. While urban hospitals also experience long waits, that is all the more reason to bolster care in rural communities like ours—so patients don't have to travel long distances and add to already overwhelmed facilities in Winnipeg.

The argument that Steinbach is only 15 minutes away is not a realistic solution. Steinbach is growing rapidly, and its hospital is already under significant strain. Southeastern Manitoba has seen explosive population growth over the last two decades, yet we remain critically underserved in hospital beds and regional resources compared to other parts of the province. The recent small expansion in Steinbach, while welcome, is simply a drop in the bucket.

I, along with other local government organizations, have reached out on several occasions to both the previous and current provincial governments, including the new Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, Uzoma Asagwara, and Premier Wab Kinew. To date, I have received no response to my repeated requests for a meeting or for them to tour Ste. Anne Hospital in person. This silence is frustrating, especially in light of repeated public commitments by this government to improve health care access for all Manitobans.

Further, the regional health authority appears unwilling to designate Ste. Anne Hospital as a regional facility—despite the fact that such a designation would allow the hospital to reopen 24/7 and be properly resourced for essential services such as lab work, X-rays, and more. Currently, some samples are being driven to other facilities for testing—an inefficient and unnecessary process when our hospital is equipped to do more, if only it were staffed accordingly.

I am not asking for everything overnight. But I am asking for a clear commitment to getting Ste. Anne Hospital where it needs to be—a phased, realistic plan for restoring hours, adding staff, and expanding services. We have the infrastructure. We have a strong team of medical

professionals. We have a passionate and committed Hospital Fund Board ready to take on any project. What we lack is a government partner willing to invest in what we already know works.

This is also a matter of equity. Our region has a significant Francophone, Métis, and Indigenous population. Ste. Anne Hospital has the capacity and the heart to serve these communities with dignity and excellence—if given the resources it needs.

This is a win-win opportunity. By properly resourcing our hospital, the government would reduce pressure on urban centers, save money long-term, and provide much-needed health care to a growing population in rural Manitoba.

So again, I publicly invite Minister Asagwara and Premier Kinew to visit us at Ste. Anne Hospital. Come see firsthand the incredible work being done—and what more could be accomplished with your support.

Sincerely,
Yvan St. Vincent
Mayor, Town of Ste. Anne