

**From:** Karl Ellis

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 4, 2022 1:42 PM

**Subject:** Ontario Health - MRI Proposals

Hello:

Just prior to the Christmas break, Ontario Health issued a call for proposals to operate MRI diagnostic imaging equipment in Ontario. They expect to approve 15 proposals in the province. There is currently only one MRI machine in southwestern Ontario north of highway 7 and west of highway 400, located in Owen Sound at Grey Bruce Health Services. The other machines serving southwestern Ontario are in Guelph, Kitchener, Cambridge, Stratford, Woodstock and London. Smaller hospitals have historically not been operators of MRI machines.

The Wingham and District Hospital (WDH) is ideally located at the centre of the large geographic area within Southwestern that does not currently have a resident MRI unit.

While it may be aggressive, the Listowel Wingham Hospitals Alliance is planning on submitting a proposal to operate an MRI machine in Wingham. The proposal highlights that Wingham is approximately 90 kilometres from any existing MRI machine and would propose to serve residents of north Perth, south Bruce, south Grey, northwest Wellington and northern Huron counties.

Round trip travel time from the centre of this geographic area in Wingham to any of the existing MRIs begins at 140 minutes and increases to 3.5 hours of round trip travel to the closest academic health sciences centre in London. These are not insignificant travel distances and times. Populations in rural and remote communities acquire out-of-pocket travel expenses for diagnostic imaging services delivered in distant locations. Additional costs are also incurred by the patient and their caregivers through work absenteeism and other incidentals such as parking, meals, childcare and accommodation and may act as a disincentive to seeking a diagnosis. This proposal, if approved, helps to address a current inequity in access to health care for rural Ontarians.

This business case is unique in the fact that it provides evidence of a sufficient population to support an MRI machine in a central location in rural Southwestern Ontario. While Wingham would be the smallest hospital and population centre with an MRI unit in Ontario, it would serve a massive geography of over 6,000 square kilometres and over 111,000 people. This is greater than the current proportion of MRI units in the province of Ontario (in operation and planned) at 1 unit per 106,000 people.

We acknowledge that historically, most MRI machines are located in urban centres and there is undoubtedly valid arguments for adding additional capacity in one or more of the existing locations serving southern Ontario. However, adding additional capacity in urban centres or a southwestern Ontario location other than Wingham does not address the travel and access issues outlined.

The operating costs of the machine would be funded by the Province with the capital costs funded locally through donations to the hospital Foundation.

We would appreciate a letter of support from you regarding this proposal as it would benefit your constituents. The submission to Ontario Health is due January 14<sup>th</sup> and letters of support would be appreciated by January 12<sup>th</sup> in order to be incorporated into the proposal.

Thanks for your consideration.

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