



January 23, 2026

The Honourable Natalia Kusendova Bashta  
Minister of Long Term Care  
400 University Avenue, 6th Floor  
Toronto, ON M5G 1S5

Dear Minister Kusendova Bashta:

It was a pleasure to meet with you at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association Conference earlier this week. I appreciate you making time in your busy schedule to meet with the Sault Ste. Marie delegation.

As a follow up to our discussion about long-term care capacity in Sault Ste. Marie, I am writing to you regarding the Ontario Finnish Resthome Association's (OFRA) proposal to upgrade its Mauno Kaihla Kot facility. I understand they have been seeking financial support for more than a decade, and I urge your ministry to work with OFRA to see this development come to fruition. OFRA has been providing quality care to Sault Ste. Marie seniors for the past 55 years, and any funding allocated to their organization will make a positive difference in our community.

I acknowledge and appreciate that the Government of Ontario has undertaken long-term care modernization efforts, but the current funding formula continues to disadvantage Northern Ontario – a region with a higher than provincial average of residents over the age of 65 – and the need to support projects such as the aforementioned OFRA proposal will only continue to grow until a remedial policy adjustment is made. Without increased support, communities like Sault Ste. Marie will remain challenged in meeting demand and reducing pressures across the broader health care system. Investing in Mauno Kaihla Kot would help ensure more seniors can access the right level of care, in the right place, closer to home. It would also better support local hospitals by easing avoidable capacity pressures and improving patient flow.

Attached is a letter from OFRA outlining the need to, and the potential impact of, support for their organization. I appreciate the time your Ministry has taken to meet with myself and the OFRA team recently, and would be happy to continue working with both your Ministry and OFRA to continue to advance this file.

Sincerely,

**MATTHEW M. SHOEMAKER**  
Mayor, Sault Ste. Marie



## THE ONTARIO FINNISH RESTHOME ASSOCIATION

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Matthew Shoemaker, Mayor  
City of Sault Ste. Marie

Mayor Shoemaker,

I am writing to ask for the City of Sault Ste. Marie's help in advocating to the Province of Ontario for an equitable long-term care capital funding model for Northern communities—one that reflects the real costs and realities of building and delivering care in Algoma.

Ontario has taken meaningful steps to modernize long-term care by increasing up-front capital support. However, the current framework continues to disadvantage Northern Ontario. Under the new model, projects in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area are eligible for funding based on a maximum of \$750,000 per bed, while North-Urban markets such as Sault Ste. Marie are capped at \$450,000 per bed. This gap is largely justified on the basis of land costs in the south. Yet in practice, nearly every other cost driver is higher in the North: construction bids, skilled-trade availability, travel and accommodation for workers, longer supply chains, and compressed seasonal build windows. These realities routinely add millions to northern projects, but are not reflected in the funding model.

The result is structural inequity. Northern operators are expected to deliver complex institutional infrastructure with fewer dollars, fewer contractors, higher labour premiums, and greater logistical risk. Instead of levelling the playing field, the policy widens the gap between North and South.

For Algoma, this has system-wide consequences. Geography already limits access and choice. Seniors here do not have the dense network of nearby homes that exists in Southern Ontario. When a local bed is unavailable or unsuitable, the next option may be 60 to 200 kilometers away. This is not real choice. It is displacement.

The strain is visible in our hospital. Sault Area Hospital regularly carries high numbers of Alternate Level of Care patients—seniors who are medically ready for discharge but have nowhere appropriate to go. Without sufficient modern long-term care capacity, acute beds remain blocked, emergency departments back up, and the entire system becomes less resilient.

Inside outdated Class-B homes such as Mauno Kaihla Koti, the human cost is immediate. Multi-resident rooms, shared washrooms, and cramped spaces undermine dignity, privacy, infection control, and staff safety. These conditions contribute to poorer outcomes, higher clinical risk, behavioural distress, and avoidable hospital transfers.

This is not about special treatment. It is about fair treatment. Your advocacy matters and carries weight with the Province, particularly when framed as a community health and system-capacity issue rather than a single-project concern. I respectfully ask that the City of Sault Ste. Marie support this call for funding parity.

I welcome the opportunity to work in partnership toward a solution that delivers fair, regionally appropriate outcomes for seniors in Algoma.

Sincerely,

Paul Belair  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Ontario Finnish Resthome Association