

AMO Delegation

Offload Delay Briefing Note 2023

The Problem: Offload Delays in Windsor-Essex

Paramedics province-wide are spending too much time in ambulances idling outside of emergency rooms instead of being out on the road, responding to emergency calls. These “offload delays” are caused by rules requiring Paramedics to remain with their patients until the patients have been admitted to congested hospitals.

Offload delays are an inefficient use of precious Paramedic resources and an obvious and ongoing risk to public safety. They have a negative impact on Paramedic morale and public faith in the system.

The situation is particularly acute in Windsor-Essex, which declared a state of emergency in October of 2022 in response to an alarming rise in the number of Code Blacks and Code Reds, instances when zero or fewer than two ambulances are available.

Two primary factors exacerbate the crisis in Windsor-Essex: A chronic dearth of family doctors and an alarming shortage of Primary and Urgent Care Clinics with expanded hours, which causes residents to rely on ambulances for travel to emergency rooms at a significantly higher rate than other jurisdictions in Ontario.

The Solution: Reduce 911 Call Volumes and Increase Diversion Rates

The root causes of the offload delays crisis in Windsor-Essex are unique to our local circumstances and require targeted measures.

- 1) **Increased Funding for Primary and Urgent Care Clinics with Expanded Hours:** Windsor-Essex has an extraordinarily high percentage – the highest in Ontario – of patients who arrive by ambulance at emergency rooms. The provincial average for June was 18 per cent and the average for each of our three hospitals was 38 per cent, 31 per cent and 23 per cent.
- 2) **Increased Funding for Physician Recruitment:** More than 32,000 people in Windsor-Essex are without a family doctor and nearly 50 per cent of those people live in neighbourhoods with the lowest average incomes. More family doctors would help reduce the volume of 911 calls and improve local health care.

3) **Place a Patient Navigator in the Central Ambulance Communications Centre:**

The first two measures would help prevent 911 calls and a Patient Navigator would help divert low acuity calls from emergency rooms. A pilot project in the Niagara region has proved successful and would likewise prove effective in Windsor-Essex, which has proven track record of embracing innovative solutions.