



COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	October 12, 2022
SUBJECT:	Hospital Offload Delays (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Michael Sanderson Chief, Paramedic Service Health and Safe Communities
SIGNATURE:	

Hamilton Paramedic Service continues to experience significant impact of offload delays and its ability to maintain adequate levels of service to our community. The increasing trend of hospital offload delays has continued through 2022 and continues to worsen.

Over the last 24 hours HPS experienced a notable and significant surge in ambulance offload delays. A record high of 337 hours of ambulance response capacity was lost due to ambulance offload delays over the 24 hour period ending at 07:00 this morning. These high offload delays created extended periods where there were few or no Hamilton ambulances available for response in the City. We experienced at least eight (8) Code Zero events, with a combined time of almost 12 hours during this period.

Patients were on ambulance stretchers awaiting transfer of care at hospital for as long as 11 hours overnight. As many as 29 of our 32 staffed ambulances were on offload delay at hospital at one point. While the Provincial target for offload time at hospital is 30 minutes at the 90th percentile the last 24 hours in Hamilton saw this increase to longer than 7 hours.

Ambulances from Halton, Guelph, Niagara, Haldimand, Six Nations, and from as far away as Orangeville responded to 9-1-1 calls in Hamilton as the closest available ambulance. There were multiple delays to calls dispatched as Code 4 (life threatening) calls. Non-critical 9-1-1 calls for medical assistance were queued for as long as six hours.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Year to date in 2022 - with almost 3 months left to go in the year - we have lost 31,633 hours of response capacity to offload delay, an average of 109 hours per day, an increase of 24%. More significantly the peak days have reached unmanageable levels as evidenced by the 337 hours lost yesterday – the equivalent of 28 entire 12 hours shifts.

Corresponding to these major offload delay increases we have had a major increase in Code 0 events and lengthening response times to emergency calls. We have experienced 300 Code Zero events year to date, an average of more than 1 per day compared with an average of 1 every 4 or 5 days in both pandemic and pre-pandemic years.

On a provincial level most larger land ambulance services are reporting increasing hospital offload delay trends. However, the increases are not as significant as what we are experiencing specifically in Hamilton and generally across the former Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN area (now a part of Ontario Health West).

The situation puts significant pressure on our paramedic workforce. As such from an employee wellness and working condition perspective, hospital offload delays have also become a major focus for OPSEU, which represents our front-line paramedics.

ACTION:

Our provincial association has raised and will continue to raise offload delays as a significant issue with the Ministry of Health. We continue to meet regularly with leadership and staff from both hospital corporations on a shared work plan and undertake initiatives to assist in reducing these delays.

We continue to work with senior hospital administration and the Ministry of Health at the Assistant Deputy Minister level on solutions and have engaged the ADM in the challenges of the last 24 hours.

Noting the sustained successes in Ontario Health Central Region related to offload delays in the GTA, we have recently engaged North York General Hospital leadership to assist us in identifying opportunities that will enable us to replicate their outcomes. A meeting is planned with NYGH leadership, the CEOs and Presidents of the St. Joseph's Health System, Hamilton Health Sciences and their Senior Leaders and will be attended by myself and our General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities. We will continue to monitor the situation and actively engage both the hospitals and the Ministry of Health on more permanent solutions and will keep Council apprised of progress.

Should you require further information, please contact Chief Michael Sanderson at ext. 7741 or at michael.sanderson@hamilton.ca.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None