

Issue at a glance:

Dedicated Offload Nurse Program Expansion in Guelph



The City of Guelph calls on the Ministry of Health to support its expanded application under the Dedicated Offload Nurse Program, to provide 24/7 offload nurse coverage at Guelph General Hospital.

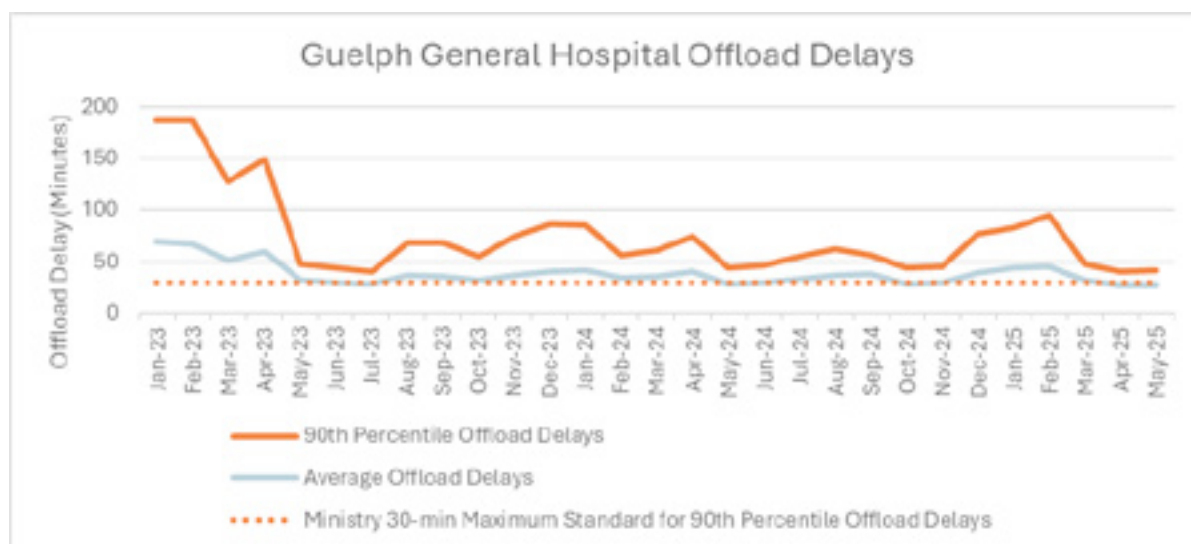
Why this is important:

Offload delays occur when patients who are transported to the hospital by ambulance are unable to be immediately seen by hospital medical staff. This results in paramedics remaining at the hospital to care for their patients, making them unavailable to respond to emergency calls.

Throughout 2022–23, Guelph General Hospital (GGH) experienced significant offload delays. At the peak of these challenges, it was not uncommon to only have 3 out of 15 ambulance

crews available to respond to emergencies, with the rest caring after patients in hospital.

While there has been significant progress made since 2023, offload delay times at GGH have seen concerning trends, and continue to exceed maximum standards set by the Ministry of Health. As of May 2025, the average offload time at GGH was 27 minutes, and 1 out of 10 patients had to wait in excess of 42 minutes to be discharged into hospital care, exceeding maximum standards by 12 minutes.



Month-by-month offload delays at Guelph General Hospital. 90th percentile offload delays are a standard performance measure - in any given month, 1 out of 10 patients experienced a delay greater than the 90th percentile delay for that month.

Progress to date—the Dedicated Offload Nurse Program:

Throughout the second quarter of 2023, Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services worked jointly with GGH and the government of Ontario to significantly reduce offload delays at GGH through process improvements, and increased patient diversion initiatives by paramedics.

The Dedicated Offload Nurse Program (DONP) was invaluable in these efforts, with the Ministry of Health providing annual funding since 2023 to

support dedicated offload nursing staff. Through this funding, a dedicated offload nurse is on site at GGH from 9 a.m.–9 p.m., 365 days a year, assuming care of patients brought to hospital by ambulance. This program is estimated to save roughly 5000 paramedic hours annually, and has significantly contributed to reducing offload delays from peak levels, and freeing up paramedic capacity.

The need for program expansion:

While significant progress has been made, the 90th percentile offload delays at GGH continue to exceed the Ministry of Health standards every month. This means that at least 1 in 10 patients brought to GGH by paramedics experience excessive wait times. This has a direct impact on patient health and wellbeing, and puts pressure on paramedics who cannot respond to emergency calls while caring for patients in hospital.

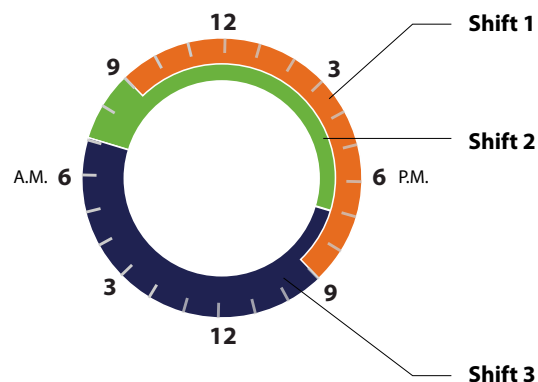
As Guelph and the surrounding areas continue to grow, the pressures on both hospital and paramedic capacity are likely to continue to increase, and it is important to respond to this

growing demand with additional resources. To support growing needs, and to maintain the progress made over the past 2 years, the City of Guelph submitted an expanded application for DONP funds in February 2025, seeking a total of about 1 million for 2025–26, an increase of \$697k. This additional funding would enable 24/7 offload nurse coverage, and allow for two dedicated offload staff to be present during peak hours. This expanded funding would ensure sufficient resources around the clock as emergency call volumes continue to rise, and assist GWPS and GGH staff in working to meet Ministry targets for offload delays.

Current Dedicated Offload Nurse Staffing



Proposed Dedicated Offload Nurse Staffing
(Pending Funding Approval)





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