

Issue at a glance:

Dedicated Offload Nurse Program Expansion at Guelph General Hospital



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 Guelph General Hospital (GGH)?



Rising paramedic call volumes:

Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services continues to see rising call volumes, increasing 8.36 between 2023 and 2025



Leveraging new capacity:

Work is underway at GGH to build a new offload space, expanding the total number of offload stretchers from 3 to 5 starting in 2027



Reducing inefficiencies:

Current 12-hour coverage means that patients under the care of an offload nurse must be transferred at the end of the shift, resulting in up to a 90 minute window where no additional offload patients can be accepted into their care.

GUELPH-WELLINGTON
PARAMEDICS

History of Offload Delays at GGH

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.

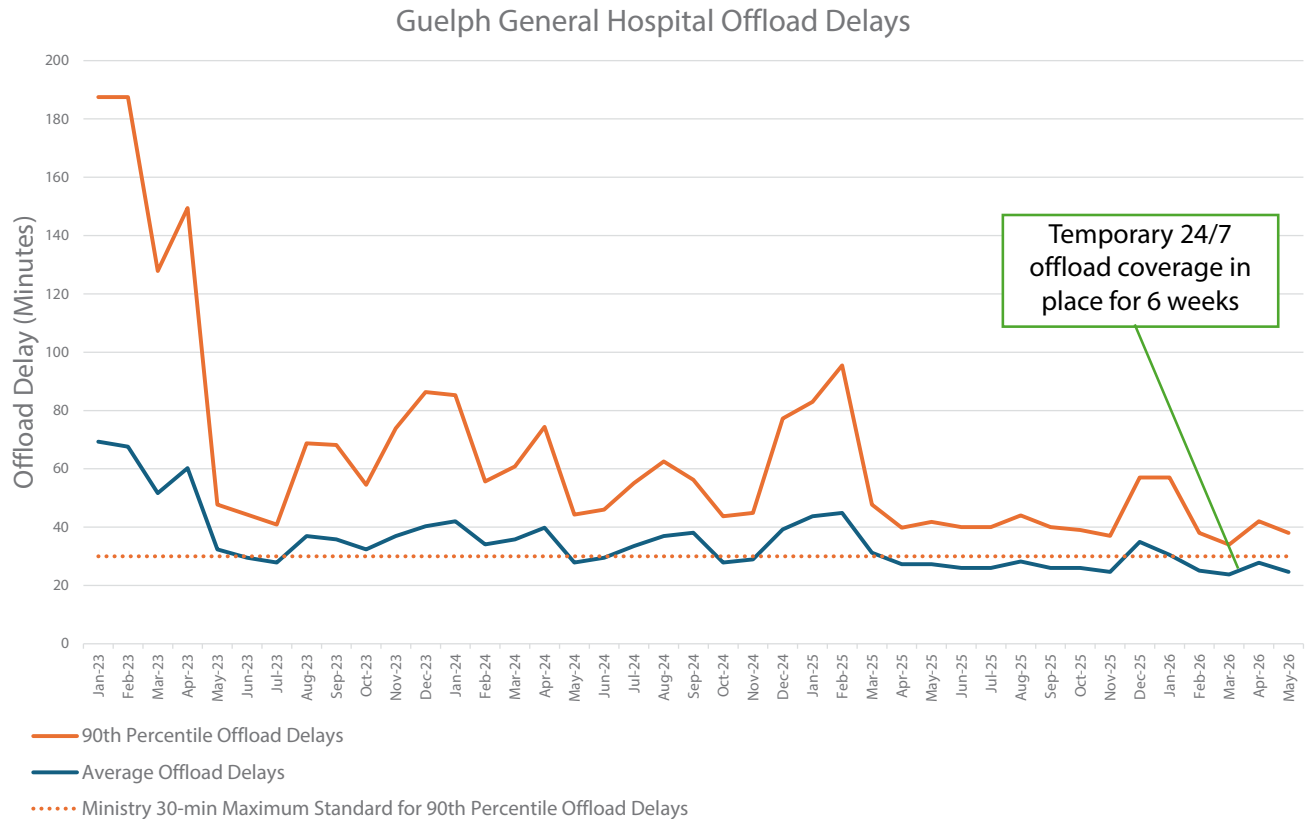
Throughout 2022-23, GGH - through a combination of factors - experienced substantial offload delays. Emergency patients arriving by ambulance waited an average of over an hour to be discharged into hospital care, and paramedics were unable to respond to other calls while caring for patients in hospital, resulting in an increase of "code red" status incidents for ambulance availability in Guelph and Wellington County.

As a result, 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 currently on site at GGH from 9am – 9pm, 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.



Why 24/7 Offload Nurse Coverage is Needed Now

Guelph Wellington Paramedic Services continues to see rising call volumes, with an average 8.36 per cent increase in call volumes between 2023 and 2025. While there has been significant progress made since 2023, offload delay times at GGH have seen concerning peaks in early 2025 and 2026, and continue to exceed maximum standards set by the Ministry of Health. As of May 2026, the average offload time at GGH was 27 minutes, and 1 out of 10 patients had to wait in excess of 40 minutes to be discharged into hospital care, demonstrating the need for uninterrupted around-the-clock offload support.

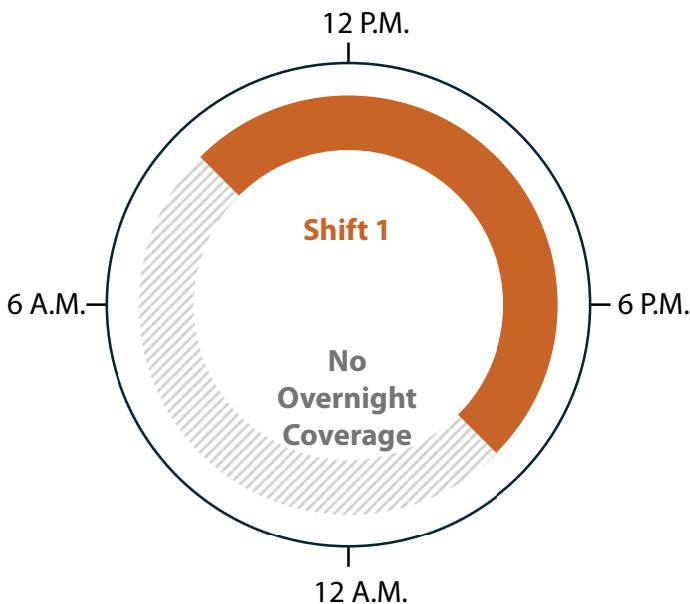


Month-by-month offload delays at Guelph General Hospital. 90th percentile offload delays are a standard performance measure - in any given month, 1 out of 10 patients experienced a delay greater than the 90th percentile delay for that month. Offload delays in March 2026 reached a 5-year low while 24/7 offload nursing coverage was in place.

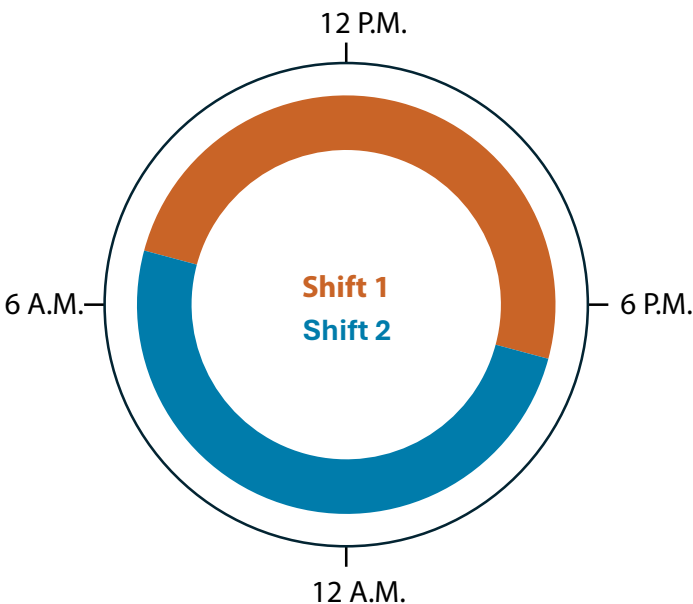
As Guelph and the surrounding areas continue to grow, the pressures on both hospital and paramedic capacity are likely to continue to increase. To support growing needs, and to maintain the progress made over the past 3 years, the City of Guelph submitted an expanded application for DONP funds in March 2026, seeking \$682,682 for 2026-27. This additional funding would support two nursing shifts covering the offload department at GGH around the clock, and eliminate current delays associated with transferring patients at the end of an offload nursing shift.

Impacts of Full Coverage

The impacts of 24/7 coverage are tangible. When GGH used limited-time provincial support to provide 24/7 offload nursing coverage for March 2026, offload delays dropped to the lowest level since 2021. Longer-term expanded funding for 24/7 offload nurse coverage would ensure sufficient resources to maintain this result 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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