

ONTARIO TACKLES ER WAITS WITH \$109 MILLION INVESTMENT

Enhanced Home Care Coverage and Efforts Targeted At Poorest Performing Emergency Rooms Lead the Way

NEWS

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Responding to challenges patients are facing in emergency rooms, the Ontario government is taking numerous coordinated steps to reduce wait times and improve patient satisfaction.

A major factor causing long emergency room (ER) wait times is the high number of alternate level of care (ALC) patients occupying acute care hospital beds, making it difficult to admit patients from the ER to hospital. ALC patients are unable to be discharged because the appropriate level of care they require is not always available. Today's announcement is making much more of that care available.

Ontario's \$109 million investment includes:

- \$39.5 Million for a *Performance Fund* targeting Ontario's 23 poorest performing emergency rooms, IT enhancements and coaching teams to enhance hospital efficiency
- \$38.5 million for increased home care personal support and homemaking services and enhanced integration between hospitals and Community Care Access Centres
- \$22 million in new priority funding for Ontario's 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) to invest in local solutions to further address ALC pressures
- \$4.5 million for dedicated nurses to care for patients who arrive at ERs by ambulance to ease ambulance offload delays
- \$4.5 million for new nurse-led outreach teams to provide more care to patients in long-term care homes to avoid transfers to the ER

Dr. Alan Hudson is Provincial Executive Lead, Access to Services and Wait Times. With today's announcement, Dr. Kevin Smith, President and CEO of St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton, is being appointed Expert Panel Lead - Alternate Level of Care (ALC). Dr. Smith will be working with Dr. Michael Schull, Sr. Scientist, ICES and Director of Emergency Medicine at University of Toronto, who was previously appointed as Expert Panel Lead for ER Wait Times.

In April, George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, unveiled his government's top two overarching health priorities for the next several years: reducing emergency room wait times and family health care for all. Today's announcement is the first in a series and builds momentum on ER wait times reductions.

QUOTES

"You cannot have a good performing emergency room so long as the ER can't admit patients to hospital," said George Smitherman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "These changes will free up our emergency rooms to do what they do best – treat emergencies."

"Fixing ER wait times is the foremost challenge for the entire health care system," said Dr. Alan

Hudson, Lead of Access to Services and Wait Times. “It requires strong leadership by hospitals, LHINs and the community sector, working together to deliver better care for the patients of Ontario. Given that Ontarians make more than five million visits to ERs they deserve nothing less.”

“By enhancing the options patients have to receive the care they need in the most appropriate setting, these investments will relieve pressures on hospitals,” said Dr. Kevin Smith, President and CEO of St. Joseph’s Healthcare in Hamilton and ALC lead. “By reducing pressures on ERs, we will reduce wait times and increase patient satisfaction.”

“The Ontario Hospital Association welcomes today’s very significant investments in hospital emergency departments and, just as importantly, in health services provided in the community,” said Tom Closson, President and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA). “We believe that this comprehensive and innovative approach to shortening emergency department wait times and ensuring that people get the care they need in the most appropriate setting will benefit patients and strengthen public confidence in Ontario’s hospitals and health care system.”

QUICK FACTS

- There are 163 emergency rooms in the province, with 2.8 million people making 5.25 million visits to these ERs each year.
- The Ontario Hospital Association indicates that seniors who are awaiting access to appropriate care elsewhere, occupy 18.6 per cent of hospitals beds in the province; 58 per cent are waiting for long-term care (LTC) home placement.
- Nearly 60 per cent of LTC homes in the province have more than 50 residents sent to hospital each year.

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Learn more about Ontario’s comprehensive [strategy](#) to improve access to care for all Ontarians.