

Funding aims to ?connect people to paramedics and ambulance services faster?



A significant investment from the Provincial government is intended to ?connect people to paramedics and ambulance services faster? throughout York Region.

On Friday afternoon, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of Health Sylvia Jones, announced the Province was increasing land ambulance funding to York Region by more than seven per cent.

?The Ministry of Health continues to support municipalities with the provision of ambulance services that meet their community's needs through the annual Land Ambulance Services Grant,? said Gallagher Murphy at the announcement, which was held at the Region of York's Newmarket headquarters. ?In 2023, Ontario is providing upper tier municipalities and designated delivery agents with over \$811 million to support land ambulance services. I am happy to announce that Ontario is increasing land ambulance funding for York Region by more than seven per cent, bringing the Province's total investment to our region this year to over \$50.4 million.

?Ontario's four-point strategy to improve ambulance offload times is focused on returning ambulances to communities faster; second, providing appropriate care for the community; thirdly, facilitating non-ambulance transportation for stable patients; and fourthly, increasing health and human resources. Together, this helps to improve patient flow in hospital, reduce ambulance offload delay and avoid unnecessary visits to the emergency department. This is why we take the issue of ambulance workload delay so seriously. We will continue to support municipalities and paramedic services to maintain ambulance availability in their communities.

?As announced in the 2023 Ontario Budget, the Government increased the dedicated offload nurses program funding with an additional \$51 million being invested over the next three fiscal years to support municipalities and dedicated delivery agents across this Province. The additional \$17 million annual funding will mean that more than double the funding is going to the dedicated offload nurse program. This definitely demonstrates our commitment to strengthen emergency health services. To this end, to help reduce delays paramedics encounter dropping off patients in a hospital, Ontario is investing nearly \$2.4 million in York Region, representing a more than a 60 per cent increase over the previous year. This will allow nurses and other eligible health care providers to be hired and dedicated to the smooth and timely offloading of ambulance patients in hospitals.?

In making the announcement, Gallagher Murphy recognized ?the amazing work and commitment? of York Region Paramedic Services which, she said, are out in the community every day and are ?a key pillar of our healthcare system.? They are also ?thinking outside the box on how they can best provide health services to our community members?, with the Province giving the Service flexibility to treat 9-1-1 patients ?at home, on the scene, or take them to more appropriate care facilities in the community, instead of transporting patients to emergency departments.?

Chris Spearen, Chief of York Region Paramedic Services, hailed MPP Gallagher Murphy and Regional Council for their ongoing support, adding that this funding will help address increasing call volumes and demand for paramedic services, particularly in such a growing community.

“This funding is vital for improving patient outcomes and ensuring response time targets are met,” said Spearen. “The announcement today focuses on the three areas of focus: our land ambulance service grant funding, which is critical to making sure we have the ability to deliver on our operational services, and also make sure our paramedics are able to provide care in the community; it allows us to develop and use some of our innovative systems and to be able to deliver this care as well. It really supports our long-term planning. We have done a lot of work trying to plan in the long-term as to how we meet the needs of our residents and ongoing funding like this does allow us to meet those needs.

“Offload delay is one of the key elements that provides risk in our system. Being able to get our paramedics out of the hospital back out into the community and run in to respond in a really timely manner is absolutely critical to making sure that the public gets the care they need.”

Added Regional Chair Wayne Emmerson: “When we work together to ensure our residents have access to the right care at the right time, we're also working together to maintain a strong, caring and safe York Region for all and that is critical.”

By Brock Weir
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