

Police Support in Emergency Departments

September 23, 2021

Dear Ottawa Police Services Board,

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) is no stranger to the Emergency Department (ED) teams at Queensway Carleton Hospital (QCH) and The Ottawa Hospital (TOH). OPS plays an important role in patient safety, transition, and elopement.

In 2020, the OPS presented 2,740 patients to both QCH and TOH EDs, almost 70 per cent of their total patients taken to EDs in Ottawa last year. Officers support patients' transition from the community to the hospital – helping to ensure the safety of not only the patients but also the nurses and doctors who care for them. Officers remain with the patient until a safe transition can be made to the hospital care team. This is particularly relevant for those patients experiencing a mental health crisis. This patient population represents the majority of OPS patient transfers.

In addition, the OPS also respond to hospital “Code Yellow” when a patient is missing, supporting a search of the property and the neighbouring areas. OPS also conducts wellness checks at patients' homes when specifically requested by the hospital physicians when there are immediate concerns for the safety of a patient.

Now more than ever, the Emergency Department requires these supports. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the mental health of this community. We are seeing a higher volume of cases, and more acute cases. This puts great pressure on our already-stretched Emergency Departments, where staff are exhausted after 18 months of change, uncertainty, and staffing shortages.

Recommendation to the Ottawa Police Services Board

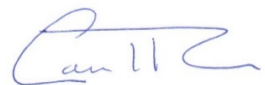
1. The Ottawa Hospital and Queensway Carleton Hospital are asking the OPS Board to please ensure that OPS can maintain the same level of service to hospitals at this critical time. Cutting services would negatively impact this community, specifically those experiencing a mental health crisis.
2. In addition, The Ottawa Hospital and Queensway Carleton Hospital are asking the OPS Board to consider increasing resources for the Health IM Program in which officers in the field assess patients, determine the most appropriate location for transport, and notify hospitals in advance of any safety risks using an on-line tool. This important program helps hospitals prepare in advance to ensure the right resources and protections are available for a timely transfer of care. Given limited police resources, this program is not yet running as designed.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our words and for giving us the opportunity to shed some light on how critical police officers are to the hospitals in Ottawa.

Sincerely,



Dr. Andrew Falconer, President & CEO
Queensway Carleton Hospital



Cameron Love, President & CEO
The Ottawa Hospital