

Ontario Launching New Emergency Department Action Team to Shorten Wait Times

TORONTO — The Ontario government is taking action to reduce wait times and improve the patient experience in emergency departments with the official launch of the Emergency Department Action Team (EDAT). Supported by an investment of more than \$47 million, the EDAT will lead efforts to help 26 hospitals across the province reduce wait times and get patients the care they need as quickly as possible. This team will also apply Lean methodologies to streamline processes, identify and address bottlenecks and improve patient flow so people can receive timely, high-quality care when they need it the most.

“Ontario is investing historic amounts in our health-care system, including \$101 billion this year, so we can connect more patients to convenient care close to home,” said Premier Doug Ford. “Our Emergency Department Action Team will leave no stone unturned in its mission to reduce emergency room wait times at Ontario hospitals, so patients and families get the care they need, when and where they need it.”

In fall 2025, the EDAT worked with five emergency department sites across three hospital organizations: The Ottawa Hospital, Windsor Regional Hospital and Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre. This work identified a series of operational, workforce and system-level factors that contribute to delays in patient care and increased pressure on emergency departments. It also identified practical changes to help patients move more quickly through assessment, diagnostics, admission and discharge. The five hospitals will begin implementing these recommendations over the coming months. Building on this work, the province is marking the official launch of the EDAT with an investment of more than \$47 million over four years to support its work. This will be a multi-year initiative targeting 26 emergency department sites where there is the greatest opportunity to reduce wait times and improve the patient experience. The team will work with hospitals to identify

and address delays at key stages of the patient journey, helping people get the right care as quickly as possible.

“Our government is taking action to shorten wait times and ensure people have the best possible experience every time they enter an emergency department,” said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “The Emergency Department Action Team will build on the work already underway across the province by delivering practical solutions that improve emergency services, reduce wait times and help patients get the care they need when they need it.”

The Ontario government continues to support emergency departments through targeted initiatives, including the ED Peer-to-Peer Program, ED Pay-for-Results Program and the ED Nursing Education, Retention and Workforce Program, which help hospitals improve patient flow, reduce wait times and strengthen access to emergency care. Between 2024-2025, Ontario saw year-over-year improvements in key emergency department performance indicators:

Average ambulance offload time improved by over 20 per cent

Average ED wait time to Physician Initial Assessment improved by 7 per cent

Average ED length of stay for admitted patients improved by nearly 10 per cent

Through Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care, the Ontario government continues to invest in improving emergency care, making it faster and easier for people of all ages to connect to the high-quality care they need, where and when they need it. This includes supporting access to care through Health811 and Health Care Connect, helping more people find the right care in the right setting and reducing unnecessary pressures on emergency departments.

The EDAT will be chaired by Dr. Abdel-Rahman Lawendy, who will lead efforts to help 26 hospitals across the province reduce wait times and get patients the care they need as quickly as possible.

Dr. Abdel-Rahman Lawendy has extensive experience as a surgeon, researcher and PhD scientist in London, Ontario. He is the J.C. Kennedy Chair in Orthopedic Surgery at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University. He serves as the Orthopedic Division Head at London Health Sciences Center and St. Josephs Health Care Centre. Dr. Lawendy also established and serves as the Medical Director and Chief of the Nazem Kadri Ambulatory Surgical Centre, a high efficiency outpatient surgical centre at London Health Sciences Centre.

Ontario is investing approximately \$64 billion in major health infrastructure as part of the government's plan to get shovels in the ground on more than 50 major hospital projects across the province and deliver nearly 3,000 new hospital beds to enhance access to quality care and build a more connected, people-first health-care system.

The Ontario government is investing over \$281 million in 2026-27 to support critical infrastructure upgrades and repairs at 126 hospitals and 67 community health-care facilities across the province, a 9.4 per cent increase from the previous year.

More than 4,200 nurses have participated in ED Virtual Education, with over 15,000 Specialty Training Fund Grants utilized.

There has been a 300 per cent increase in ED Peer-to-Peer Program calls since inception of the program.

“Ontario's hospital emergency department teams have demonstrated resilience and improved performance. Today's announcement of the Emergency Department Action Team will further bolster Ontario's response to health system pressures and increasingly high acuity. Ontario Health will continue to work alongside system partners to spread leading practices, support performance improvement and advance solutions to help patients access emergency care more quickly.”

- Matthew Anderson
President and CEO, Ontario Health



Election Sign Vandalism Is an Attack on Democracy — Let the Voters Decide

By John Meloche

As the 2026 municipal election approaches, a troubling issue deserves the attention of every resident, regardless of political affiliation: the removal, relocation, damage, and destruction of election campaign signs.

Signs are being pulled from the ground, moved from their original locations, knocked over, damaged, and in some cases disappearing entirely.

Whether these acts are motivated by political disagreement, personal dislike, or simple mischief, deliberate interference with legally placed election signs is unacceptable.

An election sign is more than a piece of plastic attached to a metal stake. It represents a candidate who has made the decision to participate in our democratic process. Behind that sign are volunteers, financial contributions, countless hours of work, and residents who have chosen to publicly express their support. When someone deliberately destroys or removes that sign, they are not simply damaging property. They are attempting to silence a political message. And that should concern everyone. Democracy does not mean only allowing the candidates we agree with to be heard. In fact, one of the most important tests of a healthy democracy is our willingness to defend the rights of people whose opinions, policies, or personalities we strongly oppose.

You do not have to like a candidate. You do not have to support their platform. You can criticize their decisions, challenge their statements, debate their policies, and encourage others to vote against them. But you do not have the right to interfere with their lawful campaign activities simply because you dislike them.

The law is clear. Section 6.08 of the City of Pickering's Election Sign By-law 7591/17 prohibits the removal, defacement, or wilful damage of lawfully displayed election signs.

Ontario Provincial Police have also warned that stealing, vandalizing, or interfering with campaign signs can result in criminal or provincial charges.

There is an important distinction between legitimate municipal bylaw enforcement and individuals taking matters into their own hands. Signs that violate placement regulations can be removed by the appropriate authorities. Residents who discover unwanted signs on their own property should contact the responsible campaign or the City.

Disagreement is not a licence to vandalize. There is also a financial consequence that is too often overlooked. Municipal candidates operate under strict spending limits. Campaign signs cost money to purchase, distribute, install, maintain, and replace.

Every deliberately destroyed sign creates another expense. Every missing sign forces volunteers to spend time replacing it instead of knocking on doors, meeting residents, and discussing the issues that actually matter.

More importantly, removing signs deprives residents of the opportunity to see who is running and make their own informed decisions. This is particularly disappointing in municipal elections, where candidates are often neighbours, local business owners, parents, community volunteers, and ordinary residents hoping to contribute to their city.

We should be encouraging participation in local democracy, not creating an atmosphere of intimidation and hostility.

Those responsible should understand that these actions do not strengthen their political arguments. They undermine them.

Residents who witness deliberate sign tampering should document what they safely can and report suspected offences to the appropriate authorities rather than confronting individuals themselves.

Every candidate deserves a fair opportunity to participate, regardless of their political beliefs, popularity, or chances of winning. On October 26, Pickering residents will have the opportunity to decide who should represent them. That decision belongs to voters, not vandals.

If you dislike a candidate, challenge their ideas. Ask difficult questions. Campaign for someone else. Encourage your neighbours to participate. And when the time comes, make your voice heard where it actually counts At the ballot box. Let every candidate campaign. Let every resident decide. And let democracy do its job.



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