



Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians Expresses Concerns Over Summer Closures of Emergency Departments Across Canada

[Ottawa, June 30] – The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP) is once again deeply concerned about the increasing trend of emergency department closures during the summer months across Canada. These closures not only pose significant risks to patients but also place additional strain on an already overwhelmed healthcare system. CAEP rang the alarm bell last summer with [this release](#) and unfortunately governments and policymakers have failed to enact positive changes to prevent future closures.

Emergency departments play a critical role in providing immediate and life-saving care to Canadians in their time of need. The decision to unexpectedly close or reduce services during the summer months raises serious concerns regarding patient safety and access to timely healthcare services.

Dr. Michael Howlett, President of CAEP, stated, "Unexpected emergency department closures during the summer months can have dire consequences for patients. Emergencies don't take a vacation, and people continue to require urgent medical attention regardless of the season. It is crucial that we maintain a robust and accessible emergency care system year-round."

The closures are often attributed to several factors, including staff shortages, limited funding, and increased demand for healthcare services. However, CAEP emphasizes that these challenges must be addressed through collaborative efforts among healthcare providers, policymakers, and government agencies to ensure the provision of high-quality emergency care without interruption.

Dr. Elizabeth Shouldice, Chair of CAEP's Public Affairs committee noted, "The closure of emergency departments not only disrupts access to care for patients but also places immense pressure on nearby healthcare facilities, leading to overcrowding, longer wait times, and compromised patient outcomes. It is essential that we find sustainable solutions to address these issues and protect the well-being of Canadians."

CAEP calls upon all levels of government, healthcare administrators, and policymakers to prioritize the stability and accessibility of emergency care services, particularly during peak periods such as the summer months. The association, once again, recommends the following measures to mitigate the impact of emergency department closures:

- Address systemic issues of community and long-term care that are insufficient for patient care instead of reliance on the ED and acute care hospital to solve all problems. (CAEP position statement: Emergency department overcrowding and access block).¹
- Develop a hospital bed capacity strategy that reflects actual need. Canada has one of the lowest number of beds per capita of OECD countries.



- Develop a national human health resources strategy to stabilize and create a healthy workforce including working toward a national licensure.²
- Increase the training and education opportunities in nursing and medicine.
- Actively manage the health and wellbeing of ED front-line workers. All responsible parties should be required to monitor, produce, and disclose their burnout prevention and mitigation strategies and results for front-line emergency providers, and be incentivized based on results. Future systems rely on a healthy and robust workforce, but they are leaving in record numbers. The costs to hire and provide orientation to Health Care providers is more expensive than strategies to improve workplace satisfaction and safety.
- Address issues of ED escalating workplace violence (CAEP position statement on violence in the emergency department).³

We are also calling for a National Summit with Government leaders to discuss the recommendations above. By implementing these measures, CAEP believes that emergency departments can continue to fulfill their crucial role in safeguarding the health and well-being of Canadians, regardless of the season.

The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP) is a national association representing emergency physicians across Canada. CAEP's mission is to promote the highest quality of emergency medical care and to advocate for the needs of emergency physicians and the patients they serve.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Christina Bova
Director, Member Engagement and Advocacy
Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians
Phone: 613-793-0926
Email: cbova@caep.ca

Note to editors:

The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP) is available for interviews and expert commentary on the topic of emergency department closures and their impact on patient care and the healthcare system.

References:

1. Affleck A, Parks P, Drummond A, Rowe BH, Ovens HJ. Emergency department overcrowding and access block. *CJEM*. 2013 Nov;15(6):359-84. English, French. doi: 10.1017/s1481803500002451. PMID: 24176460.
2. <https://caep.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/National-Licensure-ConsensusStatement-FINAL.pdf>



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3. Drummond, A., Chochinov, A., Johnson, K. et al. CAEP position statement on violence in the emergency department. Can J Emerg Med 23, 758–761 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43678-021-00182-z>

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