

December 13, 2022

Hon. Kelly Regan, MLA
Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts
c/o Legislative Committees Office
1700 Granville St.
2nd Floor, One Government Place
P.O. Box 2630
Halifax, NS B3J 3P7

Received LCO
December 14, 2022

Dear Ms. Regan,

We are responding to correspondence dated December 1, 2022, from the Legislative Committees Clerk for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Committee requested the Department of Health and Wellness and Nova Scotia Health provide a response to the following questions:

Q2. In the last month, how many hours were ERs closed across Nova Scotia?

Nova Scotia's emergency departments are scheduled to operate a total of 19,893 hours per month. This includes 24/7 operations at our regional EDs and the QEII, which have never closed. In October, our EDs were open 80.5 per cent of scheduled hours. In November, our EDs were open 84.4 per cent of scheduled hours.

Total closure hours for the month of October 2022 were 7,336, of which 3,451 hours were unscheduled closures and 3,885 hours were scheduled closures.

Total closure hours for the month of November 2022 were 7,020, of which 3,099 hours were unscheduled closures and 3,921 hours were scheduled closures.

There is a formal validation process in place, whereas monthly closure hours are confirmed through a retrospective reviewing of data to confirm accuracy. While the numbers noted above represent validated data for the Eastern, Western and Central Zones, the Northern Zone data is not yet validated, therefore it's possible the final validated hours may differ, albeit slightly.

Q5. How many notices have been put out encouraging people not to visit the emergency room because of it being over-stretched or understaffed in the last month?

We confirmed there was one notice issued November 8, 2022 to advise of overcapacity at the QEII resulting in long waits:
<https://www.nshealth.ca/news/overcrowding-qeii-health-sciences-centre-nov-8>.
As is our practices with other public service announcements and news releases, along with being posted to nshealth.ca, the notice was issued to media and shared on Twitter and Facebook to ensure it is widely seen.

The notice did not ask people to avoid the emergency room. In fact, it said: Please do not hesitate to visit the QEII emergency department if you are experiencing an emergency. Anyone with urgent medical needs should call 911.

Q9. What is the average cost of an ER visit using Maple? Is the department able to provide a cost comparison between an in-person appointment at an ER and a virtual care emergency appointment?

Determining a per-cost visit will be part of an evaluation of the pilot and we can provide the committee with that figure once an evaluation is completed.

Q13. How many Spring 2022 nursing graduates have now been offered and accepted a job in the province?

We hired 163 into Supernumerary positions and an additional 37 into core vacancies for a total of 200.

Thank you for this opportunity to share information with the Committee. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of us or our office.

Yours truly,



Jeannine Lagasse
Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness; and



Karen Oldfield
Interim President and CEO of Nova Scotia Health