

Funding Request for a Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (VTAC) in the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

Submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Health by the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville through the Leeds Grenville Paramedic Service

The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville respectfully submit this request to the Ontario Ministry of Health for funding to support a new model of care aimed at addressing persistent gaps in access to timely, appropriate healthcare across our region. This proposed model will integrate virtual primary care with community paramedicine services to better serve seniors, unattached patients, and individuals living with chronic conditions. By improving care coordination and reducing unnecessary 911 calls and emergency department visits, this initiative aligns with the Ministry's priorities for innovation, system efficiency, and equitable care delivery in underserved communities.

Executive Summary

Leeds Grenville Paramedic Service respectfully requests \$3 million in funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health to establish a Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (VTAC) in the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. This program will follow the proven model pioneered by Renfrew County and will be tailored to meet our areas' unique demographic and geographic needs. Through strategic integration with our existing community paramedicine program, the VTAC will address long-standing access barriers, reduce the strain on local emergency departments (EDs), and deliver high-quality care to seniors, individuals without primary care physicians, and residents managing chronic illnesses.

Background and Context

Leeds and Grenville is a predominantly rural area where access to timely health care is increasingly strained. The region is experiencing longer-than-average wait times in emergency departments, a diminishing number of family physicians due to retirement or workforce shortages, and no after-hours walk-in clinic availability. These challenges disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, particularly seniors and individuals with chronic diseases who are unattached to primary care. The geography of the region, with long distances between population centres and limited transportation infrastructure, compounds these access issues.

As a result, residents are often left with few options beyond the 911 system and local EDs for non-urgent health concerns. This misallocation of emergency resources results in increased system pressure, poorer patient outcomes, and rising health care costs.

VTAC's have demonstrated their value during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to evolve as a sustainable care delivery model. By integrating physicians, nurse practitioners and Community Paramedics, VTAC's provide an innovative, proven, locally grounded solution that aligns with Ontario Health priorities around connected care and improved healthcare equity.

Proposed Solution

A Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre would offer a centralized, coordinated, and accessible health care entry point for residents. VTAC's primary medical oversight will be provided by physicians and nurse practitioners and with the support of community paramedics, will offer virtual consultations, assessment, and treatment. Community paramedics will support this model of care and extend virtual care into homes when in-person assessments or services are needed, ensuring the right care is delivered in the right setting.

The program will directly support three priority groups:

- Seniors requiring ongoing monitoring and support,
- Unattached patients without a regular family physician,
- Individuals managing chronic conditions such as COPD, CHF, and diabetes.

The goal is to reduce unnecessary ED visits and non-emergent 911 calls while improving continuity and quality of care.

Community Paramedicine Integration

Leeds Grenville Paramedic Service's existing Community Paramedicine Program is ideally positioned to form the backbone of this VTAC's in-person response capacity. Currently funded through both the Ontario Ministry of Long-Term Care and the Ontario Ministry of Health, the program is already delivering targeted interventions for vulnerable residents, with emphasis on:

- Reducing avoidable Emergency Department visits/ED Diversion
- Managing medications and monitoring chronic conditions
- Health system navigation and healthcare literacy
- Helping seniors age safely at home awaiting long-term care and crisis placement
- Expanding support for primary care in the community
- Supporting discharges for alternate level of care (ALC) patients
- Providing support for acute palliative and end-of-life care
- Strengthening system capacity through integrated, collaborative care models

Community paramedics will act as the VTAC's frontline in-home responders, performing assessments, delivering diagnostics and treatments, supporting primary care planning, and providing follow-up to patients assessed virtually. This integration will expand the reach of virtual physicians and allow patients to remain in the community safely. VTAC is an innovative, proven and collaborative healthcare program that will exponentially increase health care access to all residents in need.

System Partnerships

The Leeds Grenville VTAC will be delivered in partnership with:

- Local primary care providers and family health teams,
- Local hospitals and emergency departments,
- The Ontario Health Team serving the region,
- The local public health unit.

This integrated approach ensures that the VTAC complements and supports existing care pathways, rather than duplicating services. It will also create new referral loops to connect unattached patients to appropriate long-term primary care supports.

Budget Request

The Leeds Grenville Paramedic Service is seeking \$3 million in funding to support the first 18 months of operation. This funding will cover:

- Clinical staffing (physicians, NPs, RNs),
- Community paramedic support and vehicle costs,
- IT infrastructure and virtual care platforms,
- Program management and administrative overhead,
- Evaluation, data collection, and reporting.

This investment will establish a sustainable, scalable model of care that reduces system strain and delivers measurable improvements in health outcomes.

Anticipated Outcomes

The Leeds Grenville VTAC will deliver the following system-level benefits:

- Greater access to primary care for unattached patients,
- A reduction in 911 calls for non-urgent issues,
- Fewer non-urgent ED visits and lower ED congestion,
- Improved chronic disease management and medication compliance,
- Increased patient satisfaction and quality of life.

Ongoing evaluation will track these outcomes and support continuous improvement.

Conclusion

The Leeds Grenville Paramedic Service is committed to innovation, integration, and improving care for the people of our region. A Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre will fill critical service gaps, reduce the burden on emergency services, and ensure our most vulnerable residents receive the care they need, when and where they need it.

We respectfully request the Ministry's support in funding this essential program, which builds on a strong foundation of local paramedic leadership and aligns with provincial health system goals.