



# WE RESPOND

## 2024 — 2029







## Message from our Board Chair and CEO

As we began mapping out the next chapter in the history of air ambulance and critical care service in Ontario, we were mindful of our unique role in the provincial healthcare system. We recognized the need to reach out to our many partners in care to fully understand how we can serve them better. We also sought the input of our own team members who are on the frontlines of delivering care in transport across every region of Ontario. Finally, we were mindful of the support of our funder, the Government of Ontario, whose investments have enabled Ornge to build the foundation required to meet the future needs of our patients.

We are excited to share the results of this process with our new *Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029*. *We Respond* is a blueprint for the future of our organization and our commitment to health equity, operational excellence, and patient-centred care.

At the core of this is our renewed mission: *We overcome time and distance when it matters most*. As Ontario’s air ambulance service, we are deeply committed to ensuring that every person, regardless of where they live, has access to timely and life-saving care. Our vision, “Health Equity in Motion,” reflects our dedication to removing barriers to healthcare across the province, especially in the most remote and underserved regions.

*We Respond* focuses on four key areas. We are committed to improving timeliness through operational excellence. We will optimize our team, assets, and responsiveness to ensure that we meet patient needs efficiently and effectively. We will lead the way in health equity by innovating and implementing new programs that address geographic disparities in access to care. We will continue to build a strong organizational culture that unites us as one team with one mission. Finally, we will foster strong partnerships that are essential to our success.

Ornge is more than a transport service. We are a lifeline for people in need. We are a team of dedicated professionals who are passionate about delivering high-quality care to the people of Ontario. Together, with our partners and communities, we will continue to respond to the needs of our patients and fulfill our mission.



**Ian Delaney**  
Board Chair  
Ornge



**Dr. Homer Tien**  
President and CEO  
Ornge



# WE RESPOND...

## VISION

Health Equity in Motion

## MISSION

We overcome time and distance when it matters most.

## VALUES

Safe  
Patient-Centred  
Accountable  
Respectful  
Kind and Compassionate

### TO THOSE WHO NEED CARE

We save lives. We preserve health.

### TO SYSTEM AND COMMUNITY

We enable timely access to care. We grow system capacity to meet need.



### AS LEADERS IN HEALTH EQUITY

We research and implement innovative services and programs to address geographic inequities in care.

### AS ONE TEAM

We are a patient-focused team unified in delivering our mission.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1

### IMPROVED TIMELINESS THROUGH OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Over the next five years we will focus on optimizing our capacity and capabilities across the organization in order to better meet need and improve timely access to care.

2

### CREATING THE ORNGE ACADEMY FOR HEALTH EQUITY

Our vision of “health equity in motion” will come to life by bringing together existing and newly planned clinical, education, research and innovation efforts into an academy of learning and application for our team and for others.

3

### ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Working together as one team, internally and with our partners, to put the patient at the centre of everything we do.

4

### ACCOUNTABILITY AND STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Focusing on partnerships to promote increased transparency on Ornge performance, system challenges and opportunities.



# OUR VALUES

Our core values shape who we are at Ornge, they guide what we do and they foster a strong culture across our team.



## The Ornge team is:

SAFE	PATIENT-CENTRED	ACCOUNTABLE	RESPECTFUL	KIND AND COMPASSIONATE
We prioritize the health, safety and well-being of our patients, our Ornge team members and our partners above all else. We foster a culture where safety is everyone’s responsibility. We are dedicated to ongoing learning and innovation in safety.	Across Ornge, we place patients at the heart of everything we do. The needs of our patients are our highest priority. We provide care that is respectful of and responsive to individual patient needs, values and optimal health outcomes.	It is our responsibility to Ontarians to set clear goals, develop actionable plans and execute them effectively. At Ornge we foster a culture of trust, transparency and open communication to ensure shared accountability for high performance always.	For those we care for, respect means diligent attention and individual consideration of health, social, cultural, and geographic impact for each patient under our care. Within Ornge, mutual respect fosters a positive and inclusive workplace where all individuals feel heard and empowered to contribute their best. For our partners, respect means listening, responding and conducting our mandate with integrity at all times.	Treating our patients, colleagues and partners with kindness and compassion supports a positive team culture and patient experience.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

## Improved **Timeliness** through Operational Excellence

Over the next five years we will focus on optimizing our capacity, performance and capabilities across the organization in order to better meet patient need and continue to improve timeliness and equity in access to care, particularly for those living in the most remote parts of the province.

### 1.1 Optimizing Our Team: *Staffing with Certainty*

A multi-pronged initiative is being put in place to ensure Ornge has a workforce:



large enough and located appropriately to meet cross-province need

specialty trained in Ornge operations

representative of a full continuum of skills and capabilities to optimize everyone’s contribution to our mandate.

**By 2029,**

All bases will be fully staffed with an increased number of front-line staff.

**>50%**

increase to front-line

A range of strategies, including attracting individuals from local Northern communities to join Ornge, will have improved front-line staff recruitment and retention. Ornge will also continue to look beyond Canadian borders for highly skilled staff.

Ornge will have a suite of comprehensive training programs in place to educate all front-line staff in meeting the highest standards of patient-centred care, aviation and aircraft maintenance practices.

### 1.2 Optimizing Our Assets

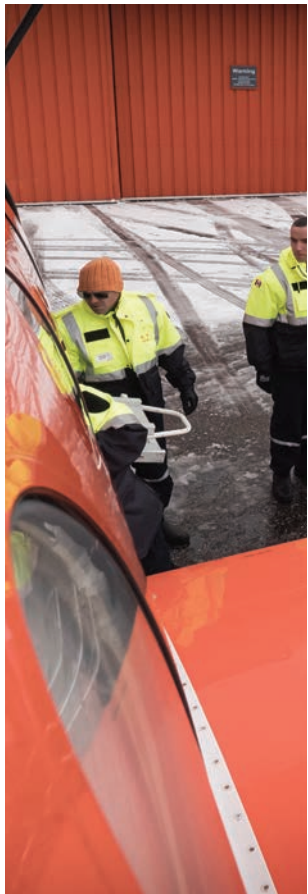
Transport assets must keep pace with Ornge’s mandate to meet the needs of Ontarians. An exciting number of asset and program expansions will take place over the next five years.

#### Major goals are:

##### Fixed Wing Fleet Renewal and Expansion

With a significant investment from the Government of Ontario and in order to meet growing need, our fixed wing fleet will be renewed and expanded between now and 2031. New, more fuel-efficient aircraft will be added to the fleet and current aircraft will be updated to be able to better meet individual patient needs and to take advantage of the latest equipment and technologies. As part of this expansion, a larger base will be built in Sudbury to balance out provincial fixed wing coverage, house four new aircraft and provide more timely response to the James Bay and Hudson Bay regions, where more than 15,000 people live.

*This expansion is expected to be fully implemented by 2031. By 2026, Ornge will have increased its fixed wing fleet by four, for a total of 12 fixed wing aircraft based out of four operational bases across Northern Ontario.*







**Special Mission Capabilities**  
Ornge is expected to meet not only critical transport needs but also complex patient needs. For example, urgent long-distance travel to treatment centres specialized in trauma or burns, neo-natal and organ team transports requiring specialized equipment or emergency transfers of multiple individuals from the site of an accident. To achieve this, Ornge will consider expanding its fleet with larger, faster long-range aircraft which are equipped for these types of specialized missions.

*By 2029, Ornge's fleet will have enhanced capabilities for special missions.*

**Dedicated Ornge Teams Specialized for Mental Health**  
Mental illness and addictions are significant health issues, particularly in Northern Ontario where access to care close to home is challenging at best. Ornge is expanding its existing service by adding an additional multi-professional team solely dedicated to the transport and care of persons with mental health needs in the North.

*By 2026, two dedicated 12/7 mental health teams will be in place to provide daily coverage for rapid response and specialized mental health care.*



### 1.3 Optimizing Our Responsiveness

Timeliness is crucial in medical transport. Ornge's response times will continue to be improved by focusing on process flow innovations, team readiness, optimized system and staff performance, dispatch and delay improvements and timeliness measures that will be shared with our partners. Equally important to having the right assets and team in place is ensuring we have the right information available to track and monitor our efforts. Understanding how we define the information we measure is critical to the success of these initiatives.

To support this, we will focus on the dispatch process itself -- examining each component from initial call to launch -- ensuring we have the tools required to generate and access timely, relevant and accurate data.

*By 2027, Ornge will employ new data-driven strategies to support a culture of timeliness.*



STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

# Creating the Ornge Academy for Health Equity

Ornge has a mandate to ensure access to care for the entire population of this province: 14.5 million people living in communities spread out over approximately one million square kilometres. Equity in access to care is an enormous challenge and impacts both life and death, particularly in remote parts of the province. Ornge is continually looking for evidence-based clinical and operational innovations to improve access to care.

## 2.1 Building a Provincial Health Equity Alliance

As part of Ornge Academy for Health Equity, research and learning in health equity will be translated into action and measurable impact, in collaboration with leading academic institutions, provincial, Indigenous, and local partners across the province. The goal is to establish a shared understanding of the challenges that exist and then to prioritize, plan and implement improvements together.

*By 2026, a provincial health equity alliance co-designed and facilitated by Ornge and our Indigenous partners comprised of community, health, academic and research partners will be in place, to develop and implement sustainable equity-focused solutions.*



## 2.2 Improving Equity in Access to Care with Emergency First Response Teams

Building on the existing program administered by the Lake of Woods District Hospital, Ornge will assume responsibility for Emergency First Response Teams situated in Northern Ontario. This involves managing and training personnel in community and offering enhanced capabilities to respond to emergencies. In partnership with Indigenous communities, Ornge will work to prioritize new communities and opportunities for program growth, including procurement of patient transport vehicles, enhanced training, and potential call dispatch support. Administration of the Emergency First Response Teams will leverage Ornge’s expertise in pre-hospital care and knowledge of the challenges faced by remote fly-in communities.

*By 2029, Ornge’s Emergency First Response Teams will be a robust program within Ornge with established training programs and community support.*

## 2.3 Innovation and Leadership Through Learning and Development

Ornge is recognized internationally for its leadership in education and research. As Ornge values professional development for all staff, all internal training and development will be directed under the banner of Ornge Academy for Health Equity. Our vision of “health equity in motion” will come to life by bringing together existing and newly-planned clinical, education, research and innovation efforts to improve health equity into an academy of learning and application.

*By 2029 the Ornge Academy for Health Equity will have strengthened and consolidated Ornge’s education and research efforts:*

- Ornge, with academic partners, will develop a virtual curriculum with hands-on practicums in critical care medicine for doctors and other health care providers working in rural and remote settings to augment provincial critical care capacity.
- Ornge will actively pursue opportunities to enhance Critical Care Flight Paramedic education within our in-house CCP program.
- Ornge, in partnership with the University of Toronto, will continue to offer the internationally available Critical Care Transport Fellowship.
- Ornge will develop and work with a university to offer a Fellowship in Health Equity based in Northern Ontario with rotations within Ornge fixed wing operations and at smaller rural hospitals to fully appreciate the unique challenges faced by Ontarians in the farthest reaches of the province.



**“Everyone in this province must have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential. We support Ornge’s efforts to ensure patients receive the care they need and deserve, regardless of where they live in Ontario.”**



**Lynne Innes, President and CEO  
Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA)**



SPOTLIGHT

INNOVATIVE HEALTHCARE INTERVENTIONS

Blood on Board and Whole Blood Trial



Hemorrhage is a leading cause of death in traumatically injured patients. Research shows that early blood transfusions can improve patient outcomes. Ontario’s first Blood on Board program - a partnership between Ornge and Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto - launched in 2021. The program was expanded to Thunder Bay in 2023 and London in 2024.

Ornge is conducting a clinical trial to assess the efficacy of using whole blood for resuscitation of hemorrhagic shock in the pre-hospital environment - the first of its kind in Canada. With the frequent need for blood products during transport and based on the success of the program to date, the plan is to expand Blood on Board to all Ornge based as well as expand the blood products carried. This is an important health equity initiative as it enhances pre-hospital capabilities for rural and remote communities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

One Team, One Mission

Working together as one team, both internally and with our partners, is crucial to extend our reach and provide better, faster and more reliable coverage. Ornge is part of a health system of partners that must work closely, putting the people we care for together at the centre of everything we do.



3.1 Working with Partner Carriers to Meet Need

To be able to meet our patients’ needs for timely and reliable air transfers, a network of ready and able aircraft is require – and this goes beyond Ornge’s own fleet. Ornge partners with private air carriers based primarily in the north – known as Standing Agreement (SA) Carriers – to complete the majority of primary care transfers – bringing Ontarians to needed care outside of their communities that is only accessible by plane. Ornge will be reviewing and assessing its contract model to ensure maximum availability of timely movement for lower acuity patients.

By 2027, Ornge’s SA network will be fully equipped, capable to meet changes in population growth and need.



3.2 Driving Strong Organizational Culture

Ornge has renewed its organizational values and will make them come alive across our mandate. A review of all transport and care policies and procedures is being undertaken to ensure our Patients-First commitment is real and embedded in all that we do. We will be looking inward to ensure all internal functions, roles, responsibilities, and broad organizational culture are aligned and consistent with Ornge’s values and mission and all staff will be provided with tools to help incorporate our values in decision-making.

By 2026, an organizational-wide framework to support values-based decision making will be implemented.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4

Accountability and Strong Partnerships

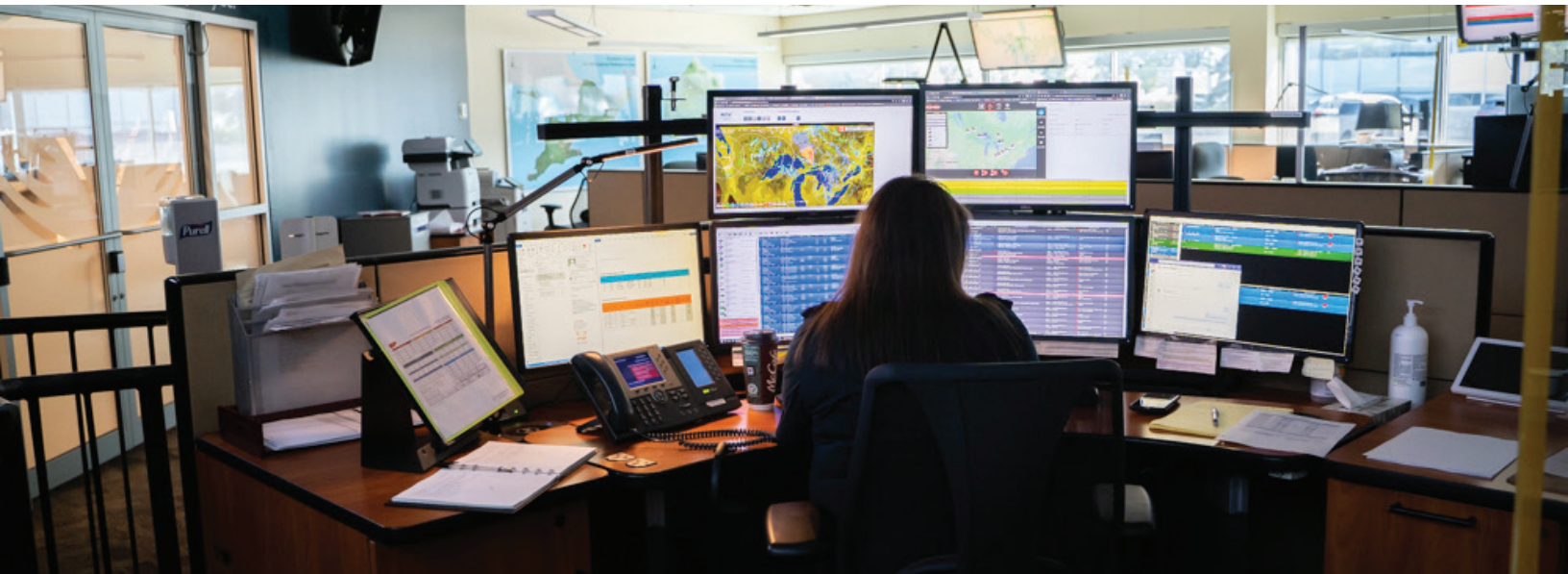
Ornge is accountable to its patients and its partners. Ornge depends on its partners and our partners depend on us. Trust, collaboration, transparency and accountability are at the heart of our partnerships.

4.1 Streamlining Timely Access to Care through Integration

Like Ornge, CritiCall Ontario is a provincial healthcare organization dedicated to supporting access to and delivery of urgent and emergent care in Ontario. Ornge and CritiCall Ontario have always collaborated for the benefit of the patient. Most notably, One Number to Call is a collaborative initiative between both organizations designed to streamline access to emergency health services in Ontario by providing a single point of contact for Emergency Departments and other referring physicians to obtain coordinated consultation and transport services for their life or limb threatened patients.

Both organizations’ stakeholders have highlighted the delays and inefficiencies in care as a result of duplicate coordination efforts. A stronger integration of Ornge and CritiCall will further improve timely access to urgent and emergent care. This will permit process and technology integrations that will result in much higher ease of access for health care providers.

By 2025, Ornge and CritiCall will work as a strong team to support improved timely and equitable access to care.



4.2 Growing Our First Nations Partnerships and Collaborations

The health status of First Nations continues to demonstrate significant and historic inequity with the rest of Ontario with dramatic disparities in the rates of mental health, youth and adult suicide and accidental injury and death. People living in Indigenous communities face elevated risk and significantly higher rates of chronic and communicable disease, which manifest as critical health emergencies including cancer, infectious disease, diabetic and cardiovascular emergencies.

We will work closely with our First Nations and Northern partners to address the unique and complex health and access challenges of these communities.



“First Nations Communities depend on integral partners, like Ornge, to ensure that they have timely and equitable access to essential services in the health care system.

SLFNHA looks forward to working with Ornge to continue to provide and improve upon these services to ensure that we all support better health outcomes for the Communities we serve in the Northern region.”



-Sonia Isaac-Mann, Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, President and CEO



### 4.3 Strengthening Accountability to our Partners

Ornge has many established relationships with allied partners, provincial agencies and advocacy groups. We will strengthen these formal relationships and ties with our healthcare stakeholders by:



Providing additional and consistent touchpoints with our partners to provide more open and formal lines of communications.



Increasing stakeholder education concerning our policies, protocols, and processes.



Demonstrating our commitment to accountability through reporting and collaboration at all levels – provincial, regional, and local.

### 4.4 Advocating Provincial Infrastructure Needs

Ornge will continue to work with its system partners in ensuring we have suitable infrastructure to transport patients safely. This includes the advocating for the development and ongoing maintenance of helipads; appropriate aviation services such as refueling and de-icing services and locations; and monitoring developments related to urban encroachment on vital helipad infrastructure at hospitals and trauma centres.



PH3

PATIENT HEALTH  
PEOPLE HEALTH  
PLANET HEALTH

Ornge will focus on establishing a baseline and making improvements in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) priorities over the next five years under the banner of *Patient Health, People Health, Planet Health*.

As a transport organization with a massive geographic catchment, Ornge must be attentive to its carbon footprint while ensuring our life-saving mission remains our focus. Environmental benefits are sought. For example, Ornge’s fleet renewal has the added benefit of up-to-date fuel-efficient aircraft capable of conducting multi-patient transfers.



Artist rendering of next generation Ornge PC-12 air ambulance



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