



## **Administrative Report**

### **Office of the Chief, Essex-Windsor EMS**

**To:** Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

**From:** Justin Lammers  
Chief, Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services

**Date:** Wednesday, April 03, 2024

**Subject:** Essex-Windsor EMS Supervision in Communications Centre

**Report #:** 2024-0403-EMS-R04-JL

---

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide Essex County Council with information and to seek approval to hire two (2) District Chiefs for staffing inside the Windsor Central Ambulance Communications Centre (dispatch) to achieve coverage for 12 hours per day, 7 days per week.

#### **Background**

Essex Windsor EMS continues to strategize and implement measures to help improve EMS response times by various means. This includes safely decreasing the number of patients being transported to hospitals through Ministry of Health approved alternate models of care, paramedic staffing enhancements, investigating opportunities for system-level change, up staffing during periods of high volume, and collaborating with hospital partners to mitigate offload delays.

In the fall of 2022, Essex Windsor EMS received approval from the Ministry of Health to place a District Chief into the Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) to assist with the flow of ambulances across the entire region amongst other operational responsibilities, and an agreement was signed.

This position was immediately a success, as realized by not only the Essex-Windsor EMS leadership team but also the hospital partners. This position was named Paramedic Patient Navigator (PPN) and was initially staffed ten (10) hours per day, five (5) days per week, but increased to twelve (12)

hours per day, seven (7) days per week in November of 2023. These positions were paid for with Designated Offload Nurse Program (DONP) funding, which is used to pay for hospital staff to watch patients in offload beds at all three (3) emergency departments.

The primary responsibility of the PPN is to balance transport volumes across the region, but it also includes working with the dispatch supervisor to provide deployment plan or service policy support on the following:

- Meal break management
- Code 3 delay management
- Rostering/staffing
- End-of-shift support
- Ambulances out of service
- General deployment/crew guidance
- Paramedics service health and safety
- Mass casualty incidents

All of the above can influence the availability of ambulances in the community in one way or another and in totality, have a significant effect on the overall operations.

The biggest success realized was the real-time connection between hospital emergency department leadership, Essex Windsor EMS leadership, and CACC leadership. Communications now flow between all partners continuously throughout the twelve (12) hour shift and surges in volume. We are better able to address individual paramedic needs, complex patients and improve the balance of overall operational needs. Additionally, diversions away from an overwhelmed emergency department are called out well in advance, thereby avoiding any ambulances piling up unnecessarily.

## **Discussion**

Historically, Essex Windsor EMS has received \$982,152 in DONP funding annually, which is paid to Windsor Regional Hospital and Erie Shores Healthcare to staff a Registered Nurse (RN) to cover four (4) offload beds at Windsor Regional Hospital Metropolitan Campus, four (4) offload beds at Windsor Regional Hospital Ouellette Campus and four (4) offload beds at Erie Shores Healthcare. The hours of coverage are twenty-four (24) hours, seven (7) days per week at Windsor Regional and eight (8) hours, five (5) days per week at Erie Shores Healthcare.

In December of 2022, the County of Essex received confirmation that the 2022/23 DONP funding would be increased by \$202,083 and that increase

was used to offset the wages of the PPN position. This practice continued through 2023/24, including offsetting the wages of an increase in the PPN position hours from four (4) days per week, ten (10) hours per day, to seven (7) days per week, twelve (12) hours per day on October 9, 2023.

On January 19, 2024, Essex Windsor EMS received notification that the DONP funding, initially applied to offset the wages of the PPN position for the 2022/23 fiscal year, was not approved due to misalignment with the terms of the memorandum of agreement. Subsequently, Essex Windsor EMS held discussions with the Assistant Deputy Minister Susan Picarello and her team to explore alternative options. However, we received a response on March 11, 2024 and it was determined that the DONP funding cannot be allocated to the PPN position, resulting in the County being required to reimburse the amount utilized for that role in the 2022/23 fiscal year, totaling \$202,083.

While the Ministry of Health had previously granted approval for Essex Windsor EMS to place a supervisor in the ambulance communications center, there was never a formal agreement stipulating that the funding would fall under DONP. As of the 2023/24 fiscal year, Essex Windsor EMS is authorized to utilize the traditional 50/50 funding outlined in the Land Ambulance Service Agreement (LASG). However, it's important to note that the 100% Ministry-funded DONP funding envelope will no longer be available for these PPN positions. Consequently, these changes will impact the previously approved 2023 and 2024 EMS budgets.

The PPN position continues to hold great value in providing operational efficiencies for Essex-Windsor EMS, especially in creating a vital link that aligns Essex-Windsor EMS with the Ambulance Communications Centre and local emergency departments. While it is not currently the responsibility of the County of Essex to manage the dispatching of ambulances, it is abundantly clear that there are significant benefits in doing so. Ceasing to operate this position will undoubtedly have an impact on the flow of ambulances amongst our local hospitals, especially in periods of surge, and will likely contribute to increasing periods of code red and black, as well as increasing operational stressors on the front-line paramedics and management team.

In light of the above, Essex-Windsor EMS strongly believes that the PPN position needs to continue at twelve (12) hours per day, seven (7) days per week and should be funded through the LASG 50/50 funding.

For awareness, Essex Windsor EMS, in collaboration with Windsor Regional Hospital and Erie Shores Healthcare has submitted a 2024-25 proposal to the Ministry of Health for DONP funding and this includes doubling the amount of offload nurses at all three (3) hospitals for a total funding request of \$3,731,760.

## Financial Implications

Due to the deficit of DONP provincial funding from the 2022/23 & 2023/24 Ministry year for the PPN positions there will be an EMS shortfall total of \$268,521. The County portion of this shortfall, \$134,260, will be funded from Safe Restart funds to cover the County cost only and the City will be responsible to fund their deficit.

Year	Annual Cost (Salary with back fill costs)*	Cost of Benefits	Total	City Portion (50%)	County Portion (50%)
2022	26,040	8,333	34,373	17,186.34	17,186.34
2023	177,385	56,763	234,148	117,073.91	117,073.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>203,425</b>	<b>65,096</b>	<b>268,521</b>	<b>134,260</b>	<b>134,260</b>

The total cost of 2 PPN positions moving forward for 2024 and 2025 are as follows:

Year	Annual Cost (Salary)*	Approx. Benefits	Total	# of Positions	Total Cost	Provincial Portion**	City Portion	County Portion
2024	166,484	53,275	219,759	2	439,518.04	164,819.27	137,349.50	137,349.28
2025	171,462	54,868	226,330	2	452,659.23	226,329.62	113,164.81	113,164.81

\*Contractual Increase in salary for Year 2

\*\*Provincial portion kicks in the following year due to funding model. Expenses will be included in LASG reporting for 2023-24 Ministry year, therefore 9 months of provincial funding expected to be received in 2024 year.

The result of the approval of the recommendation in this report would impact the County budget by \$137,349 in 2024 and \$113,165 in 2025. For 2024 the County amount will be funded by safe restart. In 2025 these additional County costs will be levy funded. If this report is approved, the 2025 budget will reflect the additional salary costs.

## Consultations

Kelli Schmidt, Financial Analyst,  
Melissa Ryan, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer,  
Sandra Zwiers, Chief Administrative Officer.

## Recommendation

That Essex County Council receives and considers report number 2024-0403-EMS-R04-JL, EWEMS Supervision in Communications Center.

That Council approves the continuation of staff in two Paramedic Patient Navigator positions in EMS to mitigate offload delays.

That Council approves to fund the County portion of these Paramedic Patient Navigator positions through levy dollars starting in 2025.

## Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

*Justin Lammers*

Justin Lammers, Chief, Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services

Concurred With,

*Sandra Zwiers*

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
N/A	