



Emergency Services

Departmental Overview

2024 was a successful year and a realignment for Essex-Windsor EMS (EWEMS) operations and future focus. Chief Justin Lammers completed his first year as Chief, and Deputy Chief Ziad Fatallah settled into the Planning and Physical Resources department.

Recruitment efforts were bolstered and a spring recruitment brought in a new wave of Paramedics to carry out the mission. Budget enhancements for 2024 were implemented, including 16 full-time Paramedics staffing 2 new ambulances in the deployment plan. Through collaborative engagement with CUPE 2974.2, Letters of Understanding were created to maximize operational efficiencies while respecting the importance of work-life balance as much as an emergency service can. Proudly, Essex-Windsor EMS approved 97% of vacation requests throughout the summer, providing a much-needed break for the team.

The leadership team at Essex-Windsor EMS continues to review operational processes to ensure they are aligned with best practice and eagerly awaits the conclusion of the 2025 Master Plan.

The proposed 2025 Budget builds on the need for increased mental wellness supports, increased support in logistics to improve vehicle and equipment readiness, and identifies areas of risk and challenges ahead.

Funding sources for Essex-Windsor EMS remain the same under the following three programs:

- Essex-Windsor EMS
- Community Paramedicine Long-Term Care
- Emergency Management

Service Delivery Promise

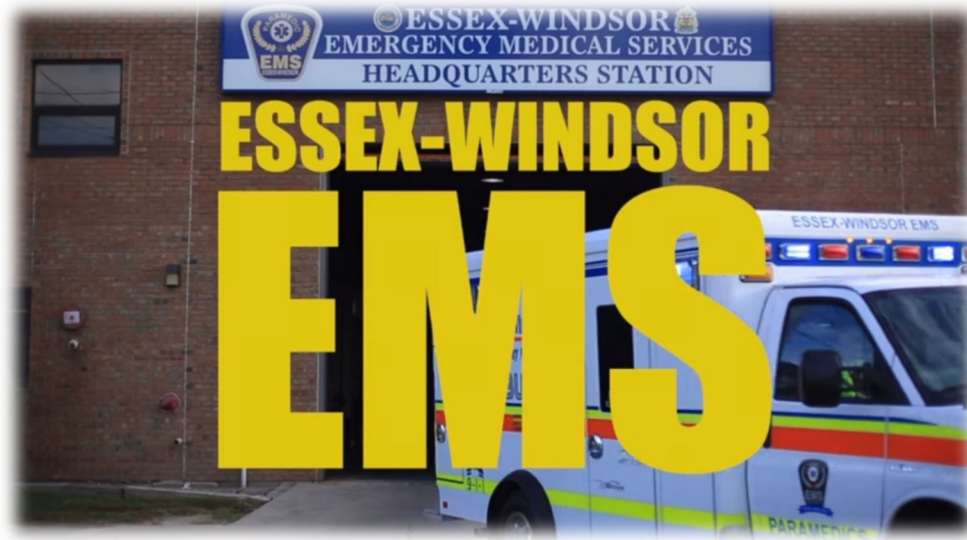
EWEMS is responsible for the provision of land ambulance services for the County of Essex, City of Windsor and Township of Pelee. EWEMS is committed to providing the highest quality Emergency Medical Services in a manner that is accessible, accountable, responsive, seamless and integrated.

In 2024, it is projected that Essex-Windsor EMS will have responded to approximately 65,600 clients requiring paramedic services, interventions, treatment, transport or assistance. This equates to a 6.5% increase in urgent responses and an 8% decrease in low-acuity responses from 2023.

In 2024, the Mobile Integrated Healthcare Community Paramedicine (MIH-CP) program continued to focus on individuals who use paramedic services frequently. Their main focus is to connect these individuals to systems and supports within our community, stabilize them in their place of residence and decrease unnecessary calls to 911. The decrease in low acuity responses in 2024 can be attributed to the work of the MIH-CP program, as well as the ongoing work of health system partners through the Windsor Essex Ontario Health Team (WEOHT).

EWEMS also oversees the services of Emergency Management, Preparedness and Coordination. Emergency Management is responsible for ensuring that the County of Essex is prepared for situations that are likely to have an impact on the County, or any local municipal partners. Emergency Management collaborates with and supports other municipal service providers, community agencies, provincial ministries, organizations and responders to ensure the communities within Essex County are prepared and can respond to any current or potential threats.

Emergency Medical Services



Level of Service Statement

Essex-Windsor EMS is committed to providing the highest quality emergency medical pre-hospital care to the citizens of the County of Essex, the City of Windsor and the Township of Pelee.

Our purpose is to foster fiscally responsible, quality care by:

- Maintaining mutually supportive relationships with other emergency services and health care agencies in our community.
- Participating in public education for prevention and awareness.
- Providing continuous quality improvement to ensure the highest standards are achieved.
- Supporting our employees by providing them with the tools and methods to accomplish the highest quality of care.

Opportunities, Challenges and Risks for 2025



Opportunities for 2025 include ongoing recruitment, health system partner collaboration through the WEOHT, leveraging new models of care to further decrease low acuity responses, increasing employee wellness supports for staff and improving out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rates.

Recruitment efforts continue as the Province is short roughly 400 Paramedics per year, due to a low output of College Paramedic Programs and high demands of Paramedic Services. Ongoing efforts to position Essex-Windsor EMS as a unique employer aim to answer the question, “Why Windsor?”. While the Ministry of Colleges and Universities has increased Paramedic Program seats, the relationship between St. Clair College has never been stronger and it’s a true collaboration that ensures those students who are enrolled, are successful.

Essex-Windsor EMS continues to be an active partner on the WEOHT and actively engages in initiatives to

promote improving community health, overall system efficiency and supporting regional initiatives. Early discussions with Ontario Health reveal an opportunity to improve responses to patients in the community who are deemed palliative. Implementing an alternate model of care will provide these patients with the most appropriate care while alleviating the need to transport them to emergency departments. Initiatives like this are one example of the innovation that is improving EMS responses and decreasing demands on hospital emergency departments without the expense of adding additional resources.

Spikes in call volumes and offload delays will continue to strain available resources and alternate models of care will continue to be investigated and deployed where possible. Continued evaluation and growth of the Community Assessment Triage Team (CATT) will allow Essex-Windsor EMS to continue safely diverting unnecessary transports to the emergency departments. It should be noted that periods of Codes Red and Black have significantly reduced from previous years and hospital administration is actively engaged in decreasing offload delays.

Improving the mental wellness of all staff continues to be a priority and there are opportunities within 2025 to improve the caliber of support. Currently, the Ability and Wellness Specialist supports employees who are off work due to illness/injury and supports them on their re-integration into the workplace. Research continues to show the importance of supporting Paramedics in the workplace and strategies to ensure a long working lifetime are strongly needed.

Improving out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rates will continue through engaging members of the public, both in residential and commercial settings, to locate and install Public Access Defibrillators (PAD) and undergo CPR awareness training. Efforts made in 2024 located close to 1,000 PADs, from a list of 400 previously. These locations are shared with the Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) so that callers to 911 are better prepared to locate and utilize a defibrillator when required. The next phase of this project includes investigating the feasibility of equipping members of the public with defibrillators to support closing the gap from the time of the call to 911, to an individual arriving at the patient's side with a defibrillator.

Challenges remain in the over-prioritization of ambulance responses due to an outdated 911 call-handling triage tool, but this will eliminate itself in 2027 when the Central Ambulance Communication Centre upgrades to a new, modern triaging tool under the direction of the Province. Until then, revisions to the deployment plan will continue to support efficiencies where possible. Essex-Windsor EMS continues to engage the Ministry of Health in transferring responsibility for CACC from the Province to the County of Essex to further improve system efficiency.

Proposed 2025 Budget Plan

The proposed 2025 Budget reflects the ongoing attention to asset management and includes the replacement of seven ambulances, two early response vehicles, and two District Chief vehicles. Additionally, one new ambulance is included to support the addition of the 16 full-time Paramedic enhancement approved in the 2024 Budget.

42 new Stryker Stretchers will replace the aging fleet of stretchers. The Peer Support Team will have increased support through the Breakwater Institute and auditing of electronic patient care records for ongoing quality assurance will occur through the Southwest Ontario Regional Base Hospital.

Two positions have been requested to support the front-end growth Essex-Windsor EMS has experienced over the past few years. While adding resources to the front lines is critical, the effects place a strain on the back end and supports must be considered.

First, adding a Manager, Employee Wellness will address the critical need for embedded mental health supports, address high psychological demands of work, prevent occupational Stress Injuries (OSI) and support the Paramedic Services Peer Support Team. As call volumes and staffing compliments increase, so do exposures to critical incidents, operational pressures and the subsequent need to increase employee support.

A Manager, Employee Wellness will allow for proactive support including having a real-time pulse on all employees and what they are experiencing based on operational data already being collected. In addition, proactive supports include the following:

- Acknowledge the moral and ethical components inherent to the organization;
- Promote an ethical and psychologically safe workplace culture;
- Arrange access to diverse support services for addressing the psychological impact of potentially morally injurious events (PMIE);
- Establish and support evidence-based policies to guide morally and ethically difficult decision-making;
- Prepare the organization to make difficult moral and ethical decisions by developing and implementing explicit training and support focused on moral-ethical decision-making that includes skills for accepting the inevitability of imperfect solutions;
- Support time for team building and decompression, particularly after PMIE exposures; and,
- If possible, rotate staff between vocational roles to mitigate the impact of potentially prolonged PMIE exposure(s).

All of the above must be taken seriously and led by someone who is the subject matter expert on evidence-based best practices and legislative requirements. The current state requires many individuals to do the best they can to support the employees, amongst many other operational requirements, including the volunteerism of the Peer Support Team.

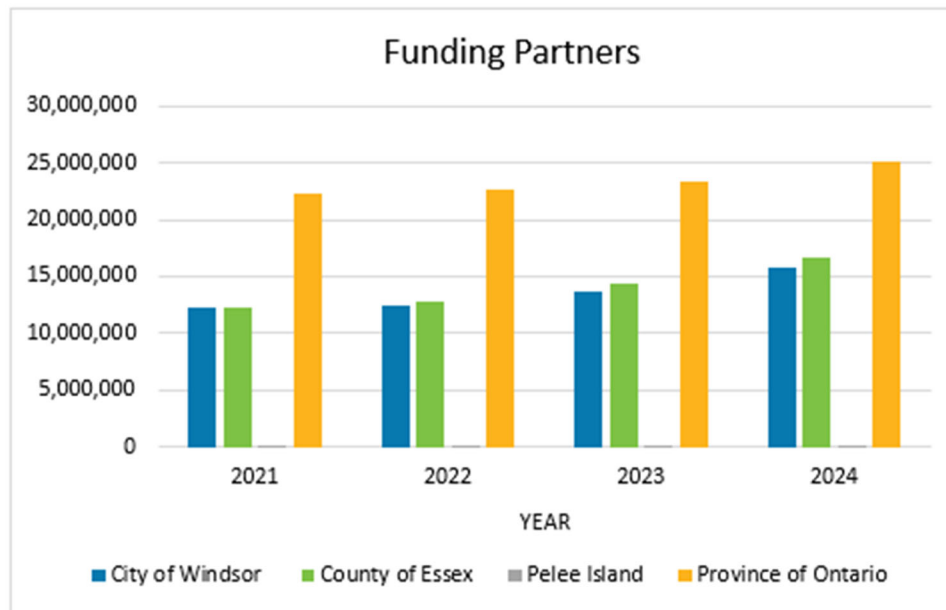
Secondly, adding a Logistics Technician will allow the Planning & Physical Resources department to ensure ambulances are in a state of readiness when needed and legislative requirements around patient care equipment and supplies are met. Essex-Windsor EMS successfully passed the 2024 Land Ambulance Service Review, but observations around vehicle and equipment readiness were noted and this position is one mechanism to mitigate future risk. In 2019, the Master Plan recommended the enhancement of a Logistics Technician, but unfortunately, COVID-19 paused any growth and when the environment stabilized, enhancements were needed the most on the front lines.

Supply chain backlogs continue to extend the life of in-service vehicles which increases the need for repairs and maintenance. As well, recent vehicle enhancements have increased the count of vehicles within the fleet. This results in increased pressures on the department and meeting legislated requirements is becoming more difficult. Adding one additional Logistics Technician aims to provide the following:

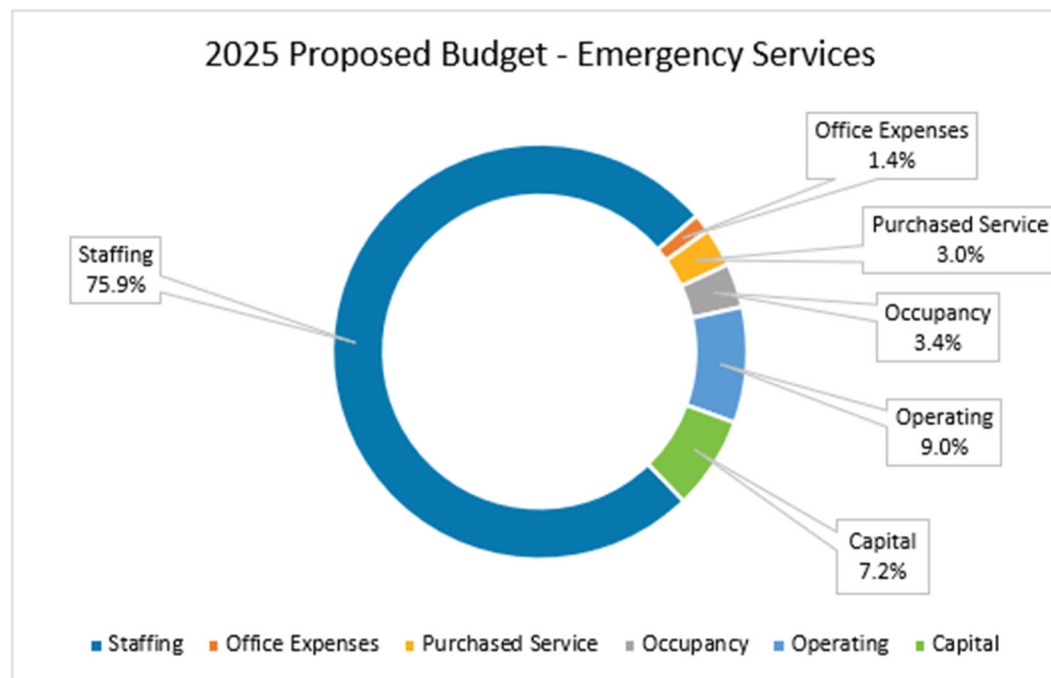
- Improve the speed at which emergency response vehicles are placed into operational readiness;
- Improve the speed at which supplies that are required for patient care are available to Paramedics;
- Implement a new process whereby every ambulance is rotated through an inventory reset, equipment inspection, and deep cleaning;
- Reduce the amount of expired consumables; and,
- Improve the ability to respond to last-minute departmental requests without interrupting the regular flow of business.

From a funding standpoint, the proposed 2025 Budget assumes the provincial funding formula used in 2024 will remain in place. The Province changed the 2021 formula to exclude inflationary increases which historically formed part of the funding calculation. The Provincial funding model is structured to provide 50% funding of EMS services.

The following chart illustrates the funding partners' share over the past 4 years:



The graph below illustrates the key areas of proposed 2025 Budget spending for Emergency Services:



Overall, the proposed 2025 Budget for Emergency Services, net of recoveries, totals \$17,503,930 (an increase of \$1,655,930 (10.45%) over the 2024 Budget of \$15,848,000).

Alignment with Strategic Plan Initiatives

Working as Team Essex County

EWEMS will scale sustainable services by continuing to leverage alternate models of care that improve system efficiency and continue to work closely with the WEOHT and other systems partners. EWEMS continues to investigate and advocate for the transfer of responsibility of the CACC from the Province to the County of Essex. Opportunities to engage in discussions with Ministry Officials will continue to be explored.

Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence

Enhancing employee engagement and retention will occur through working collaboratively with the CUPE 2974.2 executives. Review of opportunities to improve general working conditions, work-life balance and unique opportunities to make Essex-Windsor EMS an employer of choice is ongoing. Improving service delivery will be investigated with the results of the 2025 Master Plan and ongoing deployment plan review. The enhancements of a Manager, Employee Wellness and Logistics Technician will provide the necessary support to keep employees safe at work and equipment in a ready state.

Keeping the public informed will occur through traditional social media engagement, ongoing speaking events and reports to the County Council that update on the current state of affairs within EMS.

Building a Regional Powerhouse

Actively participating in WEOHT allows Essex-Windsor EMS to be an active partner in collaborating with all health service providers in our region. Opportunities to participate in community events with the Local Municipal Partners promote the growth and development of those communities.

Coordinating actions with County of Essex departments allows Essex-Windsor EMS to streamline processes and realize efficiencies for improved levels of service.

Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Advancing Truth and Reconciliation will occur by participating in education and awareness opportunities and growing our relationship with Caldwell First Nation. Early discussions with Caldwell First Nation have shown many opportunities to collaborate for community well-being, including opportunities in Community Paramedicine. Being a collaborative partner that listens to understand, Essex-Windsor EMS sees training opportunities for all staff through this relationship.

Community Paramedicine Long-Term Care



In 2021 the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Long-Term Care announced funding for the Community Paramedicine Long-Term Care Program (CPLTC). The MIH Program incorporates CPLTC services. CPLTC began operations in May 2021. CPLTC provides services to individuals who are waiting for placement in a long-term care home or who are soon to be eligible for long-term care placement. This initiative is part of the province's modernization plan to address systemic barriers in long-term care bed development and the growing demand for long-term care.

CPLTC is currently staffed by:

- Two full-time VPN paramedics, 12 hours per day, 7 days per week
- One clerk, 8 hours per day, 5 days per week
- One Registered Nurse/Paramedic District Chief, 8 hours per day, five days per week
- One quarter of a Captain, 10 hours per week
- One data analyst, 7.5 hours per day, 5 days per week

The CPLTC program is funded 100% by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. The County of Essex has received \$3,196,000 in one-time funding over the initial four-year Transfer Payment agreement (2020-2024). The Ministry has granted \$1,966,800 in additional one-time funding for a 2-year period over 2024-25 and 2025-26. The proposed 2025 Budget reflects the 2024 projections and proposed 2025 allocation of the 100% funding model.

Emergency Management



Proposed 2025 Budget Plan

The proposed 2025 Budget for Emergency Management, net of recoveries, totals \$255,070 (an increase of \$7,730 (3.13%) over the 2024 Budget of \$247,340).

Alignment with Strategic Plan Initiatives

Working as Team Essex County

Emergency Management continues to engage all Local Municipal Partners in training opportunities related to Emergency Management and Incident Management Systems. Work with the Legacy Oil and Gas Well funding through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) will continue into 2025, thereby improving the ability of our region to respond to disasters.

Growing as Leaders in Public Service

The legislative requirements of Emergency Management are under continuous review and streamlining those requirements alongside opportunities for enhancement that are relevant to the needs of our region is occurring. Maintaining a strong public presence with all facets of Emergency Management will ensure the public is informed of the risks that pertain to them as well as how to be best prepared.

Building a Regional Powerhouse

Legacy Oil and Gas Well funding through MNR continues to bolster the capabilities of all Local Municipal Partner (LMP) Fire Departments in managing Hydrogen Sulfide releases. Additional funding opportunities will be explored and shared with all LMPs.

Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Participating in County of Essex Truth and Reconciliation initiatives will continue.