



# External Commitments

## Service Delivery Promise

The County of Essex works closely with our regional partners to address important issues affecting our community. Some of these issues go beyond the County's direct responsibilities, but we recognize their importance and choose to contribute. In other cases, our contributions are required as part of legislation and service agreements. The County continues to manage these commitments to support the well-being of our residents.



## Level of Service Statement

The County's external commitments are categorized as either legislated or discretionary. Legislated commitments include funding for shared services relating to public health, property assessment, social services and social housing. Currently, the County supports discretionary commitments related to hospital support, regional economic development, tourism, housing and homelessness and regional tax appeal support.

## Opportunities and Challenges for 2025

As we move into 2025, the County of Essex is responding to important opportunities and challenges. While inflation has stabilized this year, the City of Windsor, as the regional provider for social services and housing, has identified increased pressures due to environmental and economic factors, resulting in a need for additional funding for social services and social housing.

Furthermore, other agencies have requested increases in their budgets due to their own operational needs.

Collaboration with regional partners will be essential in addressing these challenges and ensuring that the community's needs are met while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

## Proposed 2025 Budget Plan

The proposed 2025 Budget emphasizes our commitment to collaborating with the community to meet both legislated and discretionary obligations. We are dedicated to ensuring that our resources are effectively allocated to address the pressing needs of our residents while fostering partnerships that enhance service delivery.

### Legislated Commitments

The County's contribution to the Windsor Essex County Health Unit costs is expected to rise slightly by 1% compared to last year's budget. MPAC costs for property assessments are anticipated to increase by 2%, though this figure will be confirmed closer to the end of the year.

The primary drivers of increases in the legislated area include a 13% rise in the budget for Social Services due to changes in the Child Care administrative funding formula from the Ministry of Education (MEDU). As well, an

11.5% increase is included in the proposed budget for Social Housing operations, stemming from a request for additional operating funds from the Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation (WECHC) and a notable loss in federal block funding.

Social Housing capital renewal spending for the year is projected to be 16% lower than last year based on the WECHC's 10-year plan; however, significant increases in spending are planned for the next several years which will deplete our reserves for this area. For that reason, we continue to increase our contribution to the Social Housing Capital Reserve annually by \$200,000. Despite our best efforts to increase the reserve to fund the heavier spending years in the 10-year plan, we will fall short should the City ask for the anticipated funds in the plan. We will continue to build this reserve to ensure adequate funds are available when required.

### Discretionary Commitments

Our long-term discretionary commitment to Erie Shores HealthCare remains in place, with \$200,000 allocated for year two of a 10-year agreement.

We continue to allocate funds to the New Windsor Essex Hospital Reserve, following the historical funding model. This year's budget includes an increase of \$680,000, bringing our total contribution to \$7,040,000 for 2025.

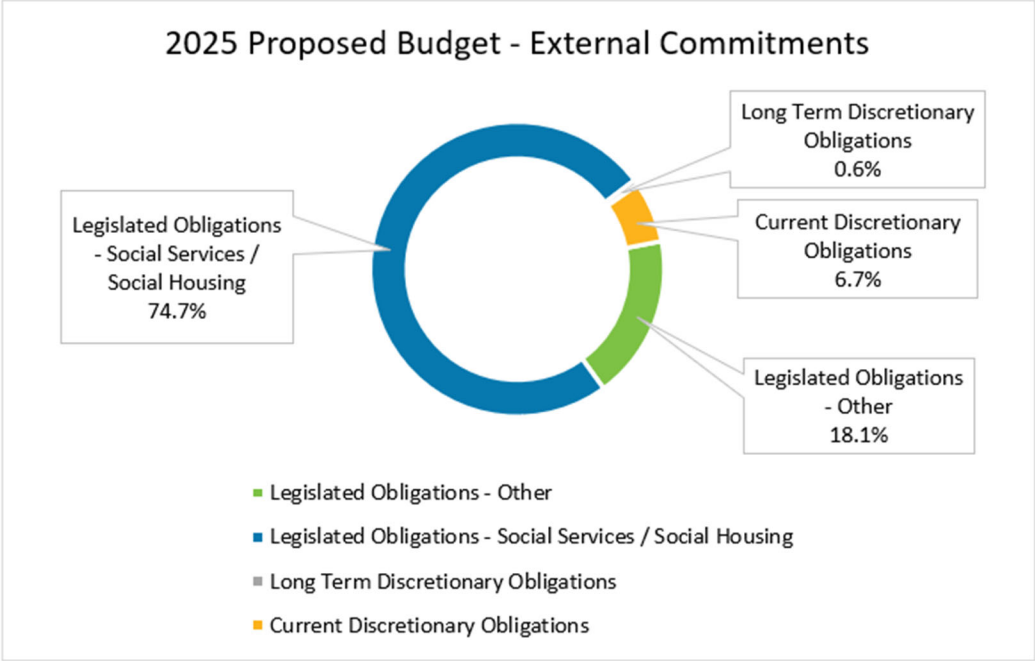
In terms of current discretionary commitments, we are supporting Invest WindsorEssex, the region's economic development agency, by including a requested 10% budget increase due to operational needs. Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI) continues to be included, maintaining its previous funding levels. Additionally, there is funding for MTE (Municipal Tax Equity), a consulting firm which provides tax assessment appeal services for local municipalities.

We are also contributing to the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan in partnership with the City of Windsor. This plan, developed in collaboration with various municipalities, agencies and organizations, aims to enhance the safety and well-being of communities across Windsor and Essex County. These funds will support the execution of this important initiative.

In 2025, there is a component for the Social Housing - Affordable Housing Strategy. Though the plan is still in development, reserve funds are allocated for this year with the expectation that finalized deliverables will require further funding through levy dollars in 2026.

Lastly, under the discretionary grant category, the only funding partner is the University of Guelph’s Ridgetown Campus. Each year, a \$500 bursary is awarded to the top Essex County student attending the campus, recognizing excellence in teaching, research and technology transfer.

The following graph illustrates the key areas of proposed 2025 Budget spending in External Commitments:



Overall, the proposed 2025 Budget for External Commitments, net of recoveries, totals \$40,058,440 (an increase of \$4,302,970 (12%) over the 2024 Budget of \$35,755,470).

## Alignment with Strategic Plan Initiatives

### Working as Team Essex County

Community Safety and Well-Being Plan: The collaboration between the County, the City of Windsor, and various agencies underlines the emphasis on teamwork across different sectors to enhance safety and community well-being. This initiative demonstrates a commitment to addressing regional issues through partnership and joint action, making sure all municipalities are aligned toward common goals.

### Building a Regional Powerhouse

Invest WindsorEssex: The funding for economic development supports efforts to attract investment and boost the regional economy, aligning with the County's objective of strengthening the County of Essex as a competitive and thriving region. This initiative contributes to building a stronger regional economy by leveraging opportunities for growth and sustainability.

Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI): Maintaining consistent funding for TWEPI supports the growth of tourism, which plays a vital role in driving economic activity. This investment in tourism infrastructure contributes to the County's vision of being a regional powerhouse, attracting visitors and boosting local businesses.

### Focusing "Team Essex County" for Results

Social Services and Social Housing: The budget increases for social services and social housing operations reflect a focus on addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable populations within the County. These services are crucial for maintaining the health and well-being of the community and ensuring that County residents receive the support they need.

Erie Shores HealthCare: By maintaining the \$200,000 discretionary commitment to healthcare services in year two of a 10-year plan, the County is ensuring that it delivers assistance for the healthcare sector in our region.

### A Government Working for the People

Affordable Housing Strategy: The initial reserve funding for the social housing strategy demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing housing affordability, a critical issue for residents. The County is preparing for the long-term needs of the community, ensuring that affordable housing is available.