



# Emergency Services

## Service Delivery Promise

EWEMS is responsible for providing land ambulance services to the County of Essex, the City of Windsor, and the Township of Pelee. The service remains committed to delivering the highest quality emergency medical services in a manner that is accessible, accountable, responsive, and integrated, ensuring residents receive timely and compassionate care when they need it most.

In 2025, EWEMS is projected to have responded to approximately 68,567 clients requiring paramedic interventions, treatment, transport, or assistance. This represents a 4.36% increase in call volume compared to 2024, consistent with the Master Plan projection of annual call growth at approximately 4.5%. This continued increase reflects the growing demand for pre-hospital emergency medical care.

The Mobile Integrated Healthcare Community Paramedicine program continues to focus on supporting individuals who frequently access 911 or emergency services. The program's primary goal is to connect these individuals with appropriate community supports and health care systems, helping stabilize their conditions in their place of residence and reducing unnecessary emergency calls.

For awareness, EWEMS has transitioned leadership and oversight for Emergency Management, Preparedness, and Coordination to the County's Human Resources Department, under the Manager, Corporate Health and Safety. This new alignment ensures that the County of Essex and its local municipal partners are equipped with robust plans to respond effectively to emergencies or events that may impact the region. Emergency Planning and Preparedness works collaboratively with local service providers, community agencies, provincial ministries, and first responder organizations to enhance readiness, strengthen coordination, and ensure a unified response to potential or emerging threats across the region.

## Departmental Overview

2025 was a year of measurable progress for Essex-Windsor EMS (EWEMS), with reductions in unscheduled down-staffing, Code Red and Code Black events, and a continued downward trend in hospital offload delays. However, most response times remained consistent with the previous year, with a slight decline in CTAS 2 performance and a moderate decline in Sudden Cardiac Arrest performance.

Recruitment efforts remained a key focus, with a successful spring intake bringing new Paramedics to support front-line operations and meet the community's growing needs. The Logistics Technician and Manager of Employee Wellness positions implemented in 2025 directly support operational readiness and staff well-being. Through strong collaboration between the Scheduling and Administration team and the CUPE 2974.2 Executive, EWEMS achieved a 100% vacation request approval rate, supported by a Letter of Understanding regarding summer staffing constraints.

The leadership team also completed a thorough review of the updated Master Plan and, for the first time, a comprehensive Service Delivery Review (SDR). Together, these documents provide a clear roadmap for the next five years. The recommendations have been prioritized to form a five-year strategic implementation plan, focused on achieving and exceeding Council-approved response time standards while ensuring sustainability and operational excellence.

The proposed 2026 Budget reflects this strategic direction. It includes investments in additional front-line Paramedics, one administrative position, new and replacement ambulances, administrative and operational support vehicles, and the ongoing cyclical replacement of aging fleet assets. Collectively, these initiatives aim to meet increasing service demands, enhance patient care, and improve overall system efficiency.

EWEMS continues to be funded through two key program areas:

- Essex-Windsor EMS
- Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care

## 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 and providing them with the tools and methods to accomplish the highest quality of care.

## Opportunities, Challenges and Risks for 2026



Opportunities for 2026 include bolstering recruitment, infrastructure planning to support regional demand, preparing for the transition to the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) for call handling, collaboration with health system partners, leveraging new models of care to respond more efficiently, enhancing employee wellness supports, and ongoing efforts to improve out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rates.

Recruitment remains a key priority as the province faces a shortfall of approximately 1,000 paramedics each year due to limited output from college paramedic programs and high demand for paramedic services. EWEMS continues to position itself as an employer of choice and actively engages with colleges and recruitment fairs to promote the opportunities available in Windsor and the County of Essex.

Collective bargaining is planned for early 2026, providing an opportunity to further strengthen the appeal of working in the region. Additionally, St. Clair College has increased the paramedic program seat count to 100; however, historical attrition rates suggest that the actual number of graduates may be significantly lower. Maintaining a strong partnership with St. Clair College and supporting students throughout their programs helps to promote high graduation rates and supports long-term staffing needs.

Securing land for a new headquarters will enable the organization to enter the design phase and move closer to operationalizing this critical next step. This project provides opportunities for logistical improvements by consolidating paramedic crews and ambulances from seven stations and converting existing facilities into satellite stations. The construction of two new satellite stations in Windsor will ensure that county ambulances remain within the region. Developing a new headquarters also presents the potential for partnerships with allied agencies, which may improve efficiency, reduce costs, enhance response times, and improve the quality of care.

Preparing for the launch of MPDS in early 2027 will enable EWEMS to redesign its deployment plan. Early experiences across the province indicate that MPDS allows Ambulance Communications Officers to triage calls more deeply, which helps reduce urgent responses and improve resource allocation. Ensuring a successful transition will require dedicated personnel, a comprehensive review of protocols, and updated training materials.

EWEMS remains an active partner on the Windsor-Essex Ontario Health Team and engages in initiatives to improve community health, enhance system efficiency, and support regional priorities. In mid-2025, the Community Paramedicine program partnered with ONHealth Alliance to provide real-time virtual primary care consultations. Initiatives such as this enhance the quality of care delivered during EMS responses while reducing unnecessary demand on hospital emergency departments. Similar opportunities will continue to be pursued throughout 2026.

Spikes in call volumes, and hospital offload delays continue to challenge available resources. Alternate models of care, including the Community Assessment Triage Team, are being evaluated to reduce unnecessary transports to emergency departments safely. Periods of Code Red and Code Black have decreased significantly from previous years, and hospital and EMS administration remain actively engaged in further reducing offload delays.

Challenges remain in the over-prioritization of ambulance responses due to the current 911 call-handling triage system, which will be resolved in 2027 when the Windsor Central Ambulance Communication Centre upgrades to the modern MPDS system. Until that time, revisions to the deployment plan will continue to support operational efficiencies. EWEMS continues to work closely with the Ministry of Health on innovative strategies to improve the efficiency of the ambulance communication system and overall emergency medical response.

## Proposed 2026 Budget Plan

The proposed 2026 Budget continues to prioritize asset management, including the replacement of seven ambulances, one support vehicle, one administrative vehicle, personal protective equipment for front-line staff, and technology upgrades. In addition, two new ambulances will be added to the front line starting in June, creating two twelve-hour day shifts and adding eight full-time paramedics to the complement.

The budget also provides for software to support front-line supervisors in monitoring real-time paramedic utilization rates and operational pressures. This tool will assist in creating opportunities to reduce operational pressures and potentially improve mental wellness by ensuring balanced assignments across the front line and providing early indicators of a Paramedic who needs a break. Data from paramedics' populated electronic patient care records will flow into a new system, enabling more robust reporting and enhanced quality assurance processes. An increase to the Public Relations and Wellness budget line will support ongoing community engagement and provide resources for the Manager of Employee Wellness to continue supporting staff.

In 2025, computers in ambulances and early response vehicles are being replaced with iPads, generating significant future cost savings in replacement equipment and improving mapping software to optimize response routing. The 2026 Budget includes ongoing support to maintain these iPads throughout their life cycle.

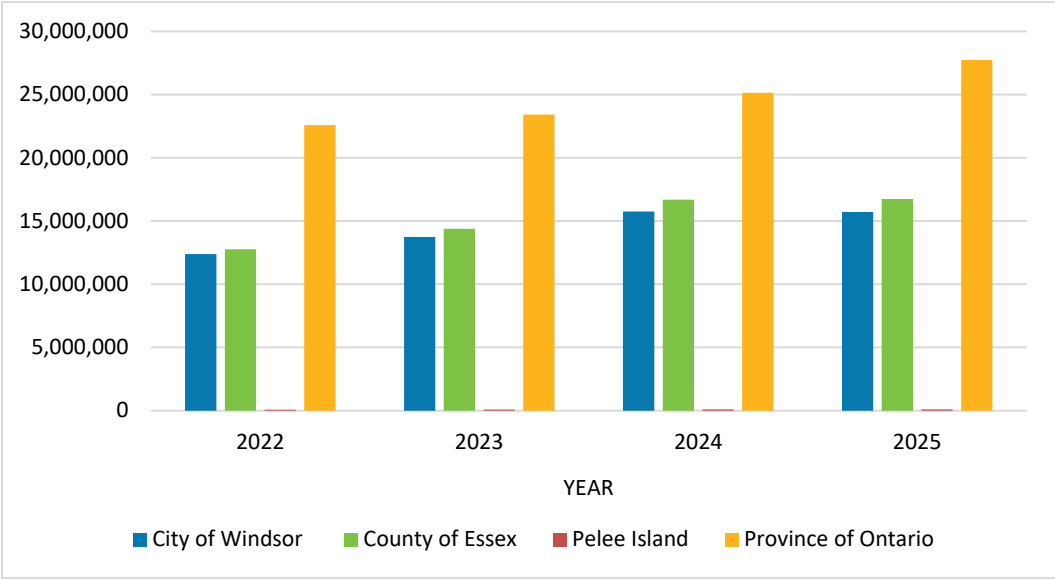
A Manager of Physical Resources position is included beginning in the second quarter of 2026. The position provides an important layer of leadership, ensuring continuity, accountability, and standardization across the management of fleet, facilities, equipment, and supply chain operations.

This position addresses capacity constraints within the existing leadership team, supports recommendations from the 2024 Master Plan refresh, and directly responds to capacity gaps identified in the 2025 Service Delivery Review. By providing focused oversight of physical resources, the Manager will allow the Deputy Chief to devote more attention to strategic planning, capital projects, and inter-agency coordination, while enabling the Supervisor of Equipment Maintenance to focus on day-to-day operational execution without additional administrative demands.

The proposed budget also includes an allocation for a Human Resources Generalist position which will support ongoing HR demands and anticipated staffing growth. Currently, gaps in HR service delivery are absorbed at the management level, which maintains core functions but diverts capacity from proactive workforce initiatives and long-term planning. Looking ahead, EMS faces significant recruitment needs for paramedics and support staff to sustain service delivery. Dedicated HR capacity will ensure timely, compliant, and effective hiring.

From a funding standpoint, the proposed 2026 Budget assumes the provincial funding formula used in 2025 will remain in place. 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.



## Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care



The Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care (CPLTC) program 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.

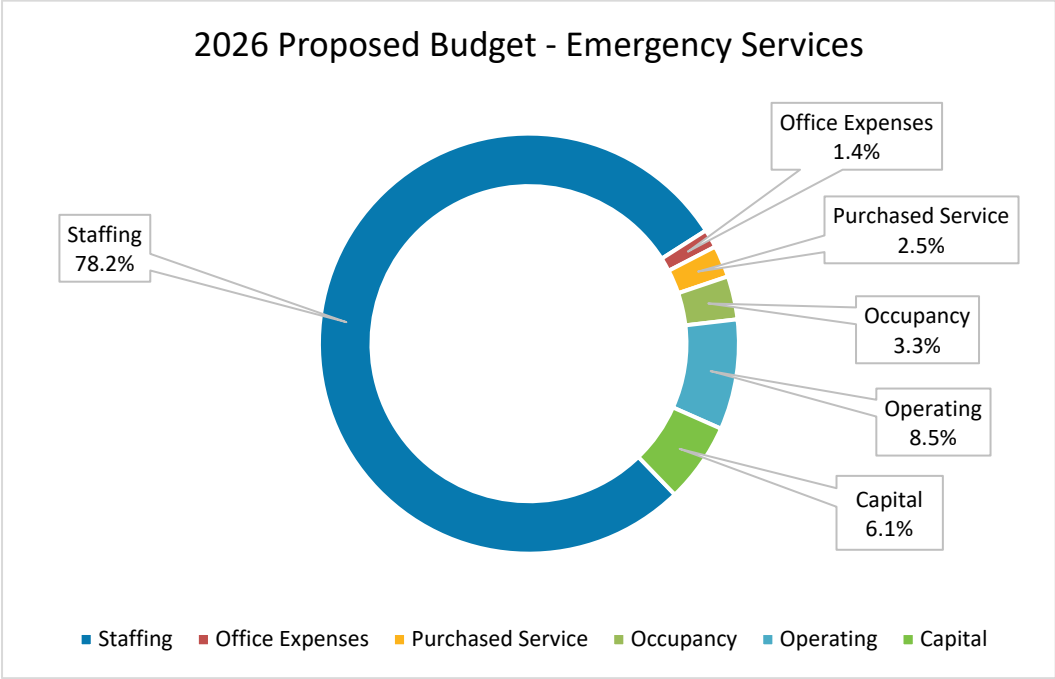
CPLTC is currently staffed by:

- Two full-time Vulnerable Patient Navigator (VPN) Paramedics, 12 hours per day, 7 days per week
- One Clerk, 8 hours per day, 5 days per week
- One Captain, 8 hours per day, 5 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 fully funded by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. The County of Essex has received \$4,179,400 in one-time funding over the initial five-year Transfer Payment agreement (2020-2025) with an additional \$983,400 in one-time funding for 2025-26.

In 2025, the Ministry of Long-Term Care announced that CPLTC funding would be made permanent. This is an encouraging sign that the Ministry is recognizing the value of Community Paramedicine, and efforts will focus on continuing to grow the program without impacting the tax levy.

The following chart illustrates the key areas of the proposed 2026 Budget spending for Emergency Services:



Overall, the proposed 2026 Budget for Emergency Services, net of recoveries, totals \$18,003,340 (an increase of \$754,480 (4.37%) over the restated 2025 Budget of \$17,248,860).

## Alignment with Strategic Plan Initiatives

### Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation

EWEMS exemplifies collaboration and teamwork through strong partnerships with local municipalities, health system stakeholders, and community agencies. Initiatives such as the Community Paramedicine program, engagement with the Windsor-Essex Ontario Health Team (WEOHT), and ongoing coordination with hospital and emergency management partners demonstrate a commitment to shared priorities and coordinated responses. Internally, EWEMS fosters a culture of teamwork by supporting front-line staff, enhancing employee wellness, and aligning scheduling and operational practices with union leadership, ensuring staff are empowered to deliver high-quality care efficiently.

## Being an Employer with Impact

EWEMS continues to strengthen its leadership and operational excellence through strategic planning, evidence-based decision-making, and implementation of innovative models of care. The recent Master Plan refresh, Service Delivery Review, and the planned transition to the Medical Priority Dispatch System illustrate the organization's focus on improving service delivery and operational efficiency. By investing in leadership capacity, data-driven reporting, quality assurance, and employee wellness, EWEMS is positioning itself as a recognized leader in regional governance and a trusted provider of public services that meets the evolving needs of the community.

## Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners

EWEMS contributes to building a regional powerhouse by creating the conditions that support safe, reliable, and efficient emergency medical services. Strategic infrastructure initiatives, including the development of a new headquarters, new satellite stations, and modernized fleet management, improve system reliability and response times across the County. These investments, combined with innovative programs such as Community Paramedicine and virtual primary care partnerships, enhance community health outcomes and strengthen the region's reputation as a well-supported, resilient, and investable area.

## Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

EWEMS continues to participate in education and awareness opportunities and grow our relationship with the Caldwell First Nation. Early discussions with Caldwell First Nation have revealed numerous opportunities for collaboration to enhance community well-being, including opportunities in Community Paramedicine and community preparedness with public access defibrillators and CPR awareness training. Being a collaborative partner that listens to understand, EWEMS sees training opportunities for all staff through this relationship.