

The Erie St. Clair Regional Cancer Program

2024-2028 Regional Strategic Cancer Plan



Delivering Excellence at Every
Step of The Cancer Care Journey


**Erie St. Clair
Regional Cancer Program**
Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)



Our Commitment to Continued Advancements in Cancer Care

The Erie St. Clair Regional Cancer Program is proud to present its Strategic Plan for 2024–2028—a comprehensive roadmap that reflects our unwavering commitment to advancing cancer care across our region. Rooted in collaboration, innovation, and compassion, this plan builds upon our region's strengths and addresses emerging challenges in a rapidly evolving health care landscape.

The population within the Erie St. Clair region is over:

 **800,000**

with 46% of people over the age of 50 years, compared to 38% in Ontario. As the population ages, there is a corresponding increased incidence of cancer. In fact:

90% of new cancers are diagnosed **at 50 years and older**

We are dedicated to ensuring that our regional cancer plan reflects the voices of our patients, families, and community partners. Their insights are essential as we work to expand access, reduce disparities, and build a system that is equitable, compassionate, and person-centred. Thank you for reviewing our 2024–2028 cancer plan for the Erie St. Clair Region.



Statistics Canada. (2023). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalog no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023

Cancer Care in Erie St. Clair

A message from **Jonathan Foster**

Regional Vice-President, Erie St. Clair Regional Cancer Program



I am proud to present the Erie St. Clair Regional Cancer Program Strategic Plan for 2024–2028, and to reflect on the meaningful progress we've made together over the past few years. Our region has recently faced unprecedented challenges, yet through the unwavering dedication of our cancer care partners, we continued to advance our mission of delivering compassionate, high-quality care. Their commitment to innovation, collaboration, and equity has laid a strong foundation for the future. As we look ahead, our focus remains firmly on compassionate care for all – now with an even deeper commitment to expanding access and inclusivity for all individuals across our communities. Together as a region, we move forward with renewed hope, bold vision, and a shared belief that cancer care must be accessible, equitable, and centered on the whole person.

A message from **Diane Marley**

Patient and Family Advisory Council Co-Chair

I was grateful and honoured to have been asked to participate in the strategic planning for 2024–2028. Our PFAC members along with many other participants embarked in conversations regarding the shaping and utilization of the strategic plan. As we endeavour to make the journey better for those who follow us, our PFAC continues to identify areas where we feel our lived experience can be of help. We were instrumental in having monitors installed in waiting areas to improve communication. We have been part of developing a Caregiver counselling program for those who seek guidance and information during the cancer journey. In using this strategic plan, our PFAC is confident in our continued success and is looking forward to the amazing work yet to be done.





Cancer Care in the Indigenous Population – Our Commitment

The registered First Nation, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) population within the Erie St. Clair region numbers approximately 23,000.

Cancer incidence and mortality rates among these populations are increasing at a disproportionate rate compared to other Ontarians. FNIM communities experience higher standardized mortality rates, with rapidly rising incidences of major cancers and comparatively poorer survival outcomes.

This elevated cancer burden is partially attributed to risk factors rooted in the social determinants of health, which disproportionately affect Indigenous Peoples. In response, our region is dedicated to enhancing cancer screening and treatment initiatives tailored to individuals of FNIM status. We actively work to identify and eliminate barriers that may limit access to regular screening and appropriate care.

Stephanie Williams

Indigenous Projects Coordinator



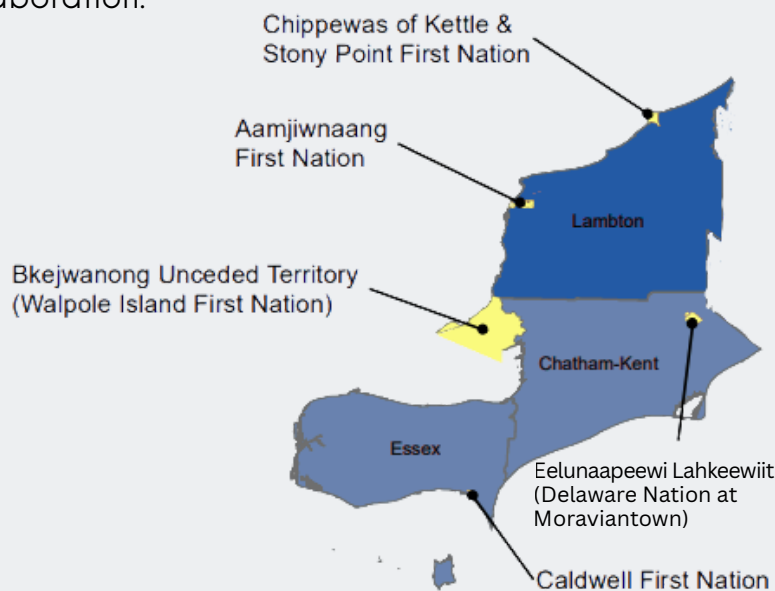
Arlene King

Indigenous Navigator

Additionally, we are committed to fostering educational efforts within FNIM communities while respecting and integrating traditional medicinal practices and cultural values through meaningful engagement and collaboration.

A message from an Indigenous patient to our team:

"This was an awesome journey; your encouraging support was my strength and peace in the eye of the storm."



A Patient's Perspective

We are truly grateful to be able to share Tina's cancer journey. The experiences of our patients remain at the forefront of planning for the future of our regional cancer program. We invite you to take a moment to read about Tina's cancer journey so far in our region.

Tina's Story

When I first received my diagnosis, I was in disbelief. I couldn't believe I was 37 years old and was being told I had melanoma that had spread to my lymph nodes. I was petrified. I thought "will I be around to see my son graduate, get married, and have kids?". The most surprising part was how quickly things moved along after I received my diagnosis. It wasn't long after that I had appointments scheduled for scans and to see an Oncologist at the Cancer Centre.

What advice would you give to someone just beginning their cancer journey in our region?

I would tell someone to first, let yourself feel all the feelings - be sad, angry, scared. It is a heavy feeling to hear the word "cancer", so I would learn everything you can about it and ask as many questions as possible. Be your own advocate and speak up for yourself, never assume people know how you are feeling.

Within the first 6 months, I had some side effects from the immunotherapy I was receiving, and they were not the "typical" side effects. I was having ringing in my ears and extreme dry mouth, but I spoke with the nurse and Oncologist about what was happening, and they did not disregard my concerns. I felt heard and validated and I was very comfortable going to them with any issues I was having.



I cannot speak highly enough about the nursing staff and volunteers in the Chemo Suite where I received my Immunotherapy treatments. All the nurses and volunteers were very kind and always around to offer refreshments, snacks, warm blankets and pillows. They made the experience feel less scary. The genuine kindness and care I received in the treatment area was definitely above and beyond what I imagined it would be.

Ontario Cancer Plan 6 Goals

Ontario is projected to have the **highest** cancer incidence rate in Canada in 2025, with a predicted 97,100 new cancer cases, according to the Canadian Cancer statistics.

 **97,193**
NEW CANCER CASES

Meaning nearly

1 out of every 2



Ontarians are expected to develop cancer in their lifetime.

This stark reality underscores the urgent need to continue to strengthen our regional response through comprehensive screening, prevention, timely diagnosis, and equitable access to treatment. In 2024, the Windsor Region Cancer Centre patient volumes were:

3049

New Cancer Patients
seen at WRCC

10,149

Total Patients
(New and Current)

84,248

Total Appointments
at WRCC

The Ontario Cancer Plan 6 (OCP 6) outlines a province-wide strategy for improving all aspects of cancer care from prevention and screening to treatment, survivorship, and palliative services. In the Erie St. Clair region, OCP 6 serves as a guiding framework for the Erie St. Clair Regional Cancer Program. It helps coordinate care among local hospitals and facilities such as Chatham-Kent Health Alliance, Windsor Regional Hospital, Erie Shores HealthCare, and Bluewater Health. In OCP 6, the following goals have been identified as areas of focus over the next 4 years:

ADVANCE
EQUITY
IN THE
CANCER
SYSTEM

IMPROVE
THE PATIENT,
CARE
PARTNER
AND
PROVIDER
EXPERIENCE

ACHIEVE
SEAMLESS &
EFFECTIVE
INTEGRATION
OF ALL
CANCER
SERVICES

IMPROVE
CANCER
OUTCOMES
AND
QUALITY OF
LIFE FOR
ONTARIANS

ENSURE
SUSTAINABLE
CANCER
SYSTEM
INFRASTRUC-
TURE AND
WORKFORCE

To learn more about the comprehensive Ontario Cancer Plan 6 and its strategic priorities for 2024–2028, please refer to Cancer Care Ontario's webpage: [CLICK LINK](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/cancerplan) if viewing electronically, or visit www.cancercareontario.ca/en/cancerplan

Ontario Cancer Statistics 2024 <https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/statistical-reports/ontario-cancer-statistics-2024>



The Heart of Our Commitment: Defining Who We Are

At the **Erie St. Clair Regional Cancer Program**, we believe that defining who we are is more than words on a page—it is the heart of our commitment and the foundation of how we serve our region. By naming and embracing the values that guide us, we create clarity for our teams, our patients, and our partners. These values shape our decisions, strengthen our collaborations, and ensure that every action reflects the spirit of our program.

During our strategic planning process, we asked members of our regional cancer program, including community and hospital partners, patients, caregivers, and support services to identify what matters most to us. These are not just ideals; they are lived experiences in every clinic, every conversation, and every partnership. Among them, **compassion, caring, collaboration and dedication** stand at the forefront. This reminds us that cancer care is not only about treatment, but about humanity, dignity, and hope.

As our word cloud demonstrates, we are a program that leads with compassion, strengthened by caring, empowered by dedication, enriched by collaboration, and guided by so much more. These values drive our consistent delivery of excellence at every step of the cancer journey.



Celebrating our Successes

Before we dive into the initiatives outlined in our 2024–2028 Strategic Plan —we want to take a moment to reflect on the progress and successes achieved through our previous plan, guided by OCP 5. Included below are some of our top successes from 2020–2024 that we would like to take a moment, as a region, to reflect on prior to continuing our efforts of developing an equally, if not more impactful 2024–2028 strategic plan.



Regional Accomplishments

- New complex malignant hematology pathways for all patients in the province
- Deep inspiration breath hold (DIBH) technique for radiation treatment
- New Linac Radiation Machine
- Sarcoma pathway development & expansion
- Erie Shores Healthcare Level 4 Satellite site status obtained
- Auto transplant service expansion
- Creation of 3 new OBSP sites
- PSO Program Expansion: Speech Language Pathology (SLP) for some head & neck patients
- Breast screening program (OBSP) self-referral expansion via OCEANS e-referral
- Multiple healthcare provider engagement and education opportunities
- Expansion of the cancer screening nursing student placement program.

Expressing Our Gratitude

We are deeply grateful for new and continued partnerships with many community programs and hospitals within our region, and are energized by the opportunity to continuously expand our services, enhance access, and continue delivering compassionate, high-quality cancer care across the region. These accomplishments were made possible thanks to the unwavering support, patience, and collaboration of our community, who stood with us as we implemented new strategies and developed innovative care pathways.



Developing our Strategic Goals and Initiatives as a Region

The development of our strategic initiatives facilitated many opportunities for collaboration and proved to be a valuable, transparent process. The graphics below showcase just a few of the incredible collaborative efforts from individuals across our region who helped shape the 2024–2028 plan.

5² REGIONAL PARTNERS

ENGAGED ACROSS THE CARE CONTINUUM

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES
& FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

700+ PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS
& ASSOCIATED SUPPORT
STAFF ENGAGED IN REVIEW

**PATIENT & FAMILY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEMBERS ACROSS THE REGION**

150 ATTENDEES AT
THE **2024**
ERIE ST. CLAIR
REGIONAL CANCER
PROGRAM SUMMIT

Thank you to everyone who joined us throughout the planning process. We are committed to amplifying the many voices that shape our regional cancer program—from patients to hospital teams, community providers, and all those in between. This plan would not exist without your invaluable insights and steadfast dedication to improving cancer care across our region.



Our Regional Strategic Initiatives for 2024-2028





Goal 1: Advancing Equity in the Cancer System

ESC RCP Strategic Objective

Enhance equitable cancer care by expanding access, integrating cultural competence, and strengthening outreach to underserved and Indigenous communities.

Initiatives

- Implement a regional centralized MRI and CT booking system that improves accessibility, reduces wait times, and ensures equitable scheduling for all patients.
- Continue to expand care services at our L4 sites.
- Implement rapid access breast days to expedite time to diagnosis.
- Increase awareness and explore new ways to improve access to cancer screening services for individuals who do not have a home address. Explore collaboration with the mental health nurses who partner with the local police department to provide education on cancer screening services.
- Incorporate Cultural Competence in Healthcare education in the onboarding process and annually for all team members.
- Expand cancer care services to include diverse ethnic groups and individuals with language barriers.
- Pilot an HPV self-screening program in collaboration with SOAHAC to improve access of Indigenous women to cervical screening programs.
- Explore opportunities to expand the Clinical Trials Navigator program to prioritize diverse and underserved populations.
- Develop pathways to improve access to cancer screening, while advancing equity in diverse and underserved populations such as 2SLGBTQIA+ (inclusive of trans and non-binary), FNMI peoples, Black and other racialized groups, newcomers.
- Explore opportunities to utilize existing community partners, including Primary Care Providers, to promote cancer screening services in communities with high volumes of unattached patients or areas with vulnerable populations.
- Engage indigenous partners and communities to build relationships and trust, minimize barriers to cancer care access, and collaborate to integrate indigenous specific care models into daily practice.



Goal 2: Improving the patient, care partner & provider experience

ESC RCP Strategic Objective

Eliminate barriers to ensure fair access to effective cancer treatments, while strengthening the system through equity, inclusion, diversity, anti-racism, and culturally responsive, trauma-informed, person-centred care.

Initiatives

- Co-design patient support pathways for breast, colorectal, lung and CNS tumours to improve the patient experience.
- Pilot a psychosocial screening assessment model to identify high symptom burdened patients earlier in the cancer trajectory.
- Improve access and awareness of Social Work services and supports.
- Explore pathways to ensure equitable access to pain management in the community.
- Create outreach initiatives to identify unattached patients and develop pathways in collaboration with local health organizations to support these patients from screening to discharge.
- Broaden the nurse navigator program to support patients, care partners, and providers throughout the cancer journey, ensuring guidance, care coordination, symptom management, and improved experiences for all.
- Develop a streamlined approach to integrating palliative care services earlier on in the care trajectory for all outpatient cancer patients identified who would benefit from earlier intervention.
- Expand palliative care education in the hospital setting for frontline staff with outpatient resources to provide to patients
- Standardize goals of care conversations at regular intervals to allow the care team to continually monitor and address care needs.
- Begin to develop a survivorship/transition/late effects clinic that provides coordinated, patient-centred care for cancer survivors, ensuring ongoing support and addressing long-term needs and quality of life for the patient, care partner, and provider. Use patient experience feedback surveys to drive this initiative.
- Develop nurse navigator workflows to coordinate patients through the transition from oncology to primary care.
- Leverage and actively offer existing established community resources to bring survivors together to share experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in a safe, supportive environment.
- Create an educational initiative to promote trauma-informed care practices for providers.
- Create structured access to trauma-informed wellness resources, including mindfulness resources, stress reduction initiatives or other peer support networks that are tailored to healthcare professionals.



Goal 3: Achieving seamless and effective integration of all cancer services

ESC RCP Strategic Objective

Ensuring coordinated, person-centred care that enhances patient outcomes, reduces system fragmentation, and supports equitable access at every step of the cancer journey.

Initiatives

- Integrate Foreign Exam Management (FEM) software to support a seamless method for a clinical user to access longitudinal DI results for a cancer patient across the region.
- Support the implementation of a regional centralized MRI and CT booking system that improves accessibility, reduces wait times, and ensures equitable scheduling for all patients. Explore existing digital resources to support timely access to cancer screening services.
- Develop a user-friendly online provider hub in partnership with easy navigation, regularly updated resources, including guidelines, toolkits, and best practices for equitable cancer care. Use this platform to increase awareness and education to Primary Care Providers on cancer services and surveillance screening that cancer patients may require following discharge from the Cancer Program.
- Develop a user-friendly online hub for patients and care partners with easy navigation, screen reader compatibility, and mobile-friendly design. Partner with patient advocates, patient and family advisors, community organizations, and cultural leaders to ensure materials are relevant and inclusive. Include wellness and community resources.
- Promote ConnectMyHealth to the cancer patients within our region.
- Explore virtual opportunities to enhance post-procedure and recovery care to support timely follow-up and recovery.
- Strengthen awareness of the pre-existing community and home support services to improve cancer symptom management.



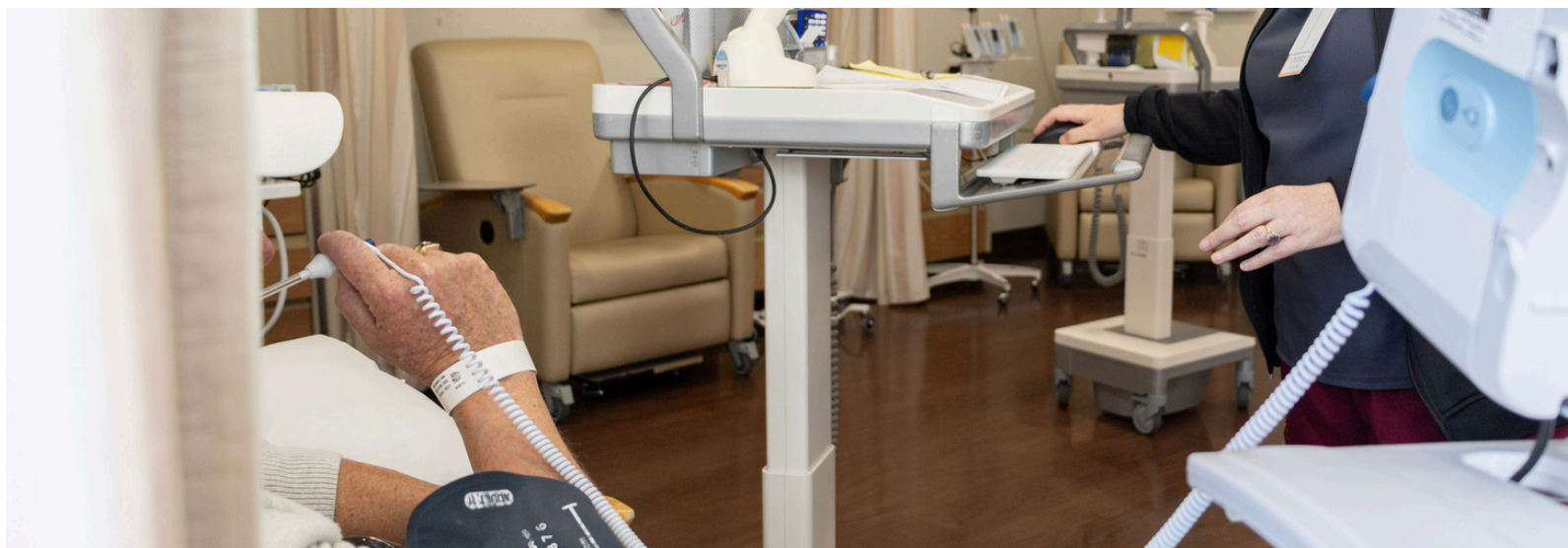
Goal 4: Improve cancer outcomes and quality of life for Ontarians

ESC RCP Strategic Objective

Enhance cancer care across Ontario by advancing early detection, expanding access to innovative treatments, and strengthening supportive services—ultimately improving survival rates and quality of life for all Ontarians affected by cancer.

Initiatives

- Continue to expand and implement RENEW program initiatives for individuals who have completed active treatment within the cancer program.
- Facilitate access to screening service information through community health events and partnerships with healthcare providers.
- Establish multidisciplinary clinics to provide integrated, person-centred care for complex oncologic disease sites (lung, GI, gyne, CNS). This will be achieved by successfully establishing and operationalizing these clinics.
- Establish disease site anthologies for select high-volume and high-risk cancers.
- Leverage local research/QI grants for funding opportunities to support new technology that will assist with improving cancer screening access.





Goal 5: Ensure sustainable cancer system infrastructure and workforce

ESC RCP Strategic Objective

Build and maintain a resilient, future-ready cancer care system by cultivating a skilled and diverse workforce, and optimizing resource allocation to meet evolving population needs.

Initiatives

- Continue regional recognition efforts through pre-existing award programs for staff or program accomplishments, while continuing to celebrate contributions of supporting programs.
- Explore initiatives to support all professional groups, such as MRTs, nurses, physicians, and other healthcare professions through exploration of new models of care.
- Offer cross-training opportunities for imaging modalities and continue to advocate for expanding training programs locally for supporting departments.
- Explore innovative ways to target young professionals to promote various careers in healthcare.
- Leverage digital tools and scheduling technology to optimize resource utilization, streamline patient flow, and enhance coordination between the outpatient oncology clinic and systemic therapy suite.
- Strengthen regional collaboration with partner hospitals to support shared care models, streamline systemic treatment visits, and provide care closer to home where clinically appropriate.
- Integrate and expand virtual care clinics throughout the patient journey to improve accessibility for patients and families.
- Explore and enhance virtual follow-up supports for patients discharged from the Cancer Program to promote continuity of care .

Looking Ahead

As we look ahead to 2024–2028, the Erie St. Clair Regional Cancer Program reaffirms its commitment to advancing cancer care through clear and purposeful goals including expanding access, reducing disparities, enhancing collaboration, driving innovation, and promoting person-centred care.

Through these collective efforts, we are shaping a future where cancer care in the Erie St. Clair region is equitable, innovative, and deeply compassionate. Together, we remain steadfast in our mission of **delivering excellence at every step of the cancer journey**. Thank you for taking the time to review our plan.



References:

Ontario Cancer Statistics 2024 <https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/statistical-reports/ontario-cancer-statistics-2024>
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