



County of Essex News

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## County Council Highlights for Nov. 1, 2023

### Warden Encourages Honouring Veterans as Remembrance Day Approaches

Wear a poppy and take time to learn about the service and sacrifices of Canada's veterans as Remembrance Day approaches, Warden Hilda MacDonald said at the start of Wednesday's Essex County Council meeting.

"In September, just outside these council chambers, we unveiled a painting depicting Essex Scottish soldiers at the liberation of Dieppe in August 1942," she said. "The story behind this painting is one that touched every corner of Essex County during World War Two. It is a powerful reminder of the significance of Remembrance Day."

The warden urged local residents to wear poppies and donate through local Royal Canadian Legion branches and at businesses that are supporting this year's poppy campaign. She also thanked local veterans, including LaSalle Deputy Mayor Michael Akpata, and their families.

Canadian soldiers have served in conflicts around the globe, including two world wars, the South African War, the Korean War, the Gulf War and, most recently, Afghanistan. Thousands of Canadian soldiers lost their lives and others returned physically and psychologically wounded. As well, more than 125,000 Canadian Armed Forces members have served in international peacekeeping efforts.

"At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, when we pause for two minutes of silence, it is the least we can do," MacDonald said.

Veterans from Royal Canadian Legion branches across Essex County pinned poppies on council members at the beginning of the meeting.

### TWEPI Presents its Plans for 2024

Representatives of Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island gave a [presentation](#) to council about their plans for 2024 and showed a new marketing video the organization is using to promote the region. They also provided an update on the results of promotional activities so far in 2023.

## Agreement Approved for Next Phase of Highway 3 Widening

Council has authorized the finalization of [an agreement](#) with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to allow for widening Highway 3 to four lanes from County Road 23 to County Road 34.

Ministry representatives made a [presentation](#) outlining the plans for construction, which is expected to begin next year and conclude in 2027. The work will take place along a stretch of Highway 3 from 1.1 km east of County Road 23 to 1.1 km east of County Road 34. The widening of Highway 3 is happening in phases, moving from Windsor to Leamington.

## Work on the New Official Plan is Nearing the Final Stage

The final versions of two key documents that will be used to create an updated County of Essex Official Plan were presented to council by Manager of Planning Services Rebecca Belanger and consultants hired to assist with the review.

The county will receive input about the [Growth Management Report](#) and [Policy Directions Report](#) until Dec. 8. After that, the first draft of the new Official Plan will be prepared for review in the spring of 2024.

The new Official Plan will incorporate policies aimed at ensuring Essex County remains a sustainable, healthy and vibrant place to live, work and play, says Belanger's [report to council](#).

The plan will also assist Essex County Council – working in partnership with local municipalities, key stakeholders and the community at large – in addressing important growth management goals, increasing the housing supply, making housing more affordable and supporting job growth while preserving valuable farmland and natural heritage land resources.

## Council Supports Call for Province to Tackle Housing and Affordability

County council is supporting [a call by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus](#) for the provincial government to revoke strong mayor powers it recently granted and instead put more resources into assisting municipalities tackle the housing and affordability crisis.

## Council Backs Proposal to Increase Threshold for Review of New Gas Lines

Council is also backing a [Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus proposal](#) to allow new hydrocarbon (usually gas) lines costing less than \$20 million to proceed after Indigenous consultation and environmental review but without requiring authorization from the Ontario Energy Board. The Wardens' Caucus says in a letter to Ontario Minister of Energy Todd Smith that the current \$2 million threshold set in 1998 effectively means all projects are being delayed because they must be reviewed by the board.

## County Passes By-law to Participate in Community Improvement Plans

Council passed a [by-law](#) amending its Official Plan to allow it to participate in tax grants offered by local municipalities to attract industrial and commercial development.

The county will now develop a [program guide](#) setting out the details of how it will participate in the tax grants. Local municipalities can only offer tax grants for their portion of property taxes – roughly 50 per cent of the typical tax bill in Essex County. The other half is for county and education taxes.

## County to Consider Options for Preserving Natural Heritage Areas

Administration is investigating ways it can enhance existing policies and by-laws to preserve the tree canopy in Essex County. Council has also asked for a report on options and associated costs should it decide to proceed with adopting a Natural Heritage Areas Preservation By-law.

Such a by-law would help the county comply with requirements of the Municipal Act and make it clear to developers that they cannot alter and remove natural heritage features prior to obtaining Planning Act approvals, says a [report to council](#). The report also says the by-law should focus on areas that are two hectares or larger.

“The target of a Natural Heritage Areas Preservation By-law at the County level would not be on residential street or yard trees,” it says, adding that local municipalities could address those issues as they see fit. Amherstburg, Kingsville, Lakeshore, LaSalle and Tecumseh have tree canopy policies and by-laws.

## Essex-Windsor EMS Adding an Ambulance and Increasing Paramedic Staffing

Essex-Windsor EMS received approval to increase its staffing by the equivalent of six full-time paramedics to cope with high call volumes and to reduce periods when one or fewer ambulances is available to respond.

The increased staffing will put an additional ambulance on the road 12 hours a day, seven days a week. The cost for the remainder of 2023 will be covered by the current budget, says

a [report to council](#) by Chief Justin Lammers, adding that Essex-Windsor EMS will be seeking further staff enhancements in 2024.

## **Approval Given to Order New EMS Vehicles for 2024 in Advance**

Essex-Windsor EMS has been given approval to order 2024 replacement vehicles for its fleet due to the fact delivery could take a year or more.

County council gave [pre-budget approval](#) for the purchase of eight ambulances, three emergency response vehicles and one pickup truck for an estimated total cost of \$2.26 million plus HST. Three of the ambulances will incorporate parts from the boxes of ambulances that are being decommissioned to reduce the price.

## **Financial and Accounting Policies Updated**

Essex County has adopted an Asset Retirement Obligations Policy and revised its Strategic Asset Management and Tangible Capital Assets policies to improve its financial reporting, asset management practices and planning processes.

The new and revised policies “promote transparency and strategic financial management, which could contribute to more effective resource allocation,” says a [report to council](#).

## **Traffic Control Study Proposed at County Road 9 and Alma**

Essex County will conduct a traffic control study at the intersection of County Road 9 and Alma Street in Amherstburg. The study was requested by Amherstburg Town Council.

## **Report on the Cost of Pursuing a Regional Waste Initiative Requested**

Council has asked for a report disclosing the costs incurred in collecting and preparing information on what would be required to regionalize waste collection in Essex County.

County and Essex-Windsor Solid Waste Authority staff prepared the information for consideration by county council and local municipal councils. County council approved the plan. However, it failed to get the required approval of at least four of the seven local municipalities –with at least 50 per cent of the electors in the county.