



Essex County Library

Service Delivery Promise

The Essex County Library (ECL) is the community's connection to information resources and services for the residents living in the 7 local municipalities within the County of Essex.

ECL is governed by the Essex County Library Board and its Mission is to welcome all Essex County residents to a world of discovery, creativity and lifelong learning through accessible resources, programs, and innovative services.

It is the vision of the Essex County Library to provide welcoming spaces for its membership where:

- Knowledgeable staff are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the community
- Innovative ideas and cutting-edge technology are embraced
- Engaging programs and current comprehensive collections are created and
- Creative partnerships encourage social interaction and cultural vitality.

Level of Service Statement

ECL is connecting residents to resources through our community branch locations and through 24/7 online service centre at www.essexcountylibrary.ca

Town of Amherstburg	Amherstburg Branch
Town of Essex	Essex Branch Harrow Branch McGregor Branch
Town of Kingsville	Cottam Branch Highline Branch, (Kingsville) Ruthven Branch
Municipality of Lakeshore	Comber Branch Toldo Foundation Branch, (Emeryville) Libro Centre Branch, (Woodslee)
Town of LaSalle	William (Bill) Varga Branch (Lasalle)
Municipality of Leamington	Leamington Branch
Town of Tecumseh	Cada Branch (Tecumseh)

Through its 14 branches, the Essex County Library provides direct access to, and staffing support for its collections, programs, and services. The 24/7 online service strengthens the library's collections and resources by providing access to its expanding digital content of eBooks, eMagazines and Databases.

2022 Achievements and Challenges

As the spread of COVID-19 began to slow, and the community started to return to normal, the Essex County Library began its own return to normalcy. This included beginning the reopening process for smaller facilities that had been closed since March of 2020, including the Comber, Cottam, Stoney Point and Ruthven branches.

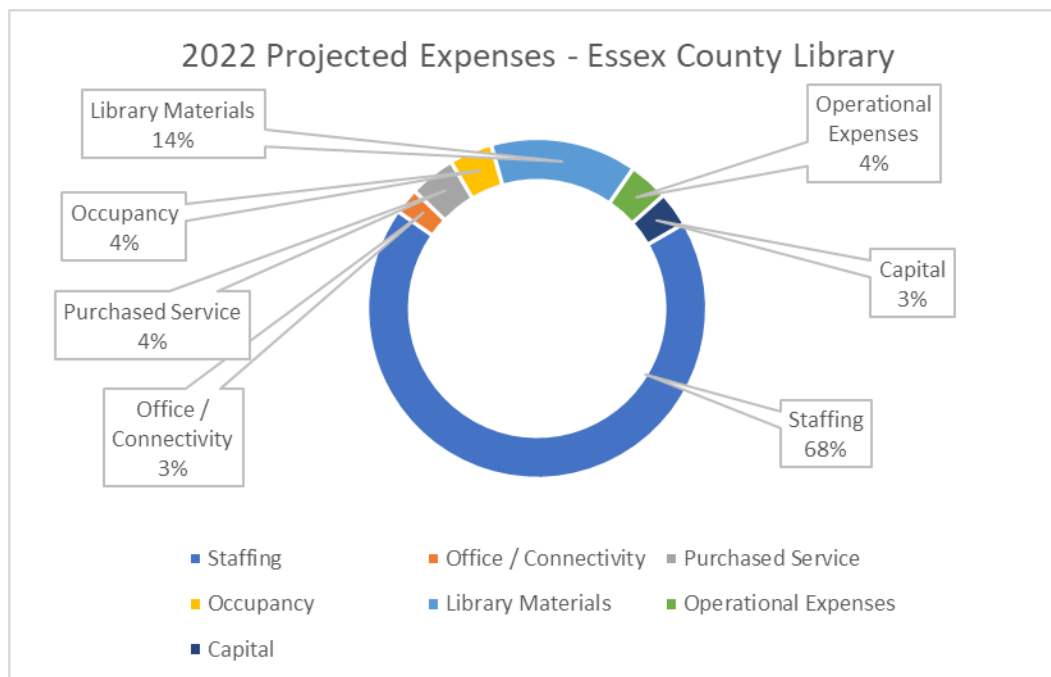
In February of 2022, ECL launched its new 'Enhanced Community Service' model of customer service in the McGregor and Harrow branches, allowing these branches to each provide an additional ~15 hours of unstaffed service every week. Having secured grant funding in 2021, ECL has committed to outfitting the new Comber branch with the technological supports necessary

to roll out Enhanced Community Service hours upon opening in late 2022/ early 2023.

In September of 2022, ECL launched a re-worked staffing model, which was intended to address the prospect of re-opening the four smaller library branches, as well as an uptick in staff illness. In the wake of COVID-19, short notice absence (sick time requests) has increased. That being the case, the new staffing model included hiring an additional 4 casual supply staff to cover absences and to ensure that public service levels are consistently maintained.

All non-union Student Desk Clerk positions remained vacant throughout 2021 and into early 2022. As operational need increases, these positions are slowly being brought back. Likewise, with key non-union Management positions, the library had spent the early months of 2022 with vacancies in its management team. This gap has also been addressed.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of spending at the Essex County Library for this past year (projected to December 31, 2022).



Opportunities and Challenges for 2023

Recent feedback from both the public and staff suggests that there is a strong community push to return to pre-pandemic levels of service, including service at the small branches which have remained closed since 2020. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the library; reopening facilities often come with hidden or unanticipated costs but are an excellent way to garner community interest in our services.

Technology and providing access to technology has long been an important component of library service. This presents a unique set of challenges for Essex County Library as the need to stay modern and up-to-date inevitably comes with a price. For example, the ECL website is in need of a significant update, as are many of our public access computers; both of which are accessed directly by the public and therefore critically important to providing the best possible service.

The Essex County Library is overdue for a new Strategic Plan and is well outside of the typical 3-5 year planning cycle. With opportunities for support from the Ontario Library Service, 2023 will be a 'planning year' and will help to solidify the direction ECL will take for the future.

Proposed 2023 Budget Plan

The proposed 2023 Budget includes consideration for the following:

Information Services and Collection

Information Services and Collections are the core service of a public library. Public Libraries aim to provide a barrier-free access to information that supports educational and recreational interests of its residents. Resource collections should be contemporary, current, and relevant to support the broad interests of our residents.

Costs associated with maintaining a robust collection are impacted by several factors, not least of which are the manufacturing costs of physical resources, the pricing for content licensing for eResources, fluctuation of the US exchange rate, and the available discount rates from the distributors.

Despite this, the proposed budget includes a 0% increase for resources. The Essex County Library has historically been underspent with respect to the collections budget and as such there will be no need for increased funding to offset any inflation in the cost of materials.

Programming and Outreach

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ECL had to restrict programming and outreach services and make the switch to online and virtual events. As we continue to return to regular public services, in-person programming and outreach services will be essential. Programming at ECL has historically included things like story times for kids, book clubs, and crafting sessions.

The proposed 2023 budget includes an increase in funding for program and outreach supplies and services. These funds will be used to help support a more well-rounded selection of programming at all branches, and will allow staff the opportunity to deliver more unique and meaningful offerings to our library users.

Branches

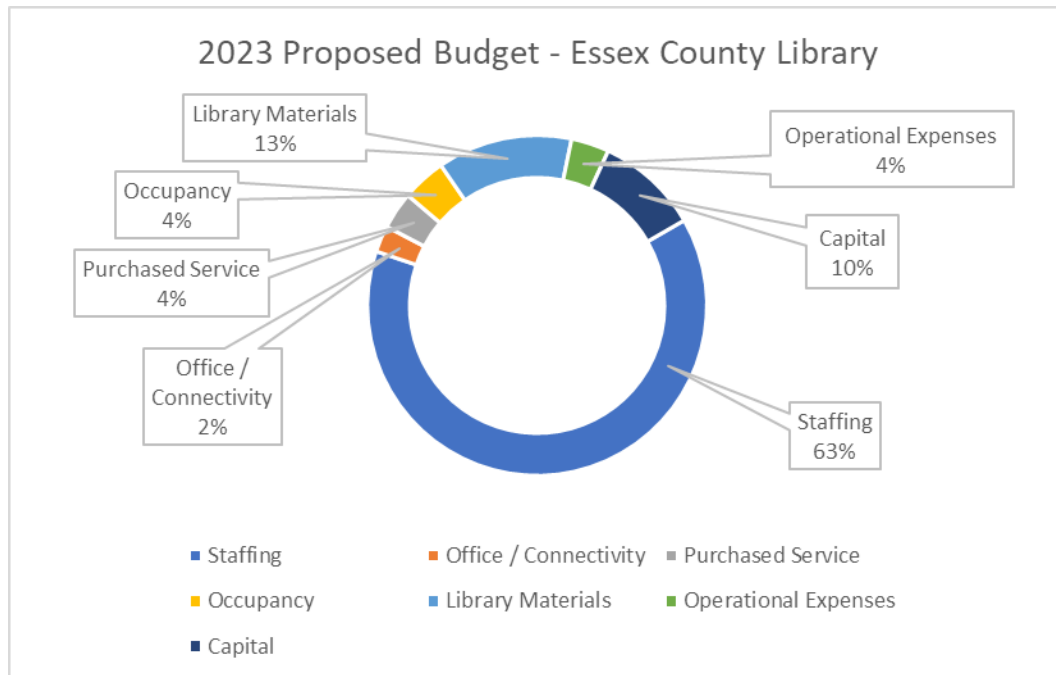
The Essex County Library uses third-party contracts for janitorial services at branch locations. In 2023, janitorial contract services will continue to be required for all site locations. Each site will maintain or return to its regular cleaning services at pre-pandemic levels.

The proposed 2023 budget includes costs associated with upcoming renovation projects. Set to begin in 2023, the Cada Branch (Tecumseh) is scheduled to undergo a significant refresh and renovation project that includes new carpet and paint, reworked staff and public study space, new washrooms and more.

Technological Infrastructure

The proposed 2023 budget is mindful of the need to address technological obsolescence in both the public facing and the administrative infrastructure that the library utilizes. This includes things like replacing public access PCs as they age out of service, implementing new network hardware to increase security, and any costs associated with updating the Essex County Library website.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of proposed 2023 Budget spending at the Essex County Library:



Overall, the 2023 Budget for Essex County Library, net of recoveries, totals \$6,029,600 (0.06% increase over the 2022 Budget of \$6,026,200).