



Administrative Report

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Date: Wednesday, January 15, 2025

Subject: County of Essex Delegation at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association Conference

Report #: 2025-0115-CAO-R01-SZ

Purpose

To provide County Council with delegation application information for the upcoming Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Conference that will be held in Toronto, Ontario from January 19 to January 21, 2025.

Background

The deadline for making delegation applications for the ROMA Conference was November 27, 2024.

The Senior Leadership Team, in consultation with the Warden, discussed and identified initiatives requiring advocacy that were rooted in the County's Strategic Plan and appropriate for delegation at ROMA. Refinements were made and applications were submitted by the deadline.

Subsequently and through to the timing of this report, work is underway to finalize supporting materials, including briefing notes and infographics.

The Warden and CAO will lead the delegation with subject matter experts, ensuring an impactful, well-organized presentation. Following the conference, County Council will be provided with a summary of delegation efforts, including issues raised and materials shared, to publicly report on the County's advocacy at ROMA.

Discussion

In late November, 2024, Administration applied to delegate to three Ministries:

- 1) Ministry of Transportation (MTO)

- Attendees: Warden MacDonald, CAO Zwiers, Project Manager Daniel Baggio;
- 2) Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI)
- Attendees: Warden MacDonald, CAO Zwiers, Director of Infrastructure & Planning Services Botham, Mayor McNamara (Tecumseh), CAO Misek-Evans (Tecumseh); and
- 3) Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Attendees: Warden MacDonald, CAO Zwiers, Chief Lammers.

As of the writing of this report, confirmation has been received (with dates/times/locations to be determined) from all three Ministries, (MTO, MOI and MOH). Administration will be working closely with Ministry representatives to schedule the sessions over the coming days.

MTO – Roads to Prosperity

The County of Essex is requesting provincial support for urgent infrastructure upgrades to accommodate the transformative growth occurring in the Windsor-Essex region. Key projects, including a \$5-billion electric vehicle battery plant, a new regional hospital, and a new international border crossing, will generate thousands of jobs and fuel substantial residential, commercial, and industrial growth. However, without significant upgrades to critical infrastructure, such as the construction of grade-separated interchanges on County Road 22 at County Road 19 and Lesperance Road, the region faces potential traffic congestion and disruptions that could undermine these opportunities.

Essex County is prepared to contribute \$45 million towards the estimated \$105 million cost of each interchange project and is ready to begin preparatory work in 2025. However, due to financial constraints, the County requires substantial provincial assistance to advance these projects. The interchanges are vital to ensuring smooth traffic flow, supporting the region's economic development, and enabling the construction of up to 13,000 new homes in the area. This investment is crucial to realizing the full economic potential of Windsor-Essex and advancing Ontario's broader growth goals.

MOI – MHIP County Road 19/22 (Joint with Tecumseh)

The County of Essex and the Town of Tecumseh are requesting a joint delegation to advocate for funding support through the Housing-Enabling Core Servicing Stream (HECS). This funding would enable critical transportation infrastructure improvements along County Road 19 (Manning

Road), which is vital to unlocking new housing opportunities and supporting substantial population growth in the region.

The proposed project includes expanding Manning Road to a four-lane urban roadway with enhanced stormwater management, intersection improvements, and active transportation features. These upgrades will support the development of the Manning Road Secondary Plan Area (MRSPA), enabling the construction of 3,300 homes within five years while improving traffic flow, safety, and stormwater resiliency. With projected population growth of up to 115,000 people and increasing demand for affordable housing, this high-priority project aligns with the County's Official Plan and Ontario's goal of building 1.5 million homes by 2031.

MOH – Answering the Call

Essex-Windsor EMS is requesting that the Ministry of Health transfer the operational responsibility for the Windsor Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) to the County of Essex, allowing Essex-Windsor EMS to manage day-to-day decision-making under a performance agreement with the Ministry. This move would enable more agile and responsive dispatching, leveraging the region's successful community paramedicine programs to improve patient care and outcomes. With the region's growing population and increasing ambulance call volumes, simply adding more resources such as ambulances and paramedics is neither financially feasible nor operationally sustainable. Instead, a more integrated approach to deploying existing resources is necessary to meet the demands of Windsor-Essex, which is facing a chronic shortage of paramedics and rising costs for ambulance services.

By taking control of the CACC, Essex-Windsor EMS could improve operational efficiency, reduce response times, and enhance coordination with regional health partners. This model has proven successful in other Ontario regions like Niagara, Ottawa, and Toronto, and has been identified as the preferred solution by expert consultants working with Essex-Windsor EMS. The transfer of responsibility would allow for a more streamlined, real-time deployment of resources, including community paramedics, to ensure patients receive the right care when and where they need it. This would also support the broader goal of reducing unnecessary emergency room visits and optimizing the overall healthcare system in the region.

Financial Implications

Preparing for delegations at the ROMA Conference requires the resources of a number of departments: the operational department most impacted by the advocacy issue, the Communications Department, the CAO's office and the

Warden. The Corporation is fortunate to have in-house expertise to manage the process and develop and create the deliverables. The cost of this work is absorbed in the daily running of the business.

The opportunity to advocate before a Minister is considered a privilege and while no financial commitments are secured from the Province during delegations, these opportunities open the door to the potential for new programs and financial supports from the Province, which can work to reduce pressures on the Corporation’s tax base.

Consultations

- Warden MacDonald
- Senior Leadership Team
- Administration of the Town of Tecumseh

Strategic Plan Alignment

Working as Team Essex County	Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence	Building a Regional Powerhouse
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share	<input type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-0115-CAO-R01-SZ, ROMA Delegation as information.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Zwiers

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
N/A	N/A