

County of Essex
ROMA Conference Delegation Submission
Sun, Jan 19 - Tues, Jan 21, 2025

1. Select the ministry you would like to meet with.

- Ministry of Transportation (MTO)
- Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister (MMAH)
- Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS)

2. Enter the full names and titles of delegates who will attend this meeting

- Sandra Zwiers, Chief Administrative Officer
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 - 519-776-6441 ext. 1350
- Hilda MacDonald, Warden
- Daniel Baggio, Project Manager
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3. Provide an Issue Title to describe your concern

Roads to Prosperity

4. Provide an Issue Summary to describe your concern related to this ministry.

Transformational growth in Windsor and Essex County is being driven by generational investments but infrastructure funding for two interchanges is urgently required to ensure this region can accommodate thousands of new homes while maximizing opportunities for job creation and economic development.

Provide an Issue Background to describe your concern related to the issue above.

The Windsor-Essex region is on the cusp of historic economic growth, driven by transformative projects that promise to generate tens of thousands of jobs, inject hundreds of millions of dollars into government coffers, and ignite an unprecedented surge in residential, commercial and industrial growth. However, the full economic

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potential of these historic projects may not be realized without substantial provincial support for necessary infrastructure enhancements.

The construction of a \$5-billion electric vehicle battery plant, a new regional hospital and a new international border crossing have the potential to transform the regional and provincial economy, but significant infrastructure upgrades are urgently required to minimize traffic congestion and conflict with Essex County's agricultural centre and to ensure these projects promote rather than prevent continued residential, commercial and industrial growth.

The battery plant alone is projected to create 2,500 direct jobs, with estimates ranging from 14,000 to 21,000 indirect jobs, along with supply chain investments surpassing \$1 billion. Simultaneously, the construction of the new regional hospital, set to commence in 2026, is expected to generate over 11,000 jobs, contributing \$1.57 billion to the region's GDP and attracting top talent in health care. However, the existing infrastructure, mainly rural roads and congested arteries like County Road 22/E.C. Row Expressway, requires major upgrades to accommodate that explosive growth. Excessive traffic disruptions impeding additional growth and increased conflicts with the agricultural sector are anticipated without infrastructure upgrades.

Essex County strives to be a partner with the Province of Ontario in providing a safe and reliable road system "that connects smaller communities to larger centres; improves access to jobs and critical services; and supports an open and competitive business environment," as set out in *Connecting the Southwest: A Draft Transportation Plan for Southwestern Ontario* (2020).

The county has steadily and consistently been making major investments in its road network to accommodate growth, particularly in the area around the City of Windsor. It is currently expanding and enhancing County Road 42, a critical regional road that will carry increased traffic being generated by a new electric vehicle battery plant, as well as the planned new regional hospital and Gordie Howe International Bridge. Other enhancements to Essex County roads in the fast-growing area east of Windsor are nearing the construction stage and expected to be completed in the next few years.

At the same time, congestion during peak travel times is already bringing traffic to a standstill at two at-grade, signalized intersections on County Road 22 within three kilometres of the new electric vehicle battery plant. An environmental assessment has confirmed that the safe and efficient movement of traffic requires grade-separated interchanges where County Road 22 intersects with both County Road 19 and Lesperance Road.

The estimated cost of each project is \$105 million. The County is prepared to provide \$45 million for each project and could begin preparatory work, including the

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identification of land acquisition needs and the design and construction of a stormwater management solution, in 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 with the full construction of both interchanges to commence in 2028.

The total cost of these projects is significant and beyond the capacity of Essex County taxpayers to fund on top of other ongoing road improvements required based on the Regional Transportation study. The County's updated Asset Management Plan pegs the annual capital requirement for road segments at \$22,956,400 while the actual reinvestment is only \$10,521,600, generating an annual funding shortfall of \$12,434,800. The annual funding gap for all County of Essex assets has been calculated at \$27.3 million.

County Road 22 is the major thoroughfare connecting Windsor with the Town of Tecumseh and Municipality of Lakeshore. Between 30,000 and 40,000 vehicles travel this stretch of road from the border with Windsor through rapidly expanding County of Essex communities. Both the Town of Tecumseh and Municipality of Lakeshore are diligently taking steps to increase housing to meet provincial targets and support regional growth. They have completed or are in the process of finalizing secondary planning studies so that areas along the County Road 22 corridor can accommodate another 13,000 households in the near future. As well, both the Independent Electricity System Operator and natural gas industry are projecting growth and anticipating major expansions in this area.

Add to this the traffic from the EV battery plant, new hospital and border crossing, and the pressure on the intersections at County Road 22 and County Road 19 and County Road 22 and Lesperance Road will lead to traffic backups that compromise billions of dollars invested in economic growth and housing. The construction of interchanges before this happens is a worthwhile investment in the future of Windsor-Essex and Ontario. Essex County is prepared to do its fair share but requires significant assistance from the province to advance these projects that will benefit this region and the economy of Ontario as a whole.

The Ontario government has consistently shown its support for Windsor-Essex and expressed its belief that the region can leverage its skilled workforce, history of manufacturing excellence and proximity to the border to become a powerhouse that drives the provincial economy.

The County of Essex is seeking continued support to maximize the positive impact of the generational opportunities before it.