

## Council Services



Essex County Council is comprised of the Mayors and Deputy Mayors of the seven (7) member municipalities of Amherstburg, Essex, Kingsville, Lakeshore, LaSalle, Leamington and Tecumseh. County Council is responsible for setting levels of service, establishing the policies governing the operations of the County and providing direction to County Administration. Members of County Council represent taxpayers through participation in meetings, conferences, associations, boards, consultation opportunities and attendance at various events. Their representative role ensures the voice of County taxpayers are translated into services and programs that respond to their needs.

## Level of Service Statement

The Budget for Council Services provides support to County Council and includes the remuneration and benefits for Council's fourteen (14) members to participate in meetings of County Council and Committees and Boards of the County. Expenses relating to Council member training, education, meetings, conferences and travel are also provided for in the Budget in accordance with Council approved corporate policies.

In accordance with the *Municipal Act, 2001*, the Budget for Council Services also includes funding to support the contracted services of an Integrity Commissioner.

## Opportunities and Challenges for 2025

Continuing to provide opportunities for Council to receive training and attend conferences and workshops that are relevant to their roles will remain a priority for Council Services in 2025.

Ensuring residents and business owners in Essex County have access to County Council information in an accessible format, maintaining engagement with the public and ensuring an open and transparent municipal government are continued goals for 2025.

## Proposed 2025 Budget Plan

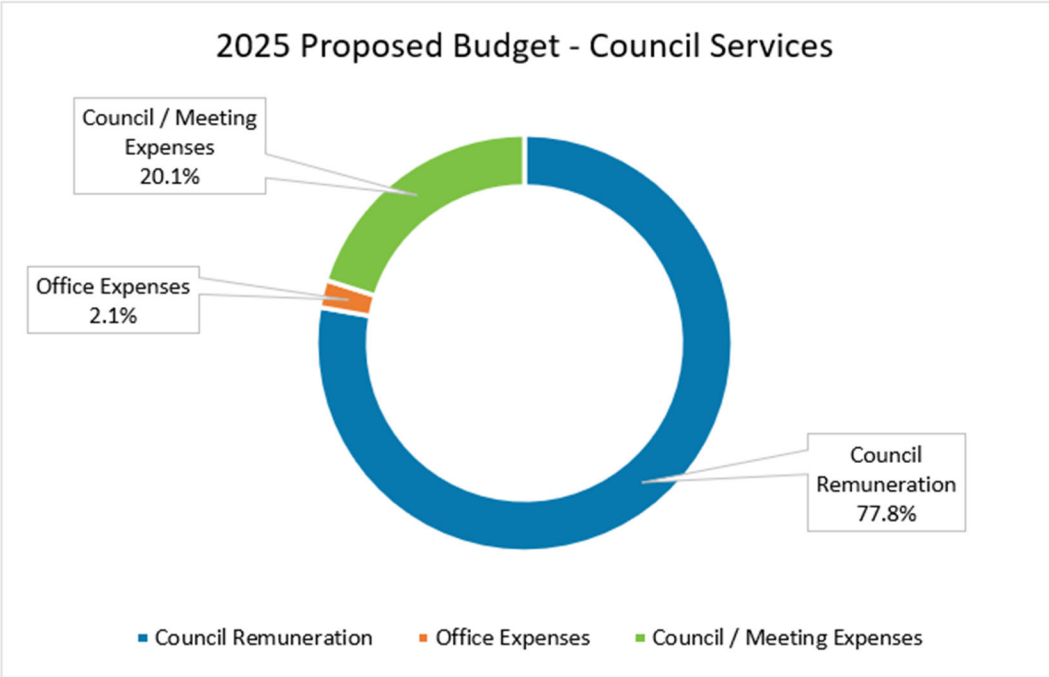
Salaries and related benefits for members of Council have been included at the adjusted rates set by Council in mid-2024, representing an increase for the proposed 2025 Budget. Likewise, there has been an increase in the amount budgeted for conferences and meetings, to align with the updated County Policy related to attendance at conferences by members of Council, Committees and Boards of the County.

There has also been an increase in conference related expenses, as it is anticipated that with the City and County hosting the AMCTO conference in 2025, there will be additional expenses associated with being the host region.

Although the inflation rate has somewhat declined, the proposed 2025 Budget still accounts for an increase in membership costs, anticipated mileage reimbursements and increased costs for closed captioning of County Council meetings.

Finally, the County has traditionally budgeted every 4 years for a reception to celebrate the outgoing Warden and commemorate their service. To normalize the budget for this expense, the proposed 2025 Budget includes an annualized amount to be contributed to reserve throughout the in-between years.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of proposed 2025 Budget spending in Council Services:



Overall, the proposed 2025 Budget for Council Services totals \$907,740 (an increase of \$327,040 (56.32%) over the 2024 Budget of \$580,700).

## Alignment with Strategic Plan Initiatives

The proposed 2025 Budget for Council Services aligns with the County's new Strategic Plan in a number of ways, but most notably with the following:

### Focusing Team "Essex County" for Results

By providing members of Council and members of Committees and Boards of the County with increased training opportunities, as well as increased opportunities to attend at conferences with other municipal and provincial leaders, Council will be more informed and better positioned to advocate for the needs of its residents.

### Promoting Transparency and Awareness

Continuing to meet the County's requirements to make its meetings accessible will promote access to more County residents to participate in reviewing the publicly available Council reports and viewing meetings of County Council.