

Appendix D: 2024 Department-Specific Achievements and Challenges

Community Services

2024 Achievements and Challenges

The County signed a funding agreement with the City of Windsor to oversee homelessness programs in the County. The City of Windsor agreed to fund the Essex County Homelessness Hub, the County Outreach Worker and an Emergency Shelter Motel Program. The Essex County Homelessness Hub also operated a warming centre from Dec.9th, 2024 to March 31st, 2025. It saw a 30% increase in visits during the operations of the Warming Centre and throughout its regular yearly operations.

The Residential Services Homes Program started working with additional partners such as the Windsor Essex Community Health Centre Addiction Support Services and with the Reaching All Canadians Service Canada Program.

Throughout 2024, the County continued to partner with health and social service agencies to support residents with mental health support, grief support, and hospital discharges. Annual inspections and infection control audits were completed.

The Residential Services Homes Program continues to be challenged with transportation gaps to ensure residents of the program are able to access healthcare supports. In addition, the Residential Services Homes providers have identified significant budgetary pressures and continue to identify a need for an increase in per diem funding.

Sun Parlor Home

2024 Achievements and Challenges

The Sun Parlor Home aims to be an inspirational home for all people within our changing community that is compassionate, innovative and fosters purpose and dignity. In keeping with this mission and in alignment with the County of Essex Strategic Plan, the Home has focused on a number of resident-focused enhancements: new dishes and dining room furniture were purchased to enhance the overall dining experience and the creation of a family dining room where residents and families can enjoy a meal together. A Reflection room was created to foster a quiet space where residents and families alike can take a "time out" from the activity on the unit. A palliative comfort chair was purchased so that families can comfortably stay overnight

with a loved one and be present at significant times in a resident's life journey. A foster kitten Program was also introduced bringing great pleasure for residents and staff alike.

Workplace culture and quality of work life has been a significant focus for senior leadership and the Management Team. Staff feedback has highlighted opportunities for improvement and steps in this direction have begun and will continue into 2025. A new fenced in courtyard was created to provide a safe place for those wishing to smoke and an existing space was renovated to provide a quiet room for staff to step away from the unit for a well-deserved break.

The aging building is an ongoing challenge and early planning for building re-development is underway. In the meantime, the Maintenance Department works diligently to maintain and update the building as opportunities arise: tub room enhancements and a new spa room built to provide a more functional and safe space for bathing/showering activities are a few improvements of note.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

2024 Achievements and Challenges

2024 was a year of significant progress, innovation, and impact for our service. We transitioned all radio communications from the outdated FleetNet system to the digital Public Safety Radio Network (PSRN), modernizing our core infrastructure as part of a province-wide initiative.

Asset replacement and upgrades included deploying 53 automated CPR devices and six vehicles, as well as installing safes in all remaining vehicles to ensure secure transportation of narcotics. We also improved the restraint system used for combative patients and transitioned from disposable sheets to laundered linens, advancing environmental sustainability and realizing budget savings.

We successfully passed our triennial Ministry of Health service review and certification audit, affirming our compliance with Land Ambulance Certification Standards. We launched the "Why Windsor" campaign and expanded outreach through career fairs, college visits, and relocation incentives, resulting in the successful hiring of forty (40) part-time Paramedics, eight (8) Paramedic Aides, and two (2) student support roles. Internally, 104 position or status changes supported career progression, including promotions to leadership roles and advanced care levels. We enhanced overall ambulance coverage by adding one (1) 24-hour ambulance

and one (1) 12-hour ambulance for a total increase of 13,140 operational ambulance hours per year. We celebrated 6 Paramedics with the Governor General's EMS Medal and 51 staff members for years of service and peer-nominated awards.

Our Peer Support Team made over 540 connections with Paramedic colleagues, 452 of which were linked to critical incident responses, reinforcing our commitment to mental health and wellness. This work was further supported by a comprehensive Mental Health and Well-Being Study, which provided actionable recommendations to continue improving staff support.

Community Paramedicine efforts significantly reduced strain on emergency resources. Our Mobile Integrated Healthcare – Community Paramedicine team helped reduce unnecessary 911 calls and emergency department (ED) transports. Clients enrolled in the Mental Health and Addictions Response Team program saw a 50% reduction in 911 calls, while those supported by our Vulnerable Patient Navigator saw a 63% reduction. Additionally, the Community Assessment Triage Team (CATT) diverted 70% of transports from the ED for residents who called 911 and had a CATT member respond. Seven new Community Paramedics were trained internally to support succession planning and future program expansion.

Essex-Windsor EMS continued to lead the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) Legacy Oil and Gas Well grant process, with significant support and collaboration from all local municipal partners. This grant funding has enabled fire and EMS training, the purchase of new monitoring and detection equipment, and the acquisition of hazardous material decontamination trailers (in progress), as well as enhanced communications equipment. This grant funding has provided the region with significant resources, enabling an improved interagency response to any major disaster.

Public engagement reached new levels, with 1,100 public access defibrillators registered and 52 AED/CPR sessions provided to over 600 participants. Public relations requests surged 222% compared to 2023, although staffing limitations allowed us to fulfill only 48 of the 216 requests.

Training and leadership development remained a priority, with all Paramedics receiving 16 hours of training and leadership team members receiving an additional 20 hours focused on management and leadership skills.

Labour relations remained collaborative, with only four (4) grievances received for the year, showcasing a strong commitment to early resolution, open communication, and maintaining a respectful working relationship.

Most notably, we reduced code black incidents by nearly 80% year-over-year and improved response times in five (5) of six (6) categories.

We look forward to building on this momentum with the results of our Master Plan refresh and our ongoing Service Delivery Review.

Infrastructure and Planning Services

2024 Achievements and Challenges

In 2024, the Engineering division successfully rehabilitated over 30 kilometres of roadway and completed the rehabilitation or replacement of two bridges and two culverts. The roadway expansion and capacity-building program advanced with the construction of County Road 43 and the new roundabout at the intersection of County Roads 42 and 43. Renovations at the County Administration offices at 360 Fairview continued, with improvements focused on the Human Resources and Community Services departments.

The County's Road Maintenance division delivered high-quality, innovative and reliable service across our regional network. With a dedicated team and strong partnerships with local municipalities, the department ensures County roads remained safe, functional, and well-maintained year-round. The division demonstrates a strong commitment to public safety, and operational efficiency. Their efforts support the movement of people and goods, contributing to the overall resilience and connectivity of our transportation system.

County facilities are maintained to a high standard thanks to the dedication and expertise of the Facilities Operations group. Their preventative maintenance, and prompt response to service needs, ensures that buildings remain safe, accessible, and efficient. In 2024, their work supported key initiatives, including ongoing renovations at the County Administration Building, while sustaining day-to-day operations across multiple sites.

Guided by the expertise and commitment of our dedicated Planning Department, a comprehensive Official Plan Review was successfully completed in 2024. The Draft Official Plan 2024 was adopted by County Council and submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval. In addition, County Council received the Final Essex Region Shoreline Natural Hazard Mapping, a valuable resource that supports both

the County and our Local Municipal Partners in fulfilling their responsibilities under the Planning Act. These achievements reflect a collaborative and thoughtful approach to long-term planning for our region's future.

Library Services

2024 Achievements and Challenges

Essex County Library experienced a year of substantial growth, community engagement, and operational development. Among the most notable achievements was a dramatic 62% increase in total program attendance, rising from 47,466 in 2023 to 77,031 in 2024. This growth was driven by a broad range of programming, including strong gains in adult and senior-focused initiatives, community partnerships, and a near doubling of drop-in activity attendance across all 14 branches.

The library also prioritized strategic partnerships and innovative programming throughout 2024. New initiatives like the "Pitch In With Essex County Library" cleanup campaign and a large-scale solar eclipse outreach—distributing over 8,000 viewing glasses—demonstrated ECL's commitment to civic engagement. Additional partnerships with organizations such as Schlegel Villages for the intergenerational "Green Bench" initiative and Telus Wise for cyber-safety programming helped strengthen ECL's role as a community connector and educator.

In terms of collections and technology, the library launched pilot collections of video games and Wonderbooks, which received highly positive feedback and are likely to see expansion. The introduction of a new online event calendar also improved access to programming and enabled better community outreach. Circulation statistics reflected increased usage overall: physical circulation rose modestly by 3% while electronic circulation jumped by 15%, supported by a 14% rise in average monthly digital users. These trends confirm a growing interest in both traditional and digital library resources.

Facilities improvements further underscored ECL's year of progress. The Cada Branch in Tecumseh completed a year-long renovation in May, receiving strong community support. Meanwhile, plans for a new Cottam branch were approved, with an expanded footprint in the forthcoming community centre. These library space upgrades reflect a broader commitment to accessibility and long-term service sustainability.

Despite these successes, 2024 was not without its challenges. The Stoney Point Branch faced an extended closure, only reopening in February 2025 after efforts to stabilize operations in collaboration with municipal and union

partners. While well-handled, the situation highlighted the importance of contingency planning and cross-organizational coordination. Additionally, surging demand for new services like video games and enhanced programming may put pressure on future budgets and staffing.

In sum, 2024 was a banner year for Essex County Library, marked by strong attendance growth, successful partnerships, infrastructure investments, and responsive service development. Looking ahead, the challenge will be to sustain this momentum by continuing to innovate, expanding successful pilots, and meeting evolving community needs while managing resources strategically.

Council

2024 Achievements and Challenges

Administration worked hard to support a very active Council during 2024. At a high level, Council with the support of Administration completed the following during 2024:

- 38 County Council Meetings were held, comprised of Regular, Special, and Closed Meetings of Council;
- Members of Council were active on multiple Regional and County level Boards and Committees, including, but not limited to:
 - Essex County Library Board
 - Essex Windsor Solid Waste Authority
 - 911 Technical Advisory Committee
 - Invest Windsor-Essex
 - Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island
 - Windsor Essex County Community Housing Corporation
 - Windsor Essex County Health Unit
 - Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus
- 58 By-laws were considered and passed by Council;
- 375 resolutions were discussed and adopted by Council;
- 127 Council Reports were presented to Council;
- Council adopted the first Closed Meeting Policy for County Council and also adopted the County's first Reserve Management Policy; and
- Council reviewed and approved revisions to the following 6 Policies:
 - Accountability and Transparency Policy;
 - Requests for Funding of Conferences Held Locally Policy;
 - Delegations to County Council Policy;
 - Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy;
 - Council and Committee Remuneration Policy; and

- Procurement Policy
- Members of Council represented the County at 16 separate conferences during 2024, with Administration assisting and coordinating attendances as required.

Again, as Council was very active and engaged in 2024, there were numerous requests by Members of Council to Administration for information. In addition to requests for information made by Council to Administration at meetings of Council, there were at least 93 requests for information made to Administration by Members of Council. Administration has completed the response on 84 of those requests, and are diligently working on the outstanding 9 requests. There may be separate requests that have been made directly to members of Administration and which requests were not forwarded to the CAO or Council Services.

Corporate Management

2024 Achievements and Challenges

2024 was a year of transition for the then Legislative and Community Service Department, now Legislative and Legal Services Department ("**LLS Department**"), with the long time Director and Clerk retiring in March of 2024. Following that retirement, the LLS Department underwent an extensive Service Delivery Review, which was completed in September of 2024.

Due to the timing of the Service Delivery Review, key vacant positions were not filled on a permanent basis until December of 2024, with the following timeline of roles being filled:

- Permanent Clerk formally appointed in June 2024;
- Permanent Director formally appointed in October 2024; and
- Permanent Deputy Clerk/Manager Records and Accessibility appointed in December of 2024.

Other positions remained vacant until 2025, including backfilling the position of Department Administrative Assistant and the new Solicitor position that was intended to backfill the County Solicitor taking on the Director role.

Despite staffing challenges, the LLS Department undertook a review or implementation of 9 Administrative Policies, including:

- Records and Information Management Program Policy;

- Records Destruction Policy;
- Access, Privacy and Security of Records Policy;
- Email as Corporate Records Policy;
- Legal and Operational Holds Policy;
- Routine Disclosure and Active Dissemination of Records Policy;
- Records Held by Employees on Departure Policy;
- Clean Desk/Clear Screen Policy; and
- Flying of Flags and Illumination Policy.

Despite the staffing challenges outlined above, the Clerk, as the County's Privacy Officer, completed the following:

- Responded to 25 requests for information under MFIPPA or related to disclosure of video from cameras on County property;
- Reviewed and provided feedback on 448 requests for information under PHIPA or Production Orders to produce ACRs; and
- Facilitated training for over 50 staff regarding Privacy, Personal Information and Personal Health Information in relation to County Obligations under MFIPPA, PHIPA, PIPEDA, and FIPPA.

Administration assisted with 11 Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee ("**ECAAC**") Meetings and assisted in providing feedback and advocating for accessibility considerations with respect to County construction and renovation projects. Administration was also key in ensuring the success of the inaugural Fest-for-All held at Colchester Beach and Park in September of 2024.

The Legal Services Division of the LLS Department had a very busy 2024, with the County Solicitor acting as interim Director from April to October of 2024, while providing legal support to both County Administration and Council. As the County continues to grow and expand, the need for legal support will likely increase. In recognition of that need, Council has approved the position of Deputy County Solicitor (filled in January of 2025) and has approved an Articling Student position (start date in July of 2026). With those new positions in place, the County should be able to continue to reduce its reliance on external legal counsel, and realize both cost savings and efficiencies in providing more timely legal advice and support.

Finally, the Communications and Organizational Development team continued to drive employee engagement initiatives in 2024, building upon the pillars of the County's Strategic Plan calling for the County to be an "employer with impact" that fosters "positive employee experiences."

They rolled out, for the first time ever, a long-term service pin program to recognize the contributions of long-serving team members. The County distributed 558 long-term service pins to employees from all departments, recognizing combined years of service of nearly 9,000 years. The program is now an annual initiative, with 189 pins being distributed in 2025.

The team also built the infrastructure and readied for rollout the County of Essex Employee Excellence Awards, designed to celebrate employees who embody our organizational values, demonstrate excellence in their roles and inspire others to achieve their best. The culmination of these efforts saw 26 employees recognized in four categories at a meeting of County Council early in 2025. This program is now established and will continue on an annual basis. Other ongoing employee engagement initiatives, including the Cheers for Peers peer recognition program, experienced year-over-year growth.

In addition to supporting ongoing multi-department recruitment and promotional efforts, including the Essex-Windsor EMS AED public mapping campaign, the Communications and Organizational Development department rolled out a special series on Truth and Reconciliation for County of Essex employees. From September through to the end of the year, weekly snippets emailed to staff provided information about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the legacy of residential schools.

As well, the County's flag policy was updated to provide for the flying the Survivors' Flag outside the County of Essex Administration Building to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30 each year.

Finance

2024 Achievements and Challenges

In 2024, the Finance Department balanced core responsibilities with key initiatives that enhanced service delivery, strengthened financial oversight, and supported the County's strategic goals.

Procurement Services completed its Annual Report, summarizing all departmental procurements and the strategies used, ranging from open competitive to direct purchase. The team also supported major corporate

projects, including the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EAP) and the new Electronic Patient Record system for Medical Services.

Internally, a new Request for Proposals (RFP) template was introduced for professional engineering design procurements. Externally, the team collaborated with Dillon Consulting on a comprehensive \$23 million tender package for the Reconstruction of CR42 and Diversion of CR43 project. This work led to the creation of a standardized Request for Tender (RFT) template now used by engineering consultants. Early 2025 efforts included engaging with Haddad Morgan and Landmark to support its adoption.

In Accounting, a new accounting system and enhanced accounts payable workflow were implemented, streamlining vendor payments and approvals across departments. The Financial Analysts continued to explore opportunities within the new system to improve analytical work and reporting. They also prioritized updating the County's asset data, condition assessments, replacement costs, and lifecycle strategies, in preparation for the 2025 Asset Management Plan.

The Payroll team progressed with implementing a new HRIS system. While balancing this with regular payroll responsibilities was challenging, key steps such as process reviews, training, and testing were completed. The system is expected to deliver long-term efficiency gains.

Additional department milestones included the appointment of a second Deputy Treasurer to support leadership capacity and succession planning, the completion and implementation of a Reserve Management Policy approved by Council, and the presentation of the IPS Roadway Expansion Funding Model to Council.

Information Technology

2024 Achievements and Challenges

During the year, the Information Technology department adapted to its centralized service model for the County. Effective in July, the department began reporting directly to the Chief Administrative Officer. This approach represents a modern model for Information Technology departments within organizations, aimed at balancing the diverse needs of each business unit.

Throughout the year, the Helpdesk prioritized ticket submissions via the FreshService system, which was launched in late 2023. The IT department observed strong adoption of the system by County users, with approximately 65 tickets submitted per week at the year's midpoint and around 110 tickets per week by the year's end. This ticket submission process allows the

department to address high-frequency issues, set and track service levels, and improve overall service quality.

To enhance the County's security posture, we launched a Security Incident and Event Monitoring (SIEM) system. In partnership with Telus, the Field Effects solution was deployed within the County's infrastructure, providing real-time monitoring and response to environmental threats. Since its implementation, the Field Effects solution has successfully intercepted unwanted network activity, including unauthorized login attempts from offshore threat actors and accidental malware links.

In collaboration with other departments, the IT department partnered with the HR department to facilitate the launch of the VIP system, which is slated for mid-2025. Similarly, the IT department is actively working on the CityWide project, providing project management assistance for its deployment, which will replace the CityWorks system in 2025.

During 2024, the IT team faced challenges related to staffing complements, as the small team adjusted to a vacancy intentionally left open during the Service Delivery Review, as well as a long-term leave and a retirement. The retirement created opportunities for internal promotions, transitioning employees from temporary to permanent roles.

Preparing for 2025, job descriptions have been modernized to reflect industry changes and align with the Service Delivery Review recommendations. Additionally, the IT team implemented process changes designed to drive further successes in 2025.

Human Resources

2024 Achievements and Challenges

Human Resources continues to play a vital role in supporting the County's strategic goals, including Working as Team Essex County and Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence. As a strategic partner across all departments, Human Resources is committed to fostering a high-performing, inclusive and engaged workforce that can meet the needs of our evolving community.

2024 marked the recommencement of our new Human Resources Information System (HRIS) implementation, a major initiative led by our Specialist, Human Resources Information Systems. This project represents a significant investment in modernizing our HR operations and requires ongoing cross-departmental and external collaboration to ensure its success.

The new HRIS & Payroll system will bring numerous improvements in data accuracy, reporting, and self-service options for staff, which will ultimately lead to greater efficiency and an enhanced user experience across the County.

As outlined in Report number 2025-0507-HR-R01- GF Human Resources Annual Service Report 2024, presented to Council on May 7, 2025, in 2024 Human Resources facilitated 138 job postings, which collectively received 8,248 applications. These numbers reflect the County's growing reputation as an employer of choice and our continued ability to attract top talent. At the same time, we remain focused on internal growth and mobility, ensuring that current employees have opportunities to advance their careers within the organization.

In support of this, the Tuition Reimbursement Program remains a key focus of the Human Resources team. In 2024, 46 applications were approved under this initiative. The steady uptake in this program reflects a culture of continuous learning and development among staff.

Labour relations also remained a key focus throughout the 2024 year. 3 collective agreements were successfully bargained, and a total of 44 grievances were filed, with 19 successfully resolved. The foregoing demonstrates our commitment to constructive dialogue and maintaining positive, solution-oriented relationships with our union partners.

Health and Safety remained a priority in 2024, with 15 policy updates implemented to align with best practices and legislative requirements. In addition, enhanced training was delivered to both staff and members of the Joint Health and Safety Committees, reinforcing our commitment to a safe and healthy work environment.

While Human Resources has achieved significant progress in 2024, we continue to face challenges related to a competitive labour market and evolving workforce expectations. In 2025, Human Resources is focusing on strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing the overall employee experience- from onboarding and career development to wellness and workplace culture.

External Commitments

2024 Achievements and Challenges

In 2024, the County of Essex continued to meet its legislated and discretionary commitments while advancing key regional initiatives in housing, health care, and economic development.

Notable achievements included:

- Advancing the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy, with reserve funding set aside in preparation for future deliverables.
- Continuing contributions to reserves for capital repairs to social housing, in anticipation of increasing costs aligned with the Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation's long-term capital renewal plan.
- Supporting the Homelessness Hub in Leamington, with operational funding transitioning to the Province's Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) as of April 2024.
- Contributing \$6.36 million to the New Windsor Essex Hospital System reserve, as part of a long-term commitment to regional health care infrastructure.

These efforts reflect the County's ongoing role in supporting both legislated obligations, such as public health, property assessment, social services, and housing and discretionary initiatives, including investments in health care, economic development (Invest WindsorEssex), tourism (TWEPI), and municipal tax appeal support (MTE).