



## Administrative Report

**To:** Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

**From:** David Sundin, BA (Hons), LL.B., Director, Legislative and Legal Services/County Solicitor

**Date:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025

**Subject:** Department of Legislative and Legal Services Update

**Report #:** 2025-0917-LLS-R42-DMS

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### Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Report (the "**Report**") is to provide County Council with an update on the Department of Legislative and Legal Services ("**LLS**") for the past year, being the period running from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 (the "**Reporting Period**"). Where there are exceptions to the Reporting Period, it is clearly disclosed in the body of this Report.

### Background

As Council is well aware, LLS is comprised of the Offices and Divisions listed below. The current positions and reporting structure are also listed.

### Reporting Structure

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**Department Head:** Director of Legislative and Legal Services/County – David Sundin

- **The Office of the Clerk**

- Clerk – Katherine Hebert
  - Manager of Records and Accessibility/Deputy Clerk – Crystal Sylvestre
    - Coordinator, Records Management Program – Jen Ciliska
    - Analyst, Records Management Program – Shan Liao
    - Administrative Assistant – Kaitlyn Baggio
    - Records Management Summer Student

- **The Office of the County Solicitor**
  - County Solicitor – David Sundin
    - Deputy County Solicitor – Claire Bebbington
    - Legal and Records Assistant – Diane MacKenzie
    - Articling Student (Summer 2026)
- **Communications and Organizational Development Division**
  - Manager of Communications and Organizational Development – Donald McArthur
    - Communications Officer – John Kryk
    - Coordinator, Communications and Organizational Development – Gemma Bélanger
- **Community Services Division**
  - Manager of Community Services – Jeanie Diamond-Francis
    - Housing with Supports Worker – Michelle Nicodemo
    - Housing with Supports Worker – Adrienne Payne
    - Community Services Summer Student

In addition to the above, the County contracts with Family Services-Windsor Essex (the "**FSWE**") to operate the County's Homelessness Hub with a number of services in Leamington. The staff of FSWE support the Community Services Division in carrying out its mandate, and now includes a County specific Outreach Worker to meet with people around the County experiencing homelessness.

## **Discussion**

### **Departmental Update**

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The Reporting Period remained a period of significant transition for LLS. Following the retirement of the long time Director and Clerk in March of 2024, LLS underwent an extensive Service Delivery Review (the "**SDR**"), which was completed in September of 2024, and which delayed the permanent replacement of the prior Director.

Due to the timing of the SDR, the vacant positions in LLS were not filled on a permanent basis until March of 2025, some positions being filled internally, leading to some staff occupying two roles over several months. Despite those necessary staffing challenges, during the Reporting Period LLS undertook a review and/or implementation of 9 Administrative Policies, including:

- Records and Information Management Program Policy;
  - Records Destruction Policy;
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- 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;
- Vital Records Policy and
- Flying of Flags and Illumination Policy.

### **Office of the Clerk Update**

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During the Reporting Period, the Clerk, along with the CAO and the Warden, attended meetings of the Councils of the lower tier municipalities, as well as reviewed Council meeting videos posted online. This was done with the objective of understanding how meetings are conducted at the local level, as well as to assess whether the County should make any modifications to how its own meetings are conducted. Observations were made over all aspects of a Council meeting, including for the various methods used for presenting the list of business on the Council agendas, the manner with which reports are written, and presented to Council, method and policies employed for public participation and delegations, as well as for matters relating to general meeting procedure and procedure by-laws. The nuances of each of the lower tier Councils are numerous, and may be considered when future revisions to County practices and policies are undertaken.

The County of Essex was represented at the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) conference and trade-show *'Building Bridges, Sparking Change'*, which was held locally at Caesars Windsor in June of 2025. The Clerk's office coordinated with local Clerks and Communications staff, to showcase each of our local municipalities at the County's exhibitor booth over the course of the conference. Members of local administration teams attended to staff the booth along with County representatives, to promote our locals, and the host region. The booth was visited by nearly 1,000 conference delegates, trade-show exhibitors, dignitaries and presenters.

The Office of the Clerk participated externally in the Essex-Windsor-Peel-Chatham Kent (EWPCCK) Municipal Clerks Working Group, the Records Management Working Group, the Ontario Network of Accessibility Professionals (ONAP), the AMCTO Zone Executive Committee, the Freedom of Information and Records Management (FOIRM) group, and internally with

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other staff members as part of the Information Governance Oversight Committee (IGOC) and, the Records Management Liaison Committee (RMLC). Collaboration is necessary with other departments of the County due to the nature of the work being done by the Office of the Clerk and LLS Team as a whole. It is particularly necessary with the Information Technology Services (ITS) department in relation to Council meeting AV and Technology requirements, coordinating access and privacy matters in relation to video requests and Freedom of Information requests, and with several aspects of records and information management for the corporation.

### ***Privacy Officer***

The Clerk, in addition to fulfilling the statutory and historic duties of a municipal clerk, has also been appointed by Council to be the County's Privacy Officer. As the Privacy Officer, the Clerk completed the following:

- In 2024, responded to 25 requests for information under MFIPPA or related to disclosure of video from cameras on County property (YTD for 2025 is 15);
- In 2024, reviewed and provided feedback on 448 requests for information under PHIPA or Production Orders to produce Ambulance Call Reports (ACR) and so far for 2025 we have received just under 200 requests;
- 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;
- Filed compliance statistical reports with the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, in relation to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

### ***Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee***

The Office of the Clerk also provides support to the Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee ("**ECAAC**"). This support is now primarily provided by the Deputy Clerk and the LLS Administrative Assistant, but involves other members of LLS as needed. The Deputy Clerk and the LLS Administrative Assistant supported the ECAAC at its eleven (11) Regular Meetings held during the Reporting Period along with AccessAbility Week events such as the Annual Accessibility Flag Raising in May 2024. The ECAAC assists in providing feedback and advocating for accessibility considerations with respect to County construction and renovation projects with LLS staff and other County departments.

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Further, during the Reporting Period, the Office of the Clerk was key in ensuring the success of the inaugural Outdoor Accessibility Fest-for-All held at Colchester Beach and Park in September of 2024. The event was successful in its aim to raise awareness around opportunities and information that promote inclusion in activities, services and spaces for people with varying levels of ability. The LLS team has since been busy planning for the next edition of Fest-for-All which was held in Amherstburg on September 12, 2024.

### **Council**

The Clerk's Office worked hard to support a very active Council during the Reporting Period. At a high level, Council completed the following during the Reporting Period:

- 34 County Council Meetings were held, comprised of Regular, Special, and Closed Meetings of Council;
  - 53 By-laws were considered and passed by Council;
  - 386 resolutions were discussed and adopted by Council;
  - 137 Council Reports were presented to Council;
  - Council adopted the first ever formal 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
    - Travel, Meetings & Conferences – Council, Committees, Agencies and Boards
    - Non-Smoking and Non-Vaping
    - Indemnification Policy
  - Members of Council were active on multiple Regional and County level Boards and Committees, including, but not limited to:
    - Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee
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- Essex County Library Board
- Essex Windsor Solid Waste Authority Board
- 911 Technical Advisory Committee
- Invest Windsor-Essex Board
- Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island Board
- Windsor-Essex Community Opioid Substance Strategy
- Windsor Essex County Community Housing Corporation Board
- Windsor Essex County Health Unit Board
- Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus
- Members of Council represented the County at 16 separate conferences during the Reporting Period, with Administration assisting and coordinating registration, travel, per-diems and accommodations as required.

Since its launch in 2025, the 'Contact Council' feedback and contact form has been used 18 times, with staff researching and responding to inquiries as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Again, as Council was very active and engaged during the Reporting Period, there were numerous requests by Members of Council to Administration for information or assistance. In addition to requests for information made by Council to Administration at meetings of Council, during 2024 there were 93 requests for information or assistance made to Administration via the CAO's Office, by Members of Council with 4 remaining in-progress and 3 outstanding, and through 2025 to-date, 58 requests have been received, with 3 remaining in-progress and 6 outstanding for resolution. There may be separate requests that have been made directly to members of Administration and which requests were not forwarded for tracking centrally.

### ***Records Management***

The Records Management (RM) team continues to review, catalogue and purge the County's significant store of physical records held at the Administration Building. Over the course of reporting period, the RM Team has assessed nearly 1000 boxes and have processed 189 for disposition.

The RM Team has also undertaken significant, and department specific, customization of the County's Records Retention Schedule. The Retention Schedule defines which records are required to be kept and for how long based on the legislation that governs the activity. These custom amendments aim to streamline the filing of Corporate records by reducing

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the number of options and making clear where records are to be kept for their useful life. This process is a component of a joint project being undertaken by the Information Technology department and Records Management to clean up the County's records and organize them into a sensible and efficient fashion.

### **Office of the County Solicitor Update**

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As the County Solicitor acted as the Director from April to October of 2024, and as permanent Director as of October of 2024, which comes with a lot of administrative duties, Council recognized that more support was needed for the Office of the County Solicitor. As such, Council approved the position of Deputy County Solicitor in the fall of 2024 (with that position being filled in January of 2025) and moving from a Summer Student position, which is only a posting for a 4-month period, to a 10-month Articling Student position (with that position to commence in the summer of 2026).

With the new position of Deputy County Solicitor being approved by Council and with the Summer Student soon to transition to a 10-month Articling Student placement, 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.

Due to the confidential nature of the work completed by the Office of the County Solicitor, an update with respect to the activities of the Office of the County Solicitor will be provided to Council in a closed meeting, as permitted by Section 239(2)(f) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended.

### **Communications Update**

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The SDR completed for LLS has recommended that the Communications and Organizational Development Division ("**Communications**") be rebranded as "Communications and Employee Engagement" to more accurately reflect the role that the Communications Division plays at the County. Communications does take the lead on Employee Engagement but does not take the lead on and is not directly involved in Organizational Development. The rebranding of Communications from its current name to "Communications and Employee Engagement" will take place effective on January 1, 2026.

The Communications team continued to drive employee engagement initiatives during the Reporting Period, 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."

Communications rolled out, for the first time ever, an Employee Excellence Awards program honouring 26 employees across the County, including employees from Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Service ("**EMS**"), the

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Sun Parlor Long Term Care Home, the Essex Windsor Solid Waste Authority, and the Essex County Library.

Employees were honoured in four categories: Innovation, Team Spirit, Service Excellence, and Empowerment. Employees, with their family members present, were honoured at a meeting of Essex County Council, and had their photos and names added to a new Employee Excellence Awards display in the lobby of the County's Administration Building.

Communications also took the lead in distributing 188 Long-Term Service Pins to employees in 2025, recognizing combined years of service of more than 3,000 years. 2025 was the second year of the Long-Term Service Pin program. In 2024, the first year, 558 pins were distributed, recognizing combined years of service of nearly 9,000 years. 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 EMS AED public mapping campaign, Communications also took the lead in rolling out a special series on Truth and Reconciliation for County employees in 2024. From September through to the end of the 2024, weekly snippets emailed to staff provided information about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the legacy of residential schools.

As advancing Truth and Reconciliation is important to the County, as evidenced by its prominence in the County's Strategic Plan, Communications continues to work on Truth and Reconciliation initiatives, and is preparing for the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in 2025. This includes, among other things, taking the lead in updating the County's flag policy during the Reporting Period, to clearly confirm that the Survivors' Flag is to be flown outside the County's Administration Building to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30 each year.

Communications also organized Inclusive Leadership training for managers, which was met with thanks from managers, who now feel better prepared to be more inclusive and supportive leaders. Again, this is in line with the goals highlighted in the County's Strategic Plan.

Communications was also tasked with redesigning the County's public website. That work was completed during the Reporting Period, with the new website going live in 2025 on a new platform that showcases the County, while also providing residents easier access to information and news.

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Finally, Council earlier in 2025 asked that LLS provide an update on social media statistics and below is a snapshot of year-over-year growth (this is different from the Reporting Period, with the snapshot below being for the period from September of 2024 to September of 2025) for the social media accounts managed by Communications.

### **Social Media Data:**

#### ***County Facebook***

- Followers: 5,008 – 798 net new followers for an increase of 18.7 per cent
- **Total Interactions:** 15,058 for an increase of 4.7 per cent
  - 9,556 reactions
  - 1,826 comments
  - 3,676 shares
- **Top Content:**
  - County of Essex Roads video on August 8 – Halfway Point on CR 42/19 Roundabout: 43,919 views
  - County of Essex Roads news Post: May 29 – County Road 42 to close for Roundabout Construction: 35,134 views
  - County of Essex Roads news post April 25 – Construction on County Road 42 and 19 set to begin: 38,648 views

#### ***EMS Facebook:***

- **Followers:** 5,882 – 576 net new followers for an increase of 10.8 per cent
- **Total Interactions:** 38,053 for an increase of 10.8 per cent
  - 31,437 reactions
  - 4,167 comments
  - 2,449 shares
- **Top Content:**
  - Welcome 22 new Paramedics on May 30 – 124,734 views
  - Survivor Day on June 2 – 64,436 views
  - Make the Right Call on Jan. 15 – 63,691 views.

#### ***ECAAC Facebook***

- **Followers:** 457 – 122 net new followers for an increase of 37.7 per cent
  - **Total Interactions:** 2,058 interactions or increase of 82.6 per cent
    - 1,601 reactions
    - 148 comments
    - 309 shares
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- **Top Content:**
  - Fest for All Returns on Aug. 14 – 51,116 views
  - Outdoor Accessibility Fest-for-All on Sept. 5 – 35,339 views
  - Outdoor Accessibility Fest-for-All on Aug. 25 – 12,854 views.

### ***EMS Instagram***

- Followers: 4,228 – 437 new followers for an increase of 11.5 per cent
  - Views: 288.4K views
  - Reach: 36.6K
  - Content Interactions: 8.3K
- Top Content:
  - Wandering Dog Reunited with Owner – 10.2 K views
  - Essex-Windsor EMS Launches AED Loaner Program – 9.6 k views
  - First Responders Day – 7.9 K views.

### ***CWATS Facebook and Instagram:***

- **Followers:** 914 – Loss of four followers for a decrease of 0.4 per cent.
- **Total Interactions:** 211 interactions for a decrease of 69.3 per cent
  - 177 reactions
  - 14 comments
  - 20 shares
- **Top Content:**
  - Winter Wheels on Nov. 14 – 3,104 views
  - TMP Master Plan on Feb. 19 – 679 views
  - TMP Master Plan on Sept. 26 – 204 views.
- **Instagram:** 344 followers

Due to limited engagement and an insufficient quantity of regular and recurring content on CWATS channels, the Communications Department is going to decommission the CWATS profiles and roll the content into the general County of Essex social media feeds, enriching that content and bringing it to a wider audience.

### ***County Instagram***

Launched on July 16, 2025: 85 followers and growing

### ***County Twitter***

3,765 followers

### ***EMS Twitter***

5,713 followers

*(Paid Account required for historical analytics).*

## **Community Services Update**

At Council's direction, the County signed a funding agreement with the City of Windsor for the County to oversee homelessness programs in the County. That funding agreement resulted in the County receiving provincial funds the City manages to fund the Essex County Homelessness Hub (the "**ECH2**"), the County Outreach Worker, the traditional Residential Services Homes Program (the "**RSH Program**") and an Emergency Shelter Motel Program. The funding also resulted in the ECH2 being able to operate a warming centre from December 9, 2024 to March 31, 2025. During that time, there was a 30% increase in visits during the operations of the Warming Centre and throughout the regular yearly operations of the ECH2.

Community Services 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 to support the RSH Program. Further, throughout the Reporting Period, Community Services continued to partner with health and social service agencies to support residents in the RSH Program with mental health support, grief support, and hospital discharges.

The RSH Program continues to be challenged with transportation gaps to ensure residents are able to access healthcare supports. In addition, the RSH providers have identified significant budgetary pressures and continue to identify a need for an increase in per diem funding. The Community Services Division will continue to advocate for more provincial funding to be provided to address these gaps.

Finally, the Manager of the Community Services Division, along with the Director of LLS, were very busy in representing the County in regional initiatives. This included (1) assisting with the completion of the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy and a Housing Needs Assessment for the County and its constituent lower-tier municipalities and (2) being involved in the launching of the HART Hub at Hotel-Dieu Grace Healthcare.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this Report, with the Report serving as information for Council, so that Council remains aware of the work being undertaken by LLS.

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**Consultations**

During the drafting of this report the following individuals were consulted and provided input:

- Katherine Hebert, Clerk
- Crystal Sylvestre, Manager of Accessibility and Records/Deputy Clerk
- Donald McArthur, Manager of Communications and Organizational Development
- Jeanie Diamond-Francis, Manager of Community Services

**Strategic Plan Alignment**

<b>Working as Team Essex County</b>	<b>Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence</b>	<b>Building a Regional Powerhouse</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results  <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners  <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County  <input type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth  <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

**Recommendation**

That Essex County Council receive Report Number 2025-0917-LLS-R42-DMS, Department of Legislative and Legal Services as information.

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## Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

*David M. Sundin*

David Sundin, BA (Hons), LL.B., Director, Legislative and Legal Services/County Solicitor

Concurred With,

*Sandra Zwiers*

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

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Title</b>
N/A	N/A