

County of Essex Policy and Procedures Manual

County of Essex Advocacy Strategy

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1.0 Introduction

The County’s Strategic Plan highlights the importance of “strong advocacy” and pillars in the plan emphasize “advocating for Essex County’s fair share and “driving shared priorities with Local Municipal Partners.” To do this, the Strategic Plan approved by Council says the County will: “Develop and execute a coordinate advocacy strategy to advance common priorities with Local Municipal Partners.”

2.0 Scope

This Policy will guide Council and Administration in setting and pursuing the County’s Annual Advocacy Strategy. It impacts all employees and Council.

3.0 Definitions

To provide context for this Policy, a list of commonly used terms is provided herein and shall be used in conjunction of the interpretation of this document.

“Administration” means the employees of the Corporation of the County of Essex.

“County of Essex” means the Corporation of the County of Essex, and may be used interchangeably with the terms the ‘County’, the ‘Corporation’ or ‘County of Essex’.

“CAO” means the Chief Administrative Officer of the County of Essex.

“Council” or “County Council” means the elected officials governing the County, consisting of the Warden, and Councillors.

“Lower Tier Municipality” or “Local Municipality” means the Municipalities of Amherstburg, Essex, Kingsville, Lakeshore, LaSalle, Leamington, and Tecumseh.

“Policy” means this County of Essex Advocacy Strategy Policy.

“Senior Leadership Team” means the department heads of the Corporation of the County of Essex.

“Warden” means the individual elected as Warden of the County of Essex.

4.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to support Council and Administration in the development and pursuit of annual advocacy priorities, in alignment with the County’s Strategic Plan.

5.0 Policy

5.1 The Strategy

5.1.1 The purpose of an annual advocacy strategy is to provide focus and form for the County’s efforts in pursuing its priorities. The strategy should provide a framework for directing the County’s advocacy efforts – both over the year ahead and the longer term.

5.1.2 The County’s proposed advocacy strategy is based on seven pillars:

- 1) Issue Identification
- 2) Council Discussion and Prioritization
- 3) Audience and Partner Mapping

- 4) Key Message Development
- 5) Engagement and Relationship Building
- 6) Communication and Ongoing Advocacy
- 7) Monitoring and Evaluation

5.2 **Issue Identification**

5.2.1 The CAO will work with the CAOs of the local lower-tier municipalities to identify issues of common concern and then work with the Warden and County Administration, considering the Strategic Plan, anticipated service delivery challenges and previous Council discussions and resolutions, to draft a list of potential advocacy priorities for Council to discuss, debate, and decide upon.

5.2.2 Priorities put forth by groups like the Association of Municipalities of Ontario ("**AMO**") and the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus ("**WOWC**") could also be considered and be localized and strengthened with information and data specific to the County

The WOWC list is provided below as an example:

- 1) Infrastructure Development and Funding
- 2) Housing Affordability and Availability
- 3) Workforce Development and Preservation
- 4) Mental Health Services and Support

Ideally, the County's advocacy strategy should consist of two to six priorities.

5.2.3 Factors that should be considered when providing advocacy recommendations for council consideration:

- 1) Is the issue Essex County specific?
- 2) Are other organizations involved? Does the County have partners with the same priority?
- 3) Does the solution being sought have a County-wide benefit?

- 4) Does it align the County's strategic goals and direction, as set by Council?
- 5) Has there been a previous or ongoing effort on this issue?
- 6) Does this issue align with a provincial/federal policy or direction?
- 7) How urgent is the need for a solution?

5.2.4 What the County is doing to address the issue and what assistance it is seeking from partners should be spelled out for each priority.

5.3 Council Discussion and Prioritization

5.3.1 Council support and direction is the backbone of any effective advocacy strategy. By establishing priorities through a public discussion and vote, the Warden and Administration will be empowered to speak on behalf of the County on specific matters of regional importance. It will allow the County to speak with a unified voice, providing the advocacy strategy with democratic legitimacy and momentum.

5.3.2 Once the priorities have been set, key messaging will be developed and shared on the County's website and social media channels by the Communications team throughout the year.

5.4 Audience and Partner Mapping

5.4.1 The CAO's office will work with subject matter experts and the Communications team to identify potential advocacy partners and audience segments considering multiple factors, including:

- 1) Who or what agencies can be enlisted to support a particular campaign?
- 2) What ministries and what level of government has carriage of specific files?
- 3) Does the voting public have an interest in the resolution of a particular priority?

- 4) What demographic groups or organizations is the target government most concerned with?

5.5 Key Message Development

- 5.5.1 Communications will work with the CAO's office and subject matter experts to lay out the case for each priority with data and information specific to the County.
- 5.5.2 This messaging will be posted on the County's website and shared on social media throughout the year.
- 5.5.3 The priorities will be shared with media outlets once they are selected by Council and will be amplified where appropriate throughout the year, in the Warden's Luncheon speech, for example, and coinciding with advocacy opportunities at provincial conferences.
- 5.5.4 Resolutions supported by Council, in line with established priorities, will also be amplified on social media.

5.6 Engagement and Relationship Building

Effective advocacy is rooted in ongoing relationships cultivated over time, and should be undertaken throughout the year, not just during election campaigns or provincial conferences.

- 5.6.1 The Warden and CAO should maintain relationships with local CAOs, MPs, MPPs, and other private and public sector leaders.
- 5.6.2 Opportunities to connect will be seized, advising decision-makers in writing of Council resolutions or offering congratulations on appointments or accomplishments.
- 5.6.3 County Council will invite MPs and MPPs to appear as a delegation at least one Council meeting each year.

5.7 Communication and Ongoing Advocacy

- 5.7.1 Advocacy messaging will be refined and shared throughout the year, recognizing that successful advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint.

5.7.2 The Warden and CAO will request quarterly touchpoints with our local MPs and MPPs.

5.7.3 Communications will create a dedicated advocacy page on the County's website, with links to all the presentations that have been made at recent provincial conferences and the advocacy papers that have been put out during recent elections. Future materials presented at the AMO, ROMA, and other conferences will be added once those presentations are made. Links to this page and these presentations will always be available for public consumption and links to the page and to the position papers will be shared on social media.

5.8 Tactics Checklist:

5.8.1 Regular meetings with MPs and MPPs to build relationships

5.8.2 Website posts and news releases at milestone moments

5.8.3 Advocate at AMO, ROMA, and other appropriate conferences

5.8.4 Post advocacy materials online and add to social media rotation

5.8.5 Provide advocacy materials to local municipal partners for inclusion on agendas

5.8.6 Amplify, on social media, Council resolutions that align with identified Council priorities

5.8.7 Encourage members of Council and local municipalities to share advocacy posts on their own social media channels

5.9 Monitoring and Evaluation

5.9.1 The CAO and Warden will bring back feedback from provincial conferences and work with staff to assess what worked, what did not work, and what could be refined and improved. Communications will track data associated with page views and social media reach in connection with particular advocacy campaigns and recommend adjustments to the outreach strategy accordingly. The CAO will take in the lessons learned from each campaign and will make

recommendations for improvements in the annual report to Council on establishing advocacy priorities.

6.0 Responsibility

- 6.1 Council is responsible for providing direction to Administration with regard to establishing County of Essex advocacy priorities.
- 6.2 The CAO is responsible for ensuring adherence to the policy.
- 6.3 The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for consulting with County Administration, Consultants and/or other resources as required to effectively support the CAO in adherence to this policy.
- 6.4 Administration is responsible for executing the actions resulting from the implementation of the strategy.

7.0 Related Information

- County of Essex Strategic Plan

8.0 Summary of Amendments

Date	Amendments
2025-11-05	New Corporate Policy proposed to County Council with report 2025-1105-LLS-R56-DM County of Essex Advocacy Strategy (DRAFT FOR ADOPTION)
2025-11-05	Proposed By-law 2025-045 to adopt Corporate Policy (DRAFT FOR ADOPTION)

Appendices

- N/A