

Council Services



Service Delivery Promise

Essex County Council is comprised of the Mayors and Deputy Mayors of the seven (7) constituent lower-tier municipalities of the County, namely 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 collectively represent all of the residents within the County, through their participation in meetings, conferences, associations, boards, consultation opportunities, and attendance at various events. County Councillors work collaboratively and share the responsibility for regional decision-making, which ensures that their direction, as the elected voice of the County, is translated into services and programs available to the residents at the right time, and in the right place across the County.

Level of Service Statement

The Budget for Council Services provides support to County Council and includes the remuneration for Council's fourteen (14) Members, seven (7) alternate Members, and the Members of committees of the County. Expenses relating to training, education, meetings, conferences, and travel for Members of Council

and Members of committees of the County are also provided for in the proposed 2026 Budget in accordance with Council-approved Corporate Policies.

In accordance with the *Municipal Act, 2001*, the proposed 2026 Budget for Council Services also includes funding to support the contracted services of an Integrity Commissioner.

Opportunities, Challenges and Risks for 2026

During 2025, Council endorsed the Annual Council Education and Training Plan (the "Plan"), which formalizes the frequency and structure of education and training opportunities for Members of Council. Throughout 2026, and beyond, the Plan's implementation is intended to ensure compliance with the County's Strategic Plan, while, and more importantly, is also intended to assist members of Council in building their knowledge, honing their skills, and expanding their competencies in their capacity as Councillors. Through a commitment to ongoing learning, Council will be better supported to perform their roles as effectively and ethically as possible, enhancing their collective understanding of governance, policy-making, legislative and regulatory requirements, and responsibilities. In addition to this Plan, the County continues to provide opportunities for Council to attend conferences and workshops that are relevant to their roles with the County, and supporting Council in such attendances will remain a priority for Council Services throughout 2026.

County Council ensures compliance with principles of Accountability and Transparency by making County information accessible to the public through various communication channels. County Council and Administration are accessible to the public, and the public are encouraged and provided with opportunities to engage with the County. Information supporting County Council decisions, meetings, programs, and services is available in an accessible format, for the public, ensuring an open and transparent municipal government, which, as part of the County's Strategic Plan, remain a continued goal for 2026.

Proposed 2026 Budget Plan

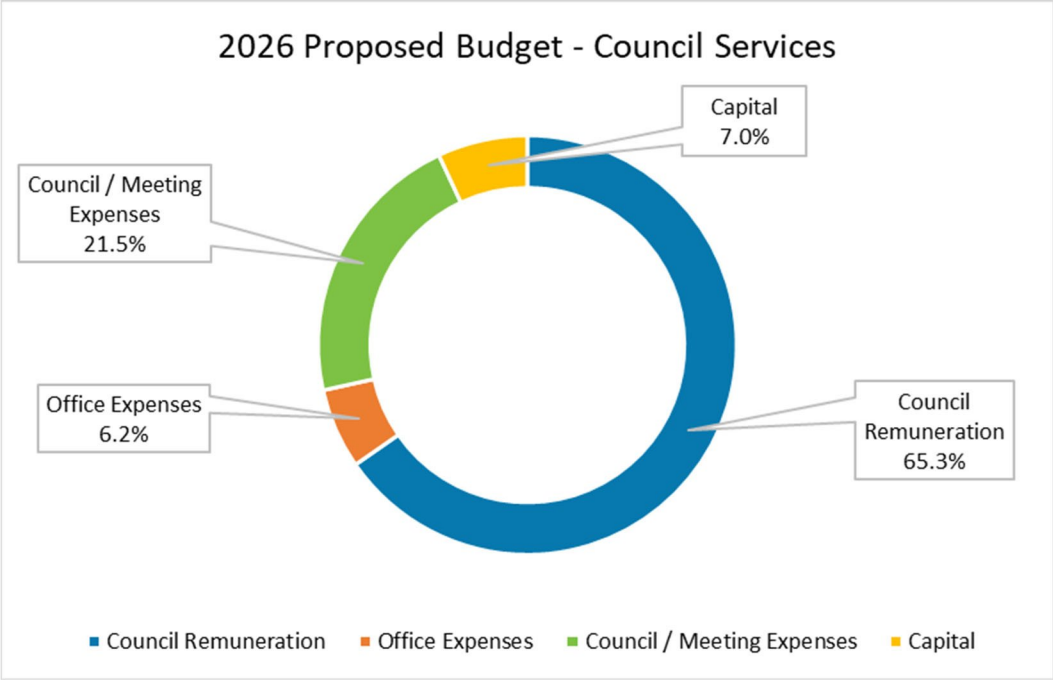
Salaries and related benefits for members of Council have been included at the rates set by Council in accordance with the approved Council and Committee Remuneration Policy #2024-018. There is an increase in the proposed 2026 Budget, which is in-line with that Policy. The proposed 2026 Budget further supports Council's attendance at conferences, workshops, and meetings, with the amounts contained in the 2026 Budget aligning with the Travel, Meetings and Conferences – Council, Committees, Agencies and Boards Policy #2022-003.

Although the inflation rate has stabilized, the proposed 2026 Budget still accounts for an increase in membership costs and anticipated increased costs for services and tools that support County Council and Committee meetings as well as operations and participation.

Finally, the County has traditionally budgeted every 4 years for a reception to celebrate the outgoing Warden and commemorate their service to the County. To normalize the budget for this expense, the proposed 2026 Budget includes an annualized amount to be contributed to reserve throughout the in-between years.

There is also an increase in the proposed budget to address election related expenses in 2026, such as the County taking the lead on a Regional Orientation Program. It is intended that, similar to the end of term events as well as the Warden's reception noted above, future budgets will annualize these expenses, to avoid large increases to the budget in election years.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of proposed 2026 Budget spending in Council Services:



Overall, the proposed 2026 Budget for Council Services totals \$1,036,640 (an increase of \$128,900 (14.2%) over the 2025 Budget of \$907,740).

Alignment with Strategic Plan Initiatives

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.

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.

Harmonizing Action for Growth

Similar to the point above, the County once again taking the lead on Regional Orientation following the 2026 Election will continue to ensure that the County is a regional leader that supports its constituent local municipalities.