



Essex County Council, Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers, 2nd Floor

360 Fairview Avenue West

Essex, Ontario N8M 1Y6

<https://video.isilive.ca/countyofessex/live.html>

- Council:
- Michael Akpata, Councillor
 - Joe Bachetti, Deputy Warden
 - Tracey Bailey, Councillor
 - Sherry Bondy, Councillor
 - Kimberly DeYong, Councillor
 - Chris Gibb, Councillor
 - Hilda MacDonald, Warden
 - Gary McNamara, Councillor
 - Crystal Meloche, Councillor
 - Michael Prue, Councillor
 - Rob Shepley, Councillor
 - Larry Verbeke, Councillor
 - Kirk Walstedt, Councillor
 - Tony Gaffan, Councillor, Alternate Member
- Absent:
- Dennis Rogers, Councillor
- Administration:
- Allan Botham, Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services
 - Danielle Dunlop, Interim Director, Human Resources
 - Katherine Hebert, County Clerk
 - Darrel Laurendeau, Director, Information Technology
 - Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services / Treasurer
 - Natasha Sheeler, Director, Health and Community Services/SPH Administrator
 - David Sundin, Director, Legislative and Legal Services / County Solicitor
 - Crystal Sylvestre, Manager, Records and Accessibility / Deputy Clerk
 - Sandra Zwiers, Chief Administrative Officer

1. Closed Meeting

There was no Closed Meeting scheduled for March 18, 2026.

Council met in an open session at 2:00PM for a Special Meeting, on March 18, 2026, where Council considered the County's Strategic Plan.

2. Moment of Reflection

3. Singing of 'O Canada'

4. Land Acknowledgement Statement

We acknowledge the land on which the County of Essex is located is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, Odawa and Potawatomie Peoples.

We specifically recognize Caldwell First Nation and other First Nations which have provided significant historical and contemporary contributions to this region.

We also value the contributions of all Original Peoples of Turtle Island, who have been living and working on this land from time immemorial.

5. Recording of Attendance

Warden MacDonald and members of Council attended the meeting at the Essex County Administration Building, Council Chambers.

Councillor Rogers was absent. Tony Gaffan attended as an alternate member for the Town of Kingsville.

6. County Warden's Welcome and Remarks

The Warden commended County and Essex-Windsor EMS personnel on their participation in the inaugural Collaborative Symposium on Legacy Oil and Gas Wells Emergency Response in London, Ontario.

Nine municipalities in Southern Ontario face the challenges of managing risks associated with tens of thousands of old, or inactive, oil and gas wells. A risk understood locally in the tragic explosion and years-long State of Emergency that victimized Wheatley earlier this decade.

Together with allied agencies, municipal and provincial partners and private-sector specialists, the symposium offered information, lessons learned and best practices to strengthen mutual preparedness in the event of any future such emergency.

March is Epilepsy Awareness Month, and March 26 is International Purple Day. In commemoration, to help increase awareness, we'll do our part by

illuminating our County Administration Building purple all next week, March 23-27.

The Warden encouraged any residents interested in running for public office to attend the Regional Pre-Election Candidate Information Session at the County of Essex Administration Building on Wednesday April 8, 2026 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

7. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest raised.

8. Adoption of Regular Meeting Minutes

087-2026

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Kirk Walstedt

That the minutes of the March 4, 2026 Regular Meeting of Essex County Council be adopted as presented.

Carried

9. Delegations and Presentations

There were no delegations scheduled for March 18, 2026.

10. Communications

10.1. Correspondence

088-2026

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That the correspondence listed on the Regular Agenda for March 18, 2026, be received and any noted action approved.

Carried

10.1.1 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

- [AMO Watchfile Newsletter](#)
- [AMO Policy Advocacy Updates](#)
- [AMO Education Workshops](#)
- [AMO Training Events](#)

10.1.2 Ministry of Francophone Affairs

March 9, 2026 Advisory Notice Maria Lamani, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Francophone Affairs RE Expansion of Designated Areas under the French Language Services Act (FLSA)

10.1.3 Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI)

February 26, 2026 - Newsletter W.E. Keep You Informed: Vote Today for the Best of Windsor Essex Awards, Register for the Staycation Expo and MORE!

- [Destination Playbook 2026](#)

10.1.4 Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP)

March 10, 2026 Media Release and Notice of Decision RE Proposed Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities

[March 11, 2026 Essex Region Conservation Authority \(ERCA\) News Release](#)

10.1.5 Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT)

[March 11, 2026 News Release: Ontario Investing \\$7.3 Million in Windsor to Protect Tariff-Impacted Workers](#)

10.1.6 Windsor Essex Chamber of Commerce

[Calendar of Events](#)

March 27, 2026 [150th Birthday Party for the Chamber of Commerce](#)

April 16, 2026 [Essex County Warden's Luncheon](#)

10.2. Resolutions

10.2.1 Municipality of Lakeshore

February 25, 2026 Letter and Resolution RE Regional Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) Model for Social Services

089-2026

Moved By Michael Prue

Seconded By Tracey Bailey

That Essex County Council defer the item to later in the meeting.

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

10.2.2 Town of Essex

March 10, 2026 Letter and Resolution RE Regional Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) Model for Social Services

090-2026

Moved By Rob Shepley

Seconded By Gary McNamara

That Essex County Council defer the item to later in the meeting.

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

11. Consent Agenda

091-2026

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Michael Akpata

That the recommendation in the Administrative Report listed as item 11.1, on the Consent Agenda for March 18, 2026, be approved, and the Minutes listed as information on the said Consent Agenda be received.

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

11.1. Summary of Outstanding Matters - March 18, 2026

Report number 2026-0318-LLS-R20-KH, Summary of Outstanding Matters - Regular Meeting, dated March 18, 2026 from Katherine Hebert, County Clerk

11.2. Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation (WECHC)

Minutes of the Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation- Board of Directors Meeting, dated November 26, 2025

12. Reports and Questions

12.1. EMS Budget Overview and Master Plan Financial Impacts

Report number 2026-0318-FIN-R09-MR, EMS Budget Overview and Master Plan Financial Impacts, dated March 18, 2026, from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Melissa Ryan provided an overview of Essex-Windsor EMS expenditures over the current term of Council and providing an estimated forecast of the projected operational and capital financial impacts associated with potential implementation of the 2027-30 EMS Master Plan. The report summarized the major capital and operational investment in the EWEMS service throughout this term of Council.

092-2026

Moved By Joe Bachetti

Seconded By Rob Shepley

That Essex County Council receive report number 2026-0318-FIN-R09, EMS Budget Overview and Master Plan Financial Impacts as information.

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

12.2. Repeal of Automobiles Policy 94-001

Report number 2026-0318-FIN-R10-MR, Repeal of Automobiles Policy 94-001, dated March 18, 2026, from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Melissa Ryan explained that each component of this policy had been incorporated into Administrative Policy 2022-005 Meetings, Travel, Conferences and Vehicle Use Policy - Staff in late 2025; thereby rendering this policy obsolete.

093-2026

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Kimberly DeYong

That Essex County Council receive report number 2026-0318-FIN-R10-MR, Repeal of Automobiles Policy 94-001 as information and direct administration to repeal Automobiles Policy 94-001.

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

12.3. Residential Services Homes - Service Level Discussion

Report number 2026-0318-HCS-R01-NS, Residential Services Homes - Service Level Discussion, dated March 18, 2026 from Natasha Sheeler, Director Health and Social Services/Sun Parlor Home Administrator

Natasha Sheeler provided an overview of the history of the Residential Services Home program, noting that recent social and economic pressures have changed the landscape of the industry. In response, the program has developed alternative pathways to support residents. She further noted that the County was successful in its request to the service provider, the City of Windsor, to increase the per diem rate for residents in 2026, which is expected to ease some financial pressures and support the program's sustainability.

094-2026

Moved By Michael Prue

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That Essex County Council postpone this item until such time Administration can provide a further report that outlines the cause and effect of the motion presented and what other municipalities are doing to address the funding issues.

In Favour (3): Sherry Bondy, Crystal Meloche, and Michael Prue

Opposed (11): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Lost

095-2026

Moved By Tracey Bailey

Seconded By Rob Shepley

That Essex County Council receive Report Number 2026-0318-HCS-R01-NS Residential Services Homes – Service Level Discussion as information and direct administration:

1. To maintain the current service level and funding approach for the Housing and Homelessness Programs;
2. That no property acquisitions or capital commitments related to this program be advanced or pursued;
3. To engage with the City of Windsor, as Service Manager, and the Province of Ontario to seek a coordinated, regionally aligned approach to funding and service delivery;
4. To report back to County Council with options that prioritize:
 - Provincial funding solutions,
 - Regional Coordination through the Service Manager
5. That any future recommendations involving increased funding, property acquisition, or expansion of the program be brought forward only with
 - Confirmed meaningful participation of the service manager, and
 - A clear funding strategy that does not place additional burden on County taxpayers.

In Favour (11): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Gary McNamara, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Opposed (3): Hilda MacDonald, Crystal Meloche, and Michael Prue

Carried

13. Unfinished Business

There were no matters of Unfinished Business for consideration.

14. New Business

14.1. Social Services Programs Administration

At the March 4, 2026 Regular Meeting of Essex County Council, Councillor Tracey Bailey introduced the following:

096-2026

Moved By Tracey Bailey

Seconded By Kirk Walstedt

Whereas, since April 1, 1999, the City of Windsor has been the provincially designated Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (the "CMSM") responsible for the administration and delivery of provincially funded social services, which social services included the administration of Ontario Works, child care, and social housing (the "Social Services") in the City of Windsor, the County of Essex, and the Township of Pelee Island (collectively, the "Region"); and

Whereas the division of costs for Social Services have been governed by a decision that arose from a Division-of-Costs Arbitration, dated March 9, 1999 (the "Arbitrated Agreement"); and

Whereas the CMSM model was established by the Province of Ontario to promote efficiency, consistency of service delivery, and economies of scale across municipal boundaries; and

Whereas the CMSM model and the Arbitrated Agreement did not address funding to address homelessness and housing issues in the Region, beyond social housing; and

Whereas there has been recent discussion at County Council to advocate for separate provincial and/or federal funding to be provided to the County to address homelessness and housing issues in the County, outside of the established CMSM model; and

Whereas there would likely be additional administrative costs for having the County manage homelessness and housing funding outside of the CMSM model, and there has been no indication that separate provincial or federal funding would be included in any separate payments made to the County; and

Whereas the creation of a parallel administrative system to address social service delivery in the County would result in duplication of

staffing, governance, infrastructure, systems, and overhead costs;
and

Whereas in the absence of new provincial or federal funding, any increased administrative or service costs to address social services in the County would necessarily be borne by local municipal taxpayers, namely the residents of the County's constituent lower-tier municipalities; and

Whereas the County addressing homelessness and housing issues on its own and outside of the CMSM model, presents a material risk of increased property taxes, service disruption during transition, and inefficiencies that may not result in improved outcomes for residents.

Now Therefore be it resolved that the Council of the Corporation of the County of Essex formally expresses its opposition to the pursuit or development of a County-administered social services delivery system, to operate outside of the CMSM model; and

Further that Council affirms its support for the existing CMSM model for the Region and encourages collaborative, evidence-based discussions between the County and City focused on service improvement within the current CMSM model rather than creating administrative duplication; and

Further that Council directs that this resolution be forwarded to the City of Windsor, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, MPP Trevor Jones, MPP Anthony Leardi, and MPP Andrew Dowie for information; and

Further that Council directs County Administration to request that the City of Windsor revisit the Arbitrated Agreement, to discuss areas of mutual agreement, discuss areas for improvement, and to discuss incorporating the costs for homelessness and housing initiative into the Arbitrated Agreement.

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

097-2026

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Michael Prue

That Essex County Council now consider the previously deferred item at 10.2.1 of the Agenda.

Carried

098-2026

Moved By Tracey Bailey

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That Essex County Council receive and file the correspondence at Section 10.2.1 of the Agenda.

Carried

099-2026

Moved By Rob Shepley

Seconded By Tony Gaffan

That Essex County Council now consider the previously deferred item at 10.2.2 of the Agenda.

Carried

100-2026

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That Essex County Council receive and file the correspondence at Section 10.2.2 of the Agenda.

Carried

15. Adoption of By-Laws

101-2026

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Larry Verbeke

That By-law 2026-09 be given three readings, and having been read a first, second and third time, be finally passed and enacted.

Carried

15.1. By-law Number 2026-09

Being a By-law to confirm the proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the County of Essex, Special and Regular Meetings for March 18, 2026.

16. Notice of Motion

There were no Notices of Motion brought forward on March 18, 2026.

17. Adjournment

102-2026

Moved By Michael Prue

Seconded By Gary McNamara

That the Essex County Council meeting for March 18, 2026 be adjourned at 7:51 PM.

Carried

Hilda MacDonald,
Warden, County of Essex

Katherine J. Hebert,
County Clerk

Date Signed