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County Council Highlights for March 18, 2026

DID YOU MISS WEDNESDAY NIGHT'S MEETING OF ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL? CHECK OUT THE HIGHLIGHTS!

By [County of Essex](#) - Mar 19, 2026

News Notices and Announcements



Warden Lauds EWEMS After First Oil and Gas Wells Symposium

Warden Hilda MacDonald in her opening remarks to Council thanked and praised Essex-Windsor EMS and County Administration, for leading the way in organizing the first Collaborative Symposium on Legacy Oil and Gas Wells Emergency Response, last week in London. This event came about in the wake of the tragic explosion and years-long State of Emergency that victimized Wheatley earlier this decade. Nine municipalities in Southern Ontario are in the same boat as Essex County – faced with the challenges of managing the risks associated with tens of thousands of old, or inactive, oil and gas wells. Attending the Symposium were 140 emergency responders, municipal leaders, provincial partners and private-sector specialists from across Southern Ontario – all there to educate, and be educated about, the legacy oil and gas well problem. Best practices across the board were shared, to strengthen mutual preparedness in the event of any future emergency. Much was learned at the Symposium, including, as the Warden pointed out, that the first commercial natural gas well in Ontario, if not in all of Canada, was drilled near Ruthven in 1889. “So,” the Warden said, “a big shout-out to (EWEMS) Deputy Chief Ryan Lemay and his hard-working staff for tending to the nuts-and-bolts details of organizing and expertly staging this vitally important Symposium.”

Also, the Warden reminded anyone considering running in a local municipal election in Essex County – this coming October 26 – to attend, either in person or remotely via Zoom, a Regional Pre-Election Candidate Information Session at the County Administration Building on Wednesday, April 8 from 6 to 9 p.m. Learn more, [here](#).

Council Approves Motions Relating to Housing, Homelessness

Council approved a motion introduced by Councillor Tracey Bailey, in relation to [a report submitted by Administration](#) that outlined challenges facing the Housing and Homelessness Programs in the County of Essex, and which presented options for potential fixes. As background, since 1999 the City of Windsor is the provincially designated Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) responsible for the administration and delivery of social services that include the administration of Ontario Works, plus child care and social housing, in the City of Windsor, the County of Essex and the Township of Pelee Island.

Councillor Bailey's approved motion directs County Administration: (a) to maintain the current service level and funding approach for Housing and Homelessness Programs; (b) that no property acquisitions or capital commitments related to this program be advanced or pursued; (c) to engage with the City of Windsor, as CMSM, and the Province of Ontario to seek a coordinated, regionally aligned approach to funding and service delivery; (d) to report back to County Council with options that prioritize provincial funding solutions and regional coordination through the CMSM; and (e) that any future recommendations involving increased funding, property acquisition or expansion of the program be brought forward only with confirmed participation of the CMSM and a clear funding strategy that does not place additional burden on County taxpayers.

Councillor Michael Prue's motion to postpone consideration of Bailey's motion until Administration could report back with additional information, as to the causes and effects of the housing and homelessness crisis in the County, was defeated.

Council furthermore voted to approve Councillor Bailey's Notice of Motion on the same subject, introduced at the March 4, 2026 Council Meeting. That motion:

- formally expresses Council's opposition to the pursuit or development of a County-administered social services delivery system, to operate outside of the CMSM model in place since 1999;
- affirms Council's 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;
- 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
- 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.

Report Outlines EWEMS Capital and Operational Expenditures

Council received an information report outlining a consolidated 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 addresses projected financial pressures, while also summarizing the major supports extended to the EWEMS service throughout this term of Council. In summarizing key factors influencing EMS expenditures, the report states that ambulance call volumes gradually rose from 55,513 in 2020 to 68,461 in 2025 – a 23.3% increase over that span. Operating expenses are expected to top \$60 million in 2026, with the County's responsibility exceeding \$22 million.

Read the [report!](#)

Special Meeting assesses goals and priorities of Strategic Plan

Earlier in the day, Council gathered in a Special Meeting to consider the County's Strategic Plan, and assess the status of its goals, and priorities. StrategyCorp, the consultant that assisted in the development of the County's Strategic Plan, facilitated discussions regarding areas of success, challenges, as well as inertia since the plan's adoption. Councillors provided their insights, opinions and feedback on several County projects and matters of regional interest, vis-à-vis the direction for the remainder of this term of Council, as well as

their vision and recommendations for the transition to a new Council following the October elections.

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