



County of
Essex



COUNTY News

~ COUNTY COUNCIL APPROVES ~
~ 1.8% TAX RATE INCREASE ~

SUMMER ISSUE

JUNE 2007

COUNTY COUNCIL APPROVED the Corporation's 2007 Budget at the annual budget meeting on February 21, 2007. The Corporation's gross expenditures for 2007 amount to \$115.9 million, up from \$103.5 million from prior year. The amount to be levied from the seven lower tier municipalities increased by a \$2.1 million from 2006, with an approved net operating requirement of \$62.2 million.

Mitigating the impact of the \$2.1 million or 3.3% net increase in the County's requirement is a 1.5% increase in weighted assessment in the County of Essex, resulting in a net **1.8% increase** in tax rates for 2007. The impact of a 1.8% tax rate increase (County portion) on a \$200,000 home is \$788.40, an increase of \$13.85 from prior year. Approximately 1/3 of a homeowner's taxes support County operations.

The County of Essex tax rate remains one of the lowest County rates in Ontario. Council's fiscal strategy of maintaining extremely low debt levels, managed fixed asset replacement program and stable reserve position have contributed to the low tax rate position and enviable credit rating of AA-, as rated by Standard and Poor's, (Essex County is currently the only County in Ontario to achieve a AA rating).

For 2007, there are a number of key operating conditions impacting the year-over-year increase in net operating expenditures. Of the 3.3% increase, approximately 2% of the net increase result from programs, expenditures and external commitments beyond the control of Council, with the remaining 1.5% of the levy increase comprised of general inflationary pressures (1.3%), marginally

offset by the net savings in service enhancements (additional Land Ambulance subsidy offset in part by Land Ambulance Service enhancements and roadway expansion initiatives).

The most significant variables impacting on the 2007 Budget include:

- ◆ Increased cost of providing social assistance and social housing
- ◆ Savings from prior year for Public Health due to provincial contribution increasing from 65% to 75%
- ◆ Substantial commitment towards studies, land acquisition and financing of road infrastructure expansion
- ◆ Enhanced Land Ambulance Service in Lakeshore and Essex to accommodate growth and service demands
- ◆ Increase in cost sharing for Economic Development with the City of Windsor
- ◆ Increased share of costs for regionally delivered services due to greater assessment growth in the County than in the City
- ◆ Continued commitment to road reconstruction with reduced dependence on reserves
- ◆ Reduction in boundary adjustment compensation from the City of Windsor, final year of five-year compensation agreement
- ◆ Increase in provincial subsidy for Land Ambulance Services to 45% of gross expenditures
- ◆ General inflationary increases including staff wages and benefits
- ◆ Marginal increase in Home for the Aged subsidy, inadequate to cover increased costs of the delivering of services to residents at the Sun Parlor Home

Aside from the advancements towards road infrastructure growth, the 2007 Budget includes very modest service delivery expansions for the Home for the Aged, Land Ambulance Services and Transportation Services. In all cases, the service delivery expansions are considered the minimum requirements necessary to narrow the gap between actual service levels provided and

provincially mandated or municipally determined service levels.

Sun Parlor Home Moves Towards Electronic Medical Records

ONE OF THE most exciting improvements in the health system is the opportunity to move towards electronic patient information. This is why the Home selected this topic as one its nine strategic goals. Assessing an automated chart system has been completed and the Home has now selected a vendor and commenced implementation of software for this new major project.

This will take place in three phases, the first being a Physician Order System to be used by our Medical Director and nursing staff for pharmacy orders, doctor's notes and lab results. Our Medical Director will be able to access this information from anywhere with an Internet connection. The second phase is the resident management system that has two components, the clinical applications and a resident assessment instrument. Phase one and two will form the Resident Electronic Record where information will be input daily and shared by all disciplines. And the third phase is the Resident Financial Management System.

This entire project is a major initiative and will occupy much time and resources with benefits expected to be obtained over the longer term. Of course, the most important reason for this is to continue to provide the

best care possible for our residents in the most efficient and effective manner.

Job Evaluation Update June 2007

OVER THE PAST winter, employees of the County of Essex received a letter from Greg Schlosser in Human Resources about the upcoming review of the job evaluation process. This article provides a further update of:

- ◆ What is job evaluation?
- ◆ How are pay levels established?
- ◆ What is Pay Equity, and how does it impact job evaluation and pay levels?
- ◆ Why is the County revisiting this issue?
- ◆ What are the steps in this process?

What is Job Evaluation?

Job evaluation is a rational process of ranking jobs based on established criteria (Job Evaluation System). Keep in mind that it is the job that is being ranked, not the person in the job, nor their performance in the job. The most common approach to job evaluation is for a committee of employees to review a document describing the job, then through consensus to rank the job based on a set of criteria. Job evaluation is a well-established process with all larger employers. These employers use a rational job evaluation process to ensure, as much as possible, that there is a fair and explainable way of determining how much to pay one job vs. an other job.

There are about a half-dozen or so commonly used job evaluation systems in use in Ontario. While each has unique aspects, all systems must meet the legal requirement of measuring:

- ◆ SKILL
- ◆ RESPONSIBILITY
- ◆ EFFORT
- ◆ WORKING CONDITIONS

The system must also be gender neutral. Gender-neutral means that the criteria can not be biased for or against the aspects of jobs that have historically been filled by men vs. women, or visa versa. We'll have more on this in the "What is Pay Equity?" section.

Through the job evaluation process, each job is assigned a total number of points based on adding the number of points assigned for each of the four sub factors (skill, responsibility, effort, working conditions).

Job evaluation and the establishment of pay levels are two separate and distinct stages. The employees involved in job evaluation are not involved in determining pay levels. The job evaluation stage is completed when there is an agreed upon ranking of jobs from the greatest to the least combined rating of the job's skill, responsibility, effort and working conditions. There are "sore thumbing" checks to make sure the ranking of jobs makes sense. Once the ranking of jobs is agreed upon, pay levels are established.

How are Pay Levels Established?

There are many different ways of establishing pay levels. There are also many things that influence how pay levels are established, besides job evaluation. Some of these other influencers are affordability, and supply and demand for certain types of jobs and skills.

The most common method, and the method we used in the past, and intend to use in the future is as follows. All of the jobs are ranked in job evaluation point order. Let's say the jobs range from 200 to 1000 points based on their composite of skills, responsibility, effort, and working conditions. One pay range may contain all jobs from 200 to 299 points, and an other range for jobs from 300 to 399 points and so on. Different dollar ranges would then be assigned to each of these pay ranges.

What is Pay Equity, and How Does It Impact on the Job Evaluation Process?

We quite often hear employees use the terms "Pay Equity" and "Job Evaluation" interchangeably; this is incorrect. Put another way; there are many job evaluation related issues that are not Pay Equity issues. However, whenever job evaluation occurs or pay levels are being impacted a thorough review must be done to ensure these changes are not in violation of Pay Equity. Job Evaluation is the tool used to establish Pay Equity.

The Pay Equity Act is provincial legislation that was introduced in the late 1980's. The objective of the legislation is to remove the

historic gender bias against the amount of pay provided to jobs that are traditionally filled by women. A common terminology used to describe Pay Equity is that its objective is to encourage "equal pay for work of equal value". To use a generic example, if a secretary role (traditionally filled by women) and a vehicle mechanic role (traditionally filled by men) are evaluated using a job evaluation system and they both end up in the same resulting pay range, then they must be paid the same.

The Pay Equity Act has many complexities. In further communications we will be providing more details about this legislation and its impact on our job evaluation and pay processes. If you would like more detailed information please visit: www.payequity.gov.on.ca

Why is the County revisiting this issue?

The job evaluation system in place for each of the Corporation's six (6) employee groups /bargaining units was implemented in the early 1990's. In addition to supporting sound pay rates for these employee groups, these formed the basis for the posting of legally required Pay Equity Plans. When our system was put in place, Social Services was part of the Corporation, and EMS was not. Per sound compensation practices and Pay Equity legislation, employers must keep their job evaluation systems current and reflective of their jobs. The County, unions impacted by Pay Equity and the Pay Equity Commission agree that it is time to review/update our system to ensure that it is still reflective of the current mix of jobs in the varied departments within the County.

The main steps in redeveloping a job evaluation system are:

1. audit the current system to see where it needs improving to ensure it reflects our jobs
2. develop a gender neutral job evaluation criteria
3. develop a job information questionnaire
4. develop terms of reference for the process within the collective agreement

5. employee communications strategy
6. evaluator training
7. conduct the evaluations
8. develop the pay scales
9. develop the legally compliant Pay Equity Postings

It is important to note that each of the steps noted above are conducted as a joint effort between the employer and the impacted union local. While there will be significant similarities in the process and the evaluation system from one bargaining unit to the next, the above process for each of the bargaining units must be a stand alone process. Similarly, non-unionized employees also have a similar but stand-alone process and evaluation system.

What are the Next Steps in the Process?

C.U.P.E. is the union that represents the majority of the employees of the County; it is also the union, to date, that we have been working with on this review. A series of meetings have taken place with C.U.P.E. local 2974.1 and tentative dates for the first meetings with C.U.P.E. locals 860 and 2974.2 are being set for the fall.

We are still at the early stages of the steps noted above. More specifically, with C.U.P.E. Local 2974.1, we have completed step 1 and are in the midst of step 2. External job evaluation experts from Watson Wyatt Worldwide and C.U.P.E. have been brought in to assist us with this project.

The review of the non-union employee system is also underway.

As an employee, the part of a job evaluation process that is most visible to you is the Job Evaluation Questionnaire. There is one questionnaire for each job, to be completed by the incumbent with input from their supervisor. For jobs where there is more than one incumbent, there will also be one questionnaire completed by a representative incumbent. While still in the early stages of planning, the plan is for non-union employees to

start completing their questionnaires over the summer and C.U.P.E. local 2974.1 employees to start filling out theirs in the fall. To help prepare for this, there will be information sessions.

There is much to cover when explaining this issue. This article is the first in a series of communications that will get into more detail, as we get closer to various milestones in this project. If you have any questions in the mean time, feel free to contact any member of the Human Resources team or your union executive.

Library News

CONSULTANT JIM MORGENSTERN of d_mA Planning & Management Services presented the Final Draft Report to the Library Board at their meeting on April 25, 2007. The draft report is posted on the Essex County Library website: www.essexcountylibrary.ca

The consultant will be presenting this report to each local municipal council, County Council and the public over the summer. The final report is expected in late September.

The draft reports calls for the expansion of all existing libraries or development of new libraries to reach the 53,000 square feet of library space needed by 2021, to keep up with the projected population growth. It calls for new libraries to replace the existing ones in Amherstburg, Kingsville and Lakeshore. It suggests that the current LaSalle Library be either expanded or replaced with a new one in the recreation center. Similarly, the report proposes that the existing facility housing the Tecumseh Library be expanded. For the Leamington Library, the report proposes a new, larger branch either on current site or in the renovated municipal building space. Essex and Harrow Libraries would be retained as is.

The six small libraries, Cottam, Comber, McGregor, Ruthven, Stoney Point and Woodlee would be closed. Along with larger facilities the report calls for an increase in service hours.

In other Library News, the hours at the McGregor Library have been changed. Beginning June 6th, 2007 the library will be open from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays and closed on Wednesdays.

Now at the Essex County Library, you can lis-

ten to audio books and read e-Books on your PC. A digital book is the downloadable version of a book on tape or a book on CD. Digital audio books can be transferred to a portable listening device, and select audio titles can even be burned to a CD. To access this service, you will need a valid library card, brief access to the Internet and the free software for the machine on which you use your digital media. Download Stations are available at select library branches. Look for great mysteries, adventures, romances, family sagas, biographies and other great books all available from OverDrive, visit: <http://essexca.lib.overdrive.com>

2006 County of Essex United Way Campaign

THE 2006 COUNTY of Essex United Way Campaign wrapped up with the final standings of the Hockey Pool competition as follows: this year's winners are Hoa Du as runner up and Gladys Kane (EWSWA Contractor) winning 1st place. Cash prizes were awarded based on half of the total funds raised divided into four cash prizes and the other half of the proceeds going directly to United Way. Prizes were awarded during the Olympic Break then again at the end of the regular season. Our final prize 1st place winner, Gladys took home \$106 and Sean, the final runner up, received \$79.50. Congratulations! Thank you so much to Margaret Shires who once again volunteered to manage the Hockey Pool fundraiser. Without Margaret the Hockey Pool would not have been possible! Also, thank you to everyone who participated.

Several other fundraisers were organized for the 2006 United Way Campaign including a Chili Cook-off, which raised \$260! Participants who brought in a pot of chili were eligible for a cash prize based on votes. This year's winners were Jackie Davis (Land Ambulance) who won 1st place and awarded \$75 and tied for 2nd place were Grant Merklinger (Roads Maintenance) and Dean Wilkinson (Land Ambulance) who were each awarded \$37.50.

During the Chili Cook-off the Hazardous Materials Response Team held a demonstration in the Civic Centre lobby, which was very interesting and informative as well.



Once again a Bake Sale was held at the Civic Centre which raised over \$228 for the United Way! Thank you to everyone who donated deserts and to those who enjoyed them.

Hoang Du (Finance Department) was successful at implementing an ongoing Dress Down Day fundraiser in which the County of Essex Civic Centre employees are able to dress down wearing jeans on the 3rd Friday of every month. This has brought in approximately \$40 a month. Thanks for organizing this Hoa!

In total, the County of Essex raised \$8,480.25 for the Windsor-Essex County United Way! Our proceeds will support the United Way and their investment in more than 130 health and human service programs held locally.

Look forward to a United Way summer BBQ currently being planned to be held at the Civic Centre. Further details to follow!

If you have any suggestions for the 2007 United Way Campaign, please contact Cari Goossens in the Human Resources Department (776-6441 ext. 578

cgoossens@countyofessex.on.ca). Thank you for your continued support!

Essex County Highways "Takes the Heat"

THIS SUMMER THE County will be replacing the existing bridge structure on County Road 23 over the North Branch Cedar Creek.

The project has several unique challenges and will utilize technology not commonly seen in Canada. The North Branch Cedar Creek has been deemed a Navigable Waterway under the Navigable Waters Protection Act. This designation introduces minimum vertical and horizontal clearances and as such the structure must be raised by approximately 1.2m above its existing level. In addition the area is designated a Provincially Significant Wetland thereby introducing other considerations.

The most interesting component of the project is the introduction of the Geothermal Snowmelt concept for the structure. This concept will use a ground

fluid then circulates in pipes within the bridge deck to heat the concrete.

The system is not only designed to melt snow but will also improve the durability of the structure and extend its service life. A full monitoring program will be implemented to record the system's performance and to monitor its effectiveness.

The County is extremely pleased to be partnering with the Becker Engineering Group and Dean Construction on this full-scale research project.

It's Orange Barrel Season Once Again

SPRING IS HERE and a new crop of Orange Construction Barrels can be seen across the County.

Several large projects have commenced and more are on the hori-



zontal source heat recovery system to maintain the bridge deck at a constant temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit thereby preventing the formation of ice and accumulation of snow on the bridge. The system basically pumps fluid deep into the ground in a pipe system where the heat in the ground warms the fluid. The

zontal. Work has started on the widening of County Road 19 (Manning Road) north of County Road 22. This project will see the improvement of County Road 19 from a two lane rural cross section to a five lane urban facility.

MTO has ramped back up on the 401 as part of their multi-year program.



structure over Belle River on County Road 42. These bridge projects will require full road closures to accommodate the work. In addition numerous road rehabilitation projects will be undertaken this construction season.

As always the projects are planned to minimize delays to the motoring public and to protect the workers. The County Road 22 project will see the County's first implementation of a regulated Construction Speed Zone with doubling of fines for speeding when workers are present. The

In July the County will commence the first phase of a multi-phase program for safety and capacity improvements on County Road 22 in Lakeshore. The first phase of work will include the construction of a new four-lane highway to replace the existing two-lane facility between East Pike Creek Road and Patillo Road. The new road will include a concrete pavement structure of four lanes with a combination flush and raised center median. Future phases include the replacement of the Pike Creek Bridge and adjacent intersections as well as the County Road 22/ Patillo Road intersection

reduced speed limit is intended to slow the traffic through the construction zone and to improve worker, as well as, motorist safety.



Included in the County's 2007 Construction Program are projects to improve the County Road 42/ Patillo Road intersection, replacement of the bridge structure over Pike Creek on County Road 46 and rehabilitation of the bridge

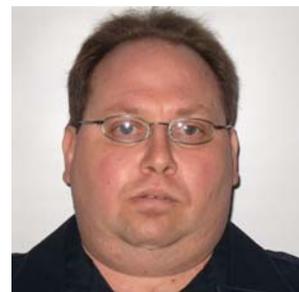
10th, 2007, after a courageous battle with cancer. Joe was an Advance Care Paramedic in the County of Essex for approximately 22 years. He began his career with the Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden (AAM) Volunteer Ambulance Service where, over the years, he served in a number of positions, including President. Joe was still a member of AAM Volunteer Ambulance Service, on a part-time basis, until his death.

Joe also began working as a paramedic with the Ministry of Health Windsor Professional Ambulance Service in 1986 until he joined the County of Essex in January 2001. Joe loved his baseball and played as a member of the Amherstburg Volunteer Ambulance Ball Team at the Muskoka tournament for a number of years.

Joe was not only an Advanced Care Paramedic, he was also a preceptor for many ALS and BLS graduates. He was recently recognized for his outstanding contribution to the provision of emergency medical services and was awarded the Governor General's Medal for Exemplary Service in April 2007.

Joe leaves behind his wife Mary Lou, who is also a Paramedic with Essex Windsor EMS and their six children.

We extend to Mary Lou and family our deepest sympathy and prayers for strength in this most difficult time.



Remembering a Colleague and Friend

THE COUNTY OF Essex EMS system lost a great Advance Care Paramedic Joe Beneteau on May

From The Desk of the County Emergency Management Coordinator

WITH NICKNAMES LIKE the Sun Parlour of Canada, and the Garden Gateway to Canada, Essex County may seem immune to disaster, however it has seen its fair share of severe weather, vehicle accidents, floods, and other localized emergencies. In previous articles "From the Desk of the Emergency Management Coordinator," individual emergency preparedness was stressed. Having a well rehearsed plan and resources to protect your home, business and family will not make one immune to the effects of mother nature or man made emergencies but will assist in minimizing injuries and loss of life and property while allowing emergency services to concentrate efforts where they are most needed. Having a 72 Hour Emergency Survival Kit located in your home or business will allow one to cope with emergencies for extended periods.

Aside from individual preparedness, emergency services also take steps, develop plans and rehearse procedures that will allow them to be effective in the response and recovery phases of an emergency situation. This is exactly what the Essex County Control Group did, along with other member municipalities and supporting agencies, as they planned and attended an emergency response exercise on May 16th, 2007. Plagued with reports of high winds, downed power lines, heavy debris, route closures and a

vehicle accident involving a chemical laden freight train, members from municipal and county emergency services gathered together to test their response to the emergency. A wide array of personnel from services such as: Fire, EMS, Red Cross, ARES, Salvation Army, Ontario Provincial Police, Municipal Police, Ministry of Transportation Ontario, Department of National Defense and Emergency Management Ontario attended the exercise. The realism of this exercise was a key factor in its success as an evacuation/reception center was set up and staffed at the Harrow Arena & Community Center, as well as an Information/Media Center being set-up in Amherstburg at the Anderson Public School. Considerable focus was placed on the testing and trialing of various communication devices including the use of cell phones, landlines, fax, email, radios and satellite phones. In using the various types of communication devices emergency services are able to practice gathering and employing resources using different devices in case of communications failure.

As was evident during the Blackout in 2003, overloaded lines caused many to be without use of their cellular phones. More recently, back-to-back disasters in Kansas exposed vulnerabilities in use of cellular phones during the emergency. Sharon Watson, spokeswoman for the Kansas Emergency Management Agency said, "A cell phone is critical in being able to communicate in a disaster. Unfortunately, because it tends to be the one most relied upon resource, it means overloaded lines." The importance of

being able to communicate during an emergency situation is paramount. Emergency services need to be able to effectively communicate and cooperate so that they can gather and employ resources as necessary. The testing and trialing of satellite phones is significant, as they are proving to be functional during emergency situations that would otherwise block or disable conventional methods of communications. Internet access via satellite may also prove to be an invaluable tool for emergency services in the event of downed communications, which was also tested during the recent emergency exercise.

Just as it is important for emergency services to develop plans and practice procedures that enable them to react and respond to emergencies, it is important that the individual do the same. Individual preparedness starts with you! In working together, we will ensure Essex County is as strong and safe as possible.

Further details on this topic, or other emergency management Program Topics, can be requested by contacting Phil Berthiaume, Emergency Management Coordinator, at 519-776-6441 ext 243 or email: pberthaiume@countyofessex.on.ca



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