



GET CONNECTED WITH
GeoSmart

N COUNTY News

FALL ISSUE

DECEMBER 2004

The County of Essex Unleashes the Power of GeoSmart

ON JUNE 23, 2004 the County of Essex officially debuted their latest technological innovation, *The GeoSmart Project*. Civic, business and community leaders were present to witness a demonstration of this powerful new technology, made possible with a \$500,000 grant from the Ministry of Natural Resources of Ontario.

The County of Essex GeoSmart initiatives utilize specific hardware, software and data centrally located and accessed by eight distinct municipal organizations through a private fibre network. This high-speed infrastructure allows the municipalities to transfer maps, drawings and various other large files between one another without speed or file size being an issue. The technology implemented will provide significant cost savings through economies of scale (one set of hardware configuration, one set of software licenses, one set of data bases all managed centrally for the eight organizations).

Through the Connecting Windsor-Essex Community Portal, (www.windsor-essex.info), users will have access to the **Business and Community Services Directory & Locator** and the **Economic Development Site Locator application**.

The Business and Community Service Locator initiative incorporates technology that connects residents and business interests with government and other ser-

vices offered throughout Windsor and Essex County. It can also be used as a tourism development tool to assist potential visitors in locating points of interest in the area. Once users have selected the attractions they wish to visit, this technology provides maps of the area and routing information to get tourists from point A to point B via the route of their choice (i.e. most scenic route or quickest route).

The Economic Development initiative introduces technology that will allow developers, and companies looking to locate in the region, information for locating commercial properties, land and other industry related information, with the capability to append demographic data to the desired geographical search area. Further, this technology incorporates resource tools, which can determine property boundaries, design bus routes or decide where a new road or shopping mall should go. Once a particular property has been identified, population details, demographics and census data for that area or within a specified per km radius of that area are available for modeling.

Municipal staff can access the **Land Use Planning and Asset Management** applications internally, through a secure high-speed fibre network.

The Land Use Planning initiative includes technology that will provide better access to digital land information providing municipal planners with requisite parcel data for making informed zoning and land-use planning decisions.

The Asset Management initiative addresses the changing government environment; municipalities are facing tighter budgets, amalgamation, staff reductions, and increasing demands for greater productivity. In addition, changes to municipal legislation and liability concerns are

putting tremendous pressure on municipalities to maintain accurate and up-to-date accountings of assets including location, condition, and life-cycles. Some of the benefits of the asset management system are:

- Comply with minimum maintenance standards for municipal highways and maintenance standards for water and sewage systems;
- Inventory of assets and ability to assess the total cost of operations, maintenance, and asset replacement;
- Spatially-enable asset management systems by linking customer requests, work orders, and resources;
- Added GIS visual to support more informed decision making;
- Manage work in the field (access service requests, work orders, inspectionst, investigations, labour, material, equipment and maps);
- Efficient and cost effective management of multiple types of infrastructure (i.e. integration of road, sewer and water asset maintenance or replacement).

The solutions will provide the public works departments throughout the County with a spatially-enabled asset management system, replacing the current paper-based processes, thus decreasing operational costs. These solutions allow municipal staff to have information at their fingertips. The system will also assist the County and its member municipalities in meeting the mini-

imum maintenance standards for municipal highways (Ontario Regulation 239/02) and Bill175 (Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act)

For further information contact Wendy St. Amour, at (519)-776-6441 EXT: 500 or wstamour@countyofessex.on.ca.

Tis the Season

SORRY TO REMIND you but, "Tis the Season" for those slow moving orange trucks with the blue flashing lights. Yes friends it's Winter Control time once again. It seems to us that we just nicely put away all of our "snow



toys". Where did the summer go? The following are some highlights of the Essex County Highways Control Program 2004/2005.

- 730 km of Highway, 96 bridges
- 4 "active" depots, 2 "storage" depots
- 16 salt/plow routes
- day/night crews
- weather monitoring/road patrols
- response to 80 events each season
- expenditures of approximately \$1,400,000 each season

This season we will be deploying some "cutting edge" "state of the art" technologies to assist us in achieving the desired Level of Service. Our entire Winter Control Fleet will be equipped with a GPS/AVL (Geographic Position System/Automatic Vehicle Locator) system. We will also be deploying our first winter control unit equipped with "prewetting" technology to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of road salt. This unit will be assigned to the high volume zones of County Road 22. A pilot program will also be conducted to test direct liquid applied, anti icing technologies on a limited controlled test site.

Winter Driving Do's and Don'ts:

- Do pay attention to weather forecasts and road condition information
- Do allow extra time
- Do clean off all vehicle windows/mirrors/roof
- Do a pre-winter vehicle check i.e. tire pressure and tread depth
- Do reduce speeds
- Do maintain half a tank of gas
- Do check level of windshield washer fluid
- Do use headlights
- Don't tailgate, leave adequate spacing
- Don't speed
 - Don't travel if at all possible during the height of a storm
 - Don't attempt to pass plow trucks
 - Don't use cell phones or other distractions while driving
 - Don't drink and drive.

Ontario Health Premium – Who Pays?

ON MAY 18, 2004, the Minister of Finance for the Province of Ontario delivered the 2004 Ontario Budget. One of the government's initiatives set out in the budget was the implementation of a new Ontario Health Premium introduced in its budget document as "health care premium."

This premium is collected through taxation at the source as other Federal and Provincial income taxes are collected. The premium is collected based on the taxable income of employees. There are two divergent interpretations being applied. Unions for the most part, are claiming that it is a premium and where there is language-obligating employers to pay health care benefits, so shall this premium be included. Conversely, employers are saying it's a tax and not their responsibility under collective agreements.

A number of grievances have been filed with employers and to date, there have been four (4) reported arbitration awards. The issue has been settled as a result. Employers in Ontario do not have to pay the new health premium for workers -- unless, of course, they have to. Even the arbitrators at this point have divergent views.

In one of the four (4) awards, the arbitrator concluded that because the government said the money collected from the premium would go toward health care, it truly is a premium and not a tax as argued by the employer. Based on language addressing the old OHIP premiums, the employer must pay.

In the other three (3) awards, the employers were successful in arguing that the premium is a tax collected under the Income Tax Act and not a premium as the unions have argued. However, the debate rages on and won't likely be settled any time soon, since it will undoubtedly end up in the courts.

Employers should carefully read their collective agreements as to any pending liability and should seek a legal opinion before making any final decision.

County Receives Clean Audit

AT THE AUGUST Government Services Committee, Corporate Section, the 2003 Consolidated Financial Statements for the Corporation were presented. Again, for 2003, a 'clean audit opinion' was received from KPMG, indicating no material weaknesses in the County's financial operations.

Significant savings in Social Services costs, favourable net supplementary taxes, an unanticipated subsidy increase at the County's Home for the Aged, and savings from budget in Land Ambulance and Transportation Services contributed to an operating surplus of \$3.1 million. Of the \$3.1 million surplus, \$2 million has been allocated to a new reserve to assist in addressing the need for expanded transportation infrastructure throughout the County.

County of Essex Consolidated Financial Reports are available at www.countyofessex.on.ca under

Corporate Records / Financial Statements or in the County Administration Office.

Library News

JENNIFER (Sirsi Voice Activation (SVA)) software was implemented over the summer. This software automates the calling of patron holds available for pickup. At a future date, we hope to implement the automatic calling of patrons who have overdue materials.

New computers with screen reading/magnification software were installed at the three branch libraries in Kingsville. They were purchased through a grant by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The Municipality of Leamington has renovated the entrance of the Leamington Library to make it more accessible for people with disabilities.

The Amherstburg Library replaced the carpet on the upper floor of the Branch and installed new tile thanks to the generosity of Diageo Canada and its employees. This completes the refurbishment of the upstairs of the Amherstburg Branch.

We are looking forward to the Essex Library Branch moving to its' new location in the former Holy Name School in 2005.

Sun Parlor Home Invites Community In

COATS FOR KIDS- The auditorium was used to assist the South Essex Community Centre (SECC) with their annual event. Over 1000 coats were collected for distribution to needy families.

SPH Auxiliary Craft and Bake Sale - Our Auxiliary's annual craft and bake sale was held on November 19, 2004.

Christmas Open Houses - Victoria Street Manor - December 5, 2004

Sun Parlor Home - December 12, 2004 - These opportunities to have families and visitors in the Homes to enjoy music, food, entertainment and decorations, all in the holiday spirit, is always a delight to our residents.

Emergency Personnel Receive Training on Farm Emergencies

AN EMS FARM Casualty Management Day was held at Wridair Farm in Malden Center on Saturday, September 25, 2004. The event was put on by Essex Kent Base Hospital with the County of Essex providing major sponsorship. The working farm is also the home of the Wright family who donated it to us as a venue for the course. BLS Coordinator, Dan Metcalfe, did an outstanding job organizing what turned out to be a very well attended learning experience for Paramedics of all levels as well as local Police, Fire Departments and even the Ministry of Transport. Ron Jones with the Essex Federation of Agriculture was actively involved in the day in all areas from lectures to demonstrations and event planning and preparation in the months leading to this event.

The level of awareness concerning farm emergencies and the types of patient injuries that can occur was increased for all attendees. The experience involved realistic scenarios including a patient trapped by a hay bale weighing in excess of one ton, another party unconscious in a manure tank, and a farmer with his arm caught in a corn head. Amherstburg Fire Department (Malden) were an integral part of our scenarios as they demonstrated rescue techniques for all our "patients". A demonstration of the devastation possible when a person encounters a "power-take-off" was done and many in attendance were amazed with the speed at which farm machinery can perform. Lecturers including Base Hospital Medical Director, Dr. Paul Bradford and Officers from the MTO spoke on a range of topics from ATV accidents to chemical emergencies. Viktor Burany, a Paramedic

with AA&M Ambulance Service and a Police Officer in Amherstburg spoke on the need for preserving evidence at the scene of a farm accident.

A raffle for our paramedic site at the Rotary Childrens' Safety Village was also a success that day raising \$344.00. The collection bin for beverages raised approximately \$74.00 for one of our own paramedics, 30 year veteran Ron Drouillard who is suffering from Parkinsons. Thank you goes to all the attendees for their generosity!

There were a great number of individuals, local groups and business who stepped up and provided invaluable assistance enabling this course to be a success. It wouldn't have been possible without them!



What's New in Roads

THE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES Department has survived another construction season and will be completing all of our projects for 2004 shortly. It was an extremely busy season but one in which we feel positive about the results of some new initiatives and are pleased with our accomplishments.

We replaced an existing bridge over Duck Creek with new technology, utilizing a pre-cast concrete bridge fabricated in Guelph. This methodology allowed us to complete the work in a shorter amount of time than the traditional cast in place construction

Work is continuing on the Environmental Assessment projects for County Road 19 (Manning Road) and County Road 22. Public Information Centres for these projects are to be held in early December. The PIC's allow us to gain valuable information from the public who use these roads each day. This allows us to verify the assumptions we have made ensuring we have appropriately captured and understood the issues/concerns related to these road sections.

From The Desk of the County Emergency Measures Planner

'TIS THE SEASON TO ... As the holidays and winter quickly approach, it is too easy to complete that line with any number of actions and activities that we traditionally do at this time of the year – shopping, winterize the car and the house, prepare for and attend the steady round of holiday gatherings, (did I mention shopping?), etc. While we are “out and about” and otherwise involved, how much thought do we give to the distinct possibilities of the various types and levels of emergencies that also accompany this time of the year? Fall and winter bring their own particular brand of severe weather conditions that can either be a minor inconvenience to our daily routines (school closures, traffic problems) or have a major impact on our personal lives, our families, workplace and homes. The unexpected should be expected more at this time of the year than at any other time of the year.

To assist us in our considerations and emergency preparations for this time of the year, the media plays a very important role in providing us with numerous sources reporting on current and future weather conditions and the specific impacts that those conditions have or may have on our area. Radio, television and the internet access to weather sites have allowed us to very quickly evolve from weather watchers and reactors to a well-informed, knowledgeable public that demands up-to-the-minute reports and updates

of weather and road conditions as well as any known or forecasted impacts. We do not appreciate nor expect surprises in the “fine art” of weather predicting. However, the unexpected does occur and we must be prepared to adjust our routines (such as driving conditions) in the event of severe weather and winter storms.

Some specific hints and suggestions in the event of a winter power failure are as follows:

- Confirm that the power failure is not only limited to your home or immediate neighbourhood;
- Turn-off all tools, appliances and electronic equipment and turn your thermostat down to minimum to prevent damage caused by power surges on restart or stove-related fires;
- Leave one light switch on so you will know when power is restored;
- Do not open your freezer or fridge unless absolutely necessary. If the door remains closed, a full freezer will keep food frozen for at least 24 to 36 hours;
- Use proper candle holders and never leave lit candles unattended;
- Do not use charcoal or gas barbecues, camping heating equipment or home generators indoors. They quickly produce high levels of carbon monoxide that can kill you before you realize that there is a problem;
- Keep a battery-operated radio available for local information;
- If you must leave your home or evacuate for any period of time, turn off the main breaker or switch at the power supply box,

turn-off the water supply where it enters the house and drain the water from your plumbing system (if you drain a gas-fired water tank, the pilot light should be turned out – the local gas supplier should be called to re-light it!), unhook washing machine hoses and drain, and, if your house is protected from ground water by a sump pump, clear all valuables from the basement floor in case of flooding;

- After the power returns, confirm that all appliances and equipment are turned-off before your turn on the main power switch, do not enter a flooded basement unless you are certain that the power has been disconnected, and do not use any appliances or equipment that might have been flooded until they have been checked and cleaned by a qualified technician.

Winter conditions have an obvious impact on emergencies that we do not expect at other times of the year. Personal preparedness, common sense and confidence will permit you to meet these challenges and protect yourself, your family and your homes.

Further details on this topic, or other Emergency Preparedness and Response topics, can be requested by contacting Phil Berthiaume, *Emergency Management Coordinator*, at 519-776-6441, extension 243 or e-mail pberthiaume@countyofessex.on.ca.

In the early fall we proposed a modified protocol and schedule for the development and approval of our 2005 Construction Program. We requested the approval of the 2005 Construction Program prior to the end of 2004 and sought authorization to release a portion of the program early in the new year. This will allow us to take advantage of “off season” pricing, allow for earlier starts to

the paving projects and to co-ordinate bridge rehabilitation projects prior to the start of the “fish spawning seasons”.

County Council approved the 2005 Construction Program and early release projects on November 17, 2004. Tenders will be called in February and March 2005.



| | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| Administration Brian Gregg Chief Administrative Officer 776-6441 Ext.325 | Corporate Services Rob Maisonneville Dir. Of Corporate Services/Treasurer 776-6441 Ext. 328 | Council Services Mary Brennan Dir. of Council Services/Clerk 776-6441 Ext. 335 | Planning Services Bill King County Planning Advisor 776-6441 Ext. 329 | Human Resources Don Shaban Manager 776-6441 Ext. 322 | Engineering and Roads Tom Bateman County Engineer 776-6441 Ext 316 | Essex County Library Ed George Chief Librarian 776-5241 Ext. 3 | Sun Parlour Home for the Aged Bill MacDonald Administrator 326-1215 Ext. 202 | Land Ambulance Brian Bildfell Director of Land Ambulance Services 776-6441 Ext. 300 |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|