



Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
789 Broadway Street, Box 3000
Wyoming, ON N0N 1T0

Telephone: 519-845-0801
Toll-free: 1-866-324-6912
Fax: 519-845-3160

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Completion of Budget Deliberations Tabled Until March 22

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

Wyoming, ON – Lambton County Council met this morning to begin consideration of the 2018 County Budget. After addressing several policy matters, Council approved a number of grant requests for 2018 before tabling the balance of its main budget deliberations until Thursday, March 22.

Council agreed to fund:

- \$1,050,000 over 10 years to the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital Foundation to assist with the acquisition of a new X-Ray Suite for Diagnostic Imaging.
- \$45,000 to Community Living Sarnia-Lambton for the purchase of a 2017 or 2018 Dodge Caravan with side-access or rear-entry wheelchair ramp.
- \$35,000 to Tourism Sarnia-Lambton to cover additional operating expenses.
- \$300,000 a year for four years to the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership to move forward on various projects and goals and to fill two vacant positions.

Council's grant request policy was updated to clarify that, with the exception of other public sector organizations such as hospitals or colleges, applicants must reside and conduct business within Lambton County and that funding will only be for activities which are consistent with or ancillary to the County's core services.

Council also directed staff to pursue funding from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport through the *Tourism Development Fund* for financial support of a consultant to further investigate the feasibility of a multi-use convention centre.

Lastly, Council approved a revised County Tax Policy for 2018 but deferred its deliberations regarding the future of the Vacancy Rebate Program to April 4 in order to allow for further public and stakeholder feedback.

As it stands now, the 2018 County Budget calls for a 3.03% net increase in funding or \$75.6 million to be raised through local property taxes. When deliberations resume, Council will be looking to reduce this amount and to this end has requested a report from staff detailing possible means to do so.

Budget deliberations will resume at 9 a.m., Thursday, March 22, 2018 and will be streamed live on the County's website, LambtonOnline.ca.

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Please contact:

Bill Weber

Warden
County of Lambton
519-649-6885
bill.weber@county-lambton.on.ca

John Innes

GM, Finance, Facilities and Court Services
County of Lambton
519-845-5417
john.innes@county-lambton.on.ca