

## REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

# Legacy Oil and Gas Wells and Subsurface Migration Hazard Risk Mitigation Funding

**To:** Warden and Members of County Council

**From:** Director of Paramedic Services

## RECOMMENDATION

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1. That Oxford County Council receive Report PS 2024-01 entitled “Legacy Oil and Gas Wells and Subsurface Mitigation Hazard Risk Mitigation Funding” and authorize the Chief Administrative Officer and Director of Paramedic Services to enter into a funding agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry as described herein.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

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- Oxford County is eligible to receive one-time funding from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) to undertake emergency management activities that focus on capacity building and risk mitigation around legacy oil and gas wells and subsurface migration hazards.
- The proposed emergency management initiatives will be in collaboration with and available to area municipalities.

## IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

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Upon approval of the recommendations of this report, the CAO and Director of Paramedic Services will sign the transfer payment agreement with the MNRF.

All work under this agreement must be completed by March 31, 2024, prior to the launch of Phase 2 activities (more information will be released in January, 2024).

## Financial Impact

The proposed initiatives include capital and operational costs, which will be funded at 100% through the Legacy Oil and Gas Well program.

### Proposed Activities and Budget

Activity	Explanation	Funding
<b>Understanding the Risks – Communications</b>	Developing and delivering education and outreach materials related to emergency preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivered by staff resources</li> </ul>	\$10,000
<b>Reduce Risks – Emergency Road Closure Trailers (4)</b>	To ensure traffic is redirected away from hazardous scenes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing asset management consideration based on anticipated lifecycle.</li> </ul>	33,000
<b>Enhance Preparedness – Emergency Operations Centre and Reception Centre Improvements</b>	Reception Centre resources, EOC management software. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Portable cots, tables, etc. to be used if a municipality opens a reception centre in response to an emergency.</li> </ul>	34,000
<b>Enhance Preparedness – Emergency Plan Update</b>	Hazard-specific emergency response plans coordinated with area municipalities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds will be used to increase the FTE for the Emergency Management Coordinator earlier than proposed in the 2024 budget.</li> </ul>	28,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$105,000</b>

Included in the funding application is an increase in staffing hours for Emergency Management Coordinator position in order to implement the activities identified in this report, which will include stakeholder engagement with area municipalities in Oxford County. This position was budgeted to transition from 0.6 to 1.0 FTE beginning July 1, 2024 and will now increase to 1.0 FTE immediately following approval of the recommendations of this report.

The 2024 approved budget includes four road closure trailers (NI 2024-04) in the amount \$33,000 proposed to be funded under this program, which will result in additional savings.

## Communications

The Emergency Management Coordinator will collaborate with area municipalities regarding the development of a Legacy Oil & Gas Well hazard-specific, coordinated plan.

The Emergency Management Coordinator will work with Strategic Communications to develop and deliver appropriate outreach materials related to emergency preparedness and this specific hazard.

## 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendation in this report supports the following strategic goals.

### Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
<b>Promoting community vitality</b>	<b>Enhancing environmental sustainability</b>	<b>Fostering progressive government</b>
Goal 1.3 – Community health, safety and well-being		Goal 3.2 – Collaborate with our partners and communities Goal 3.5 – Advocate for Oxford County

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

## DISCUSSION

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### Background

The Legacy Wells Program allocates \$7.5 million over three years, starting in 2023-2024, to enhance municipal preparedness and response to petroleum-related emergencies. Year 1 is a pilot phase, focusing on capacity building and risk mitigation, particularly in rural Southwestern

Ontario. The program requires municipalities to submit detailed project plans and budgets by September 15, 2023, with activities completed by March 1, 2024. Future program phases will be guided by ongoing engagement with municipalities and updated guidance materials expected in January 2024.

## **Comments**

The County of Oxford will direct Year 1 funding towards increasing our capacity for emergency preparedness. These funds must be utilized by March 31, 2024. All activities will be in collaboration with area municipalities and available to area municipalities.

The Province has represented to Oxford County that it is continuing work on legacy Oil and Gas wells and subsurface gas migration risks, and a clearer delineation between the roles of the Province and municipalities in the preparedness, prevention, and response regarding oil and gas releases and emergencies.

Nothing in the agreement with the MNRF shall extend the County of Oxford's responsibilities beyond those provided for in the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act and regulations. As such, Oxford County has advised the Province that it does not have the experience or expertise to fully manage Oil and Gas emergency preparedness, prevention, and response.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

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This funding opportunity will allow Oxford County and area municipal emergency responders and emergency management staff to better understand the risk that Legacy Oil and Gas wells pose to Oxford County.

The activities identified will enhance our preparedness for all emergencies and inform Oxford County staff regarding potential Phase 2 activities.

## **SIGNATURES**

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### **Departmental approval:**

Original signed by

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Ryan Hall  
Director of Paramedic Services

**Approved for submission:**

Original signed by

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Benjamin R. Addley  
Chief Administrative Officer