

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Legacy Oil and Gas Wells Action Plan Funding Program Year Three - Emergency Response Decontamination Trailer

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Paramedic Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Oxford County Council authorizes the Chief Administrative Officer and Director of Paramedic Services to enter into a funding agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and shared services agreements with participating municipalities as set out in Report PS 2025-02.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Oxford County is eligible to receive one-time funding from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) to purchase an emergency response decontamination trailer for use in responding to potential legacy oil and gas well related and other emergencies involving contaminants.
- The decontamination trailer will significantly enhance the County and participating municipalities' ability to respond to contamination needs during large-scale or hazardous incidents, aligning with community safety priorities including those related to legacy oil and gas wells.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

Upon approval of the recommendation in this report, the CAO and Director of Paramedic Services will sign the transfer payment agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF). Staff will also proceed with negotiating and execution of shared service agreements with the participating municipalities.

Procurement of the decontamination trailer will follow the County's purchasing policy.

Financial Impact

This initiative includes capital costs which will be funded 100% through the Legacy Oil and Gas Well program. Operational costs resulting from the initiative will be funded through area municipal contributions.

An emergency response decontamination trailer is anticipated to have a 10-year useful life. Annual replacement costs of approximately \$14,000 will be included in the 2026 Business Plan and Budget, contributed to the Paramedic Services Capital Reserve. Once a unit has been selected through the procurement process the useful life and annual replacement charge will be updated accordingly.

Summary of Costs (2025)

Activity	Detail	Budget
Emergency Response	Purchase of a decontamination trailer	\$133,618
Emergency Response	Anticipated 2025 operational costs (insurance, licensing, repairs and maintenance) funded through existing Paramedic Services budget.	\$2,000

Communications

Staff will consult with Oxford area municipalities and other municipalities outside of the County's jurisdiction to formalize a shared service agreement that will include cost recovery, insurance requirements and safety provisions to ensure risks associated with this endeavour are appropriately mitigated.



Any public communications to highlight the County's enhanced emergency preparedness capabilities will follow the provisions contained in the funding agreement.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

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
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
Goal 1.3 – Community health, safety and well-being		Goal 3.2 – Collaborate with our partners and communities

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

DISCUSSION

Background

The Legacy Oil and Gas Well Action Plan is a three-year initiative led by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) to address risks associated with legacy oil and gas wells and subsurface gas migration in southwestern Ontario. The program aims to increase understanding of these risks, implement measures to reduce them, and enhance emergency preparedness. A total of \$7.5 million has been allocated for these efforts.

- Year 1 (2023-2024): This was a pilot year with a focus on building municipal capacity and understanding risks. Activities included training, communication efforts, monitoring and assessment programs, and capacity building for emergency response. Eligible municipalities received funding to develop tools, training, and emergency preparedness measures.
- Years 2 and 3 (2024-2026): These years expand on Year 1’s priorities and introduce two funding streams:
 - Base Funding: Continues to support municipal efforts in capacity building, training, and risk assessment.
 - Collaborative Funding: Allocates funding for joint projects among municipalities, with up to \$0.5 million in Year 2 and \$1.0 million in Year 3. These projects focus on broader initiatives such as coordinated training, larger-scale monitoring programs, and public outreach campaigns.

The Ministry introduced a Collaborative Funding stream in Year 2 of the program, providing municipalities with additional resources to engage in joint projects that align with the Action Plan’s objectives: understanding and mitigating risks, and improving emergency preparedness. Eligible projects may involve partnerships between multiple municipalities or between upper-tier

and lower-tier municipalities with distinct emergency management coordinators. Examples include coordinated public education initiatives, regional training sessions, and shared monitoring systems. Proposals are evaluated based on their alignment with program goals, collaborative approach, and potential benefits to participating municipalities and the broader region.

Oxford County received notification from the MNRF on December 18, 2024 that the project has been approved for funding, which was after the 2025 Business Plan and Budget was approved by Council.

Comments

This project is a collaboration between Oxford County and five other upper-tier municipalities in Southwestern Ontario. These municipalities identified the need for mobile emergency decontamination trailers to enhance regional emergency response capabilities, particularly for large-scale incidents such as legacy well failures or other hazardous events. Through this collaborative initiative, participating municipalities will benefit from increased resource sharing and coordinated emergency response efforts.

By partnering in this project, Oxford County will have the ability to request additional emergency decontamination trailers from neighboring municipalities when responding to large-scale or concurrent incidents. Similarly, the Oxford County emergency decontamination trailer will be made available to neighboring municipalities facing similar emergencies. This arrangement ensures a robust, regionally coordinated response, enhancing the safety and well-being of residents across southwestern Ontario.

Collaboration and Community Benefits

This project also supports the ongoing collaborative relationships between the County and area municipalities, by pooling resources and aligning priorities, in our shared commitment to community safety and well-being.

The Woodstock Fire Department has been instrumental in this collaboration, providing critical subject matter expertise throughout the design process to ensure the trailer meets the practical and technical requirements of our first responders. Furthermore, the Woodstock Fire Department has offered to store the trailer on their premises, enhancing its accessibility and readiness for deployment across the County.

Through shared service agreements, the operational costs and access to the emergency decontamination trailer will be equitably shared, ensuring maximum utility across the area municipalities. This teamwork enables all participating municipalities to benefit from a resource that would have been challenging to secure individually. The project not only strengthens regional emergency response capacity but also enhances the trust and cooperation among local governments, ultimately benefiting the residents we serve.

Forward Planning

Deployment and usage data collected over the next three years will inform future decisions on replacement planning, ensuring fiscal responsibility and asset efficiency. This phased approach ensures that resources are effectively allocated and that decisions are data-driven, reflecting the municipalities' actual needs and priorities.

The funding from the MNRF covers the initial acquisition, while ongoing operational costs will be shared among area municipalities through shared service agreements. The trailer's design will allow for multi-purpose use, including triage, contamination response, and centralized command.

CONCLUSION

The purchase of an emergency decontamination trailer represents a critical step in enhancing Oxford County's emergency response capabilities. Collaboration with area municipalities will ensure cost-effectiveness and resource sharing, while a deferred replacement plan allows for data-informed decisions.

SIGNATURES

Departmental approval:

Original signed by:

Ryan Hall
Director of Paramedic Services

Approved for submission:

Original signed by:

Benjamin R. Addley
Chief Administrative Officer