



Report to County Council

From: Andrea Loughlean, Manager of Emergency Management & Elgin-Middlesex Regional Fire School

Date: July 23, 2024

Subject: Legacy Wells Initiative Year 2 and 3

Recommendation(s):

THAT the report titled “Legacy Wells Initiative Year 2 and 3” from the Manager of Emergency Management & Elgin-Middlesex Regional Fire School dated July 23, 2024 be received and filed.

THAT approval be granted for submission of the proposed application for MNRF’s Legacy Wells Municipal Transfer Payment Program Year 2 and 3 funding.

Introduction:

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is leading the development of a comprehensive action plan to help address risks from legacy oil and gas wells and subsurface gas migration hazards in southwestern Ontario. This Action Plan Strategy focuses on increasing the understanding of risks, identifying actions to reduce risks, and supporting measures to enhance emergency preparedness. Reducing the risks of legacy oil and gas infrastructure and subsurface gas migration involves a number of provincial ministries and municipalities. As such, a co-operative approach to identifying opportunities and solutions is critical to moving forward and achieving a successful outcome.

As part of the Action Plan Strategy, the government is investing \$7.5 million over three years in a new Transfer Payment Program focused on supporting municipalities in their efforts to reduce risks and enhance emergency preparedness within their communities. In Year 1 (2023-24), the ministry provided \$2.0 million to nine targeted upper tier municipalities - Municipality of Chatham-Kent; County of Elgin; County of Essex; Norfolk County; Region of Niagara; Haldimand County; Oxford County; Lambton County; Brant County; with the expectation of collaboration with their lower tier municipalities.

The government recognizes the greatest need for funding is predominantly in rural municipalities, where local geology and naturally occurring petroleum resources can influence the risk factors to public health and safety and the environment. Funding will

be distributed to selected municipalities in southwestern Ontario to undertake activities focusing on the ministry’s Action Plan Strategy goals of increasing understanding of the Risks and building capacity for emergency preparedness.

In Year 2 and Year 3, there will be two streams of funding available to the same nine municipalities:

Base Funding – continued funding for municipalities to build capacity and enhance preparedness. Elgin County will have the opportunity to apply for \$280,000 for each of Year 2 and 3 in base funding.

Collaborative Funding – funding available to municipalities to support various opportunities for targeted, collaborative projects that align with the strategic program objectives. Elgin County will have the opportunity to apply for a portion of \$0.5 million in Year 2 and \$1.0 million in Year 3. These amounts are the respective Year 2 and 3 totals for collaborative funding for all nine municipalities.

Background and Discussion:

The eligible activities for Year 1 included: Understanding Risk, Reduce Risks, and Enhance Preparedness. This funding allowed Elgin County to successfully:

- Train over 650 personnel, including firefighters, senior and elected officials, and municipal staff across Elgin County, all lower tier municipalities (LMPs), St. Thomas, and neighbouring municipalities in the areas of Hydrogen Sulfide Awareness, Hydrogen Sulfide Survive, Emergency Social Services, and Crisis Communications.
- Educate 125 participants from across the County and neighbouring municipalities at the Petroleum Emergencies Workshop.
- Acquire and stock 4 Emergency Response Units – 3 to support reception centre activation and 1 to support transport of hazmat and fire services equipment throughout the county.
- Improve the EOC at 450 Sunset Drive allowing better support of the County and our LMPs in the event of an emergency.
- Purchase 24 Hazardous Materials Class A training suits for firefighter training.
- Purchase gas monitoring equipment for each of the fire stations throughout Elgin County; including all LMPs as well as St. Thomas.

Year 2 (2024-2025) and Year 3 (2025-2026) eligible activities include:

Base Funding	Collaborative Projects
Capacity Building	Projects between two or more municipalities
Training	
Communications	Projects that undertake work that demonstrates collaboration between upper and lower tier municipalities where
Monitoring/Assessment	

	the municipalities are represented by different CEMCs
Emergency Response Planning	Projects that are undertaken by a selected municipality for the general benefit of other municipalities with oil and gas wells
Other activities pre-approved by MNRF	

Elgin County’s Year 2 and Year 3 Proposed Application:

Eligible Activity	Details	Budget
Capacity Building	<p>Fire Training Ground available to all fire services and firefighters within Elgin County and those training with the Elgin-Middlesex Regional Fire School.</p> <p>Equipment to include (example costs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class A Live Fire Structure - \$550,000 - Propane Training Unit - \$64,147 <p>Associated props:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car Prop - \$32,047 Horizontal Prop - \$16,045 Dumpster Prop - \$8,507 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ground Preparation – TBD - Land Acquisition – TBD - Move existing training structures at Yarmouth, Central Elgin – TBD 	<p>~\$670,746 taxes, freight, installation not included</p>
Emergency Response	Collaborate with participating LMPs in creating/updating the Emergency Response Plans to include a hazardous materials specific plan.	\$0

There are multiple locations being considered including sites that would require land acquisition or utilizing existing County assets. While a finalized location has not yet been determined, the following criteria are identified:

- Hydrant access with sufficient flow rates
- Land area of approx. 3-5 acres for future additions to the training ground as funds and partnerships become available
- Land that is cleared, ideally paved or packed gravel to decrease ground preparation costs
- Centrally located
- Not proximal to residential areas or other sensitive land uses
- Cost effective

A centrally located training ground will allow the most convenient and effective usage from all fire services within the County. Land of up to 5 acres will also allow for future development of the grounds, such as the incorporation of a fire safety village for school aged children to learn about fire safety and fire prevention – something other

municipalities outside the County have had great success with. Having additional space on site also opens opportunities for future collaboration and development with other municipalities and industries in the area. At present, St. Thomas Fire has expressed interest in investing in the proposed training site, if development remains conveniently located.

The live fire structure and mobile training props offer a realistic training scenario while maintaining an effective margin of safety. The suggested props will allow firefighters to train in scenarios related to hazardous materials, vehicle fire, dumpster fire, and live fire situations. Relocation of the existing training structures from Yarmouth Centre Fire Station in Central Elgin to the proposed training ground will further benefit all LMP fire services as it allows the ability to train in high angle scenarios, search and rescue, tactical ventilation, as well as thermal dynamics and flashover scenarios. This type of facility presents a unique and interesting opportunity for industries in the area with fire response teams on staff, as it offers an area within close proximity for training opportunities. The ability to utilize the training ground through the Elgin-Middlesex Regional Fire School, will further the beneficial reach by improving training opportunities to all fire services across Southwest Ontario and the province who utilize our Regional Training Centre.

Currently, this type of training for our firefighters is not available nor possible within the County. Fire Services across the County and in many of the surrounding areas wishing to train in this capacity would need to rent a training facility at a cost of \$500-\$1500/day or more. Renting such a training facility is not only cost prohibitive but impractical due to logistical concerns of traveling outside the County.

Financial Implications:

Funding from MNRF over Year's 2 and 3 could realistically range from \$560,000 to approx. \$1 million with an approved proposal submission, however the amount awarded will only be determined upon assessment and approval of a project proposal.

Costs associated with maintenance of the suggested equipment are considered minimal, as per manufacturer representatives, as well as representatives from Toronto, New Tecumseth, and Ingersoll Fire Services who are utilizing the same or similar props as those proposed. The manufacturer identified the life span of the training props to be up to or beyond 20 years, pending maintenance and usage.

To offset maintenance costs, the training ground can be rented out for an estimated \$750/day to remain competitive. With a rental frequency of 4 days/mos. \$36K could be generated annually and \$720,000 over the life span of the live fire unit.

Annual:	\$750/day rental fee x 4 days/mos. rental = \$36,000
20-yr Lifespan:	\$36,000 x 20 yrs. = \$720,000

In keeping with the collaborative approach of the Legacy Well Initiative, LMP fire services would have the ability to train on the grounds with no cost, beyond materials

required by each individual service. At present the LMP fire services and the Elgin-Middlesex Regional Fire School must pay to utilize a training ground outside of Elgin County to facilitate this type of training. For the Fire School alone, these costs would result in approx. \$50,000 over the lifespan of the equipment (2024 pricing).

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Serving Elgin	Growing Elgin	Investing in Elgin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensuring alignment of current programs and services with community need. <input type="checkbox"/> Exploring different ways of addressing community need. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engaging with our community and other stakeholders.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning for and facilitating commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural growth. <input type="checkbox"/> Fostering a healthy environment. <input type="checkbox"/> Enhancing quality of place.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensuring we have the necessary tools, resources, and infrastructure to deliver programs and services now and in the future. <input type="checkbox"/> Delivering mandated programs and services efficiently and effectively.

Local Municipal Partner Impact:

As mentioned, LMP fire services would have the ability to utilize the training ground with no cost to the municipality beyond those associated with each department’s training plan.

Having access to this type of training facility will benefit the LMPs, their fire services, and industries within each LMP in many ways:

- Ability to train in a capacity that is currently not possible within Elgin County.
- Significantly decreased cost for training without having to travel outside the County.
- Opportunity for more complex training scenarios for hazardous materials, live fire scenarios, and many others that will improve firefighter skill level and, ultimately, service to their communities.
- Collaborative training opportunities with other LMPs – strengthening capacity for multi-jurisdictional response.
- Opportunity for training with area industries that fire services are expected to work closely with to establish an effective response.

Communication Requirements:

At the time of this report, preliminary discussions have taken place with LMP fire chiefs regarding their support of the training facility. Key stakeholder meetings have been arranged. Communications among County Council, CAO's office, Emergency Management, Planning, Finance, and Engineering department have been established and are continuing.

Moving forward, further discussions with all key stakeholders will help determine details associated with the proposal and implementation of the project, as well as maximize funding and benefit for all municipalities within the County.

Conclusion:

It is recommended that County Council approve the submission of Year 2 and Year 3 application to the Legacy Wells Transfer Payment Program with MNRF for a joint fire training ground. With the support of the LMPs and that of the County, we can improve fire training across Elgin County for years to come.

All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Approved for Submission

Andrea Loughlean
Manager of Emergency Management &
Elgin-Middlesex Regional Fire School

Blaine Parkin
Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk