

Fire departments to serve as first-responders

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The result, presented to council Dec. 20, is that all municipalities except Leamington will now have fire departments serve as first-responders to most emergencies.

Before, fire services were sent only if ambulances were delayed.

During the meeting, Charlton thanked Brian Bildfell, director of land ambulance services for the County of Essex, but expressed disappointment

about Leamington's "dangerous" decision not to partake in the recommended changes.

"Lives aren't something to be played with," Charlton said. "No municipality can escape that reality."

Leamington Deputy

Mayor Rob Schmidt said the municipality just finished a master fire plan study that looked at risks in the community and included input from the Ontario Fire Marshall's Office.

"The best way to service our residents is to have the

best possible fire service and EMS and not to mix and match," Schmidt said. "We have a system that works in Leamington. It might not work in other places."

The Ontario Central Dispatch Communications Centre will put the new tiered

response system in place by January, Bildfell said.

Essex Mayor Ron McDermott said he is "on board" with the new system and is expecting Essex fire chief Ed Pillon's report to be presented to council at their meeting Jan. 8.

Council to review costs of town name change

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Timmins said that although he was in support of the recommendation, changing the name of the municipality would "do very little."

"It's just like changing dressing on a wound," He said. "People are very set in

Province pumps \$1.2 million into Essex

The McGuinty government announced last week it is providing the Town of Essex with \$1,239,725 in provincial funding through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, said MPP Bruce Crozier.

The province is providing \$824 million in OMPF funding to 397 municipalities in 2007. This represents a \$61 million or 8 percent increase over OMPF funding announced last March.

Grant parameters under OMPF are also being expanded to give municipalities additional social program support. In addition, no municipality will see revenue losses in 2007. Those that are projected to see lower funding in 2007 under the OMPF will receive additional assistance to ensure that their funding remains at the level announced last March.

The OMPF assists municipalities with their share of social program costs; supports areas with limited property assessment; addresses challenges faced by northern and rural communities; and responds to policing costs in rural communities.

"It is encouraging for the Town of Essex to know that the provincial support through OMPF is designed to be flexible enough to respond to the needs of our local programs," Crozier said. "(They) are essential to the health of the community."

their ways."

Timmins, who represents Harrow, said any real resolution to the north-south rift would come only with a restructuring of the municipality.

Deputy Mayor Richard Meloche said the previous council looked at considering a name change, but didn't follow up on it because a rough estimate proved to be too costly. In November 2005, council was advised that it would cost about \$50,000 to change the legal name, road signs and town

stationery.

At the end of last week's meeting, council agreed to embark on a municipal name change study to determine the costs.

"Confusing" road signs

Ward 4 Councillor Peter Timmins told council Dec. 18 the municipality's road signs are "very confusing" and should be updated to help direct tourists to such areas as the local wineries.

"It'll help the identity of the smaller areas and help people to get to where

they're going," agreed Ward 3 Councillor Paul Innes. "Right now, the signs don't stand out and people don't recognize them."

Golden Arches planned for Essex

Plans are underway for the construction of a McDonald's restaurant near the corner of Maidstone Avenue and Talbot Street in Essex.

Town Planner Chad Jeffery told council a one-acre plot of land has been

allotted for the fast-food restaurant, with a 12-car capacity parking lot with handicapped spaces and a ramp approved by the Essex Accessibility Committee.

A tentative starting date for construction has been set for late 2007.

Kudos to the Essex Area Food Bank

Ward 1 Councillor Randy Voakes presented Eileen Clifford, founder of the Essex Area Food Bank, with a cheque for \$5,000 on

behalf of the Canadian Auto Workers Local 444.

Voakes read a letter from CAW Local 444 president Ken Lewenza that addressed Clifford's efforts and thanked her for being an "angel".

"We have a lot of working poor," Clifford said after accepting the donation. "They don't have enough money to eat and live. I'm very grateful for your support."

Clifford said the food bank feeds about 1,500 people every month.

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