

PW may drop \$10,000 Petrolia arena payment

Heather Wright
The Independent

Plympton-Wyoming is considering dropping the “antiquated” practice of providing neighbouring municipalities cash to maintain their arenas.

The issue came up as the town began budget deliberations Jan. 18. Plympton-Wyoming administrators presented a \$17.6 million operating and \$9.35 million capital budget which would require a four per cent increase in municipal taxes, a \$27.18 increase for every \$100,000 of assessed value of a home.

Two of the items which caught the attention of councillors in the first night of deliberations were two \$10,000 grants – one to Petrolia, the other to Lambton Shores – for the use of the arenas. In three of the past four years, the town has contributed \$10,000 to each municipality in recognition of Plympton-Wyoming residents using the local arenas.

CAO Adam Sobanski said the municipality provided the money for the upkeep of the arenas because the town did not have a facility of its own, forcing residents to go to other communities. For many years, Petrolia asked for the cash based on the number of Plympton-Wyoming residents at minor hockey or figure skating. Several years ago, Sobanski said,

an agreement was reached to provide \$10,000 yearly instead. That agreement is in place until 2026.

Councillor Mike Vasey was the first to voice concerns about it, calling the concept “antiquated.”

“We have a boat launch now that costs us money; and I don’t see our neighbouring municipalities sending money our way when it comes to ball parks, volleyball nets,” he said. “People from Corunna come here for baseball and I’ve never seen a check from Corunna.”

Vasey said the money would be better spent in Plympton-Wyoming where the need is growing. The parks budget in Plympton-Wyoming is up 16 per cent, mostly because the town has taken over two parks - Highland Glen and McEwen Park from the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority.

Vasey says in the long run, each municipality sees residents from neighbouring communities using their services. He says municipalities should take the attitude of “You’ve got what you’ve got, we’ve got what we’ve got; you pay for what you’ve got and we’ll pay for what we’ve got.”

Many on council agreed with the sentiment and directed administration to find the agreement with Petrolia so the issue could be revisited Jan. 25.

WINTERY WALK



Leslie Klompstra of Corunna takes her dogs, Quilla and Stella for a walk through Lorne C. Henderson Conservation Area near Petrolia Tuesday in the snow. Klompstra comes to the park once a week and enjoys the many kilometres of walking trails.

Lambton College likely to lose tens of millions as international student visas capped

Heather Wright
The Independent

The federal government’s plan to curb the big business of international student education will have a big impact on Lambton College.

Lambton College officials are still assessing what new federal rules for international students will

mean. While the college’s Interim Senior Director of Community Engagement, Marilyn Mason, did not offer any details, it’s clear the college stands lose tens of millions of dollars in revenue.

Monday, the federal government announced a two-year cap on international student permits. Up to 800,000 people made their way to Canada in 2023 on student

visas, the federal immigration minister said, causing concern about the quality of education and the impact the students were having on the tight housing market.

In 2024, 360,000 visas will be permitted across the country, the immigration minister said. Provinces will receive permits based on population. The number of student visas in Ontario will be cut in half.

The provinces will determine how the permits will be distributed among colleges and universities.

Whatever is decided, Lambton College will see a dramatic drop in students and the revenue they bring. Statistics from the Ministry of Colleges show Lambton has the fifth highest number of international students in the province on its four campuses. Between

Jan. 2022 and April 2023, there were 13,246 student visas approved for Lambton College students in Sarnia, and its campuses in Ottawa, Mississauga and Toronto. Lambton has partnerships with St. Paul University in Ottawa, and two private career colleges Queen’s and Cestar College in the GTA.

SEE LAMBTON PG 2

Heritage Open House

Saturday, February 17, 2024
11:00-4:00pm
Victoria Hall, 411 Greenfield St.

All Things Petrolia

Bring your artifacts to be photographed by Petrolia Camera Club.
Document scanning & family searches - bring your paper memorabilia.
Displays of Petrolia Churches & Schools, and from local historians.

Lambton could lose big as international visas cut

CON'T FROM PG 1

The college’s 2023 annual report says it plans to attract 4,524 international students and about 3,950 domestic students this school year, up 3.2 per cent over last year.

But with the federal announcement on international visas, those numbers are likely to plummet along with the revenue which comes with them.

International education and the licensing agreements with other private colleges which provide services to international students for Lambton, generates more than 52 per cent of the college’s annual revenue according to board reports and the 2023 audited financial statements.

International student fees can be nearly quadruple what domestic students at Lambton pay depending on the program of study.

For example, a Lambton County resident would pay just over \$8,000 for a two-year course called Instrumentation & Control Engineering Technology - Industrial Automation. An international student would pay \$32,674.58 tuition for that same program.

With over 4,500 international students at the Sarnia campus alone, that translates into huge money.

The college generated \$76.76 million in revenue from international education – \$31.5 million in 2023 up from \$25 million in 2022 – and the licensing agreements it has with private career colleges which cater to international students. They generated \$45.3 million in the fiscal year ending March 2023.

By comparison, the provincial government provides \$22.5 million in basic operating grants to the college. Lambton receives about \$12.5 million more through

grants for specific courses - such as apprenticeship programs - and federal and provincial grants for research at the college.

With an operating budget of \$130 million in that same time frame, Lambton was able to salt away about \$16 million for the capital projects the college is planning, including a new residence building for international students. The building, announced in 2022, will house 300 to 350 students and will replace the current residence with 140 double rooms. It’s slated to open in three years.

Mason tells *The Independent* in an email; “Currently, we are consulting with provincial colleagues to understand the new federal policies and their impact more fully on the college and our students. We hope to provide more insights soon.”

Ontario colleges have been calling on the province, as recently as November to increase its investments in community colleges. The province cut tuition in 2019 and it has been frozen ever since.

Colleges Ontario wants the province to lift that freeze allowing colleges to increase tuition by five per cent in the next school year. It also wants the province to chip in more money for operating the college.

Ontario’s public colleges currently have the second-lowest tuition in Canada. The average Ontario public college tuition is around \$2,700 per year for a full-time program.

The province also has the highest enrollment rate of international students leading to reliance on international student tuition to keep operations running, critics say.

Marriott says feds, province to blame for lack of housing

Cathy Dobson
For The Independent

Lambton County Warden Kevin Marriott says the blame for a lack of new affordable housing in Sarnia-Lambton lies squarely with the provincial and federal governments.

“I get mad,” he said, speaking on the phone from the annual Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference in Toronto this week.

“The political will is there at the county to build more affordable and supportive housing. We are definitely open to working with groups like Indwell (charity). We want to add 250 units in the next five to 10 years,” said Marriott who is Enniskillen Township’s mayor and chairman of Lambton County Council.

At a time when there’s a serious shortage of affordable housing and when homelessness is increasingly visible, Marriott said a lack of funding from upper tiers of government in Toronto and Ottawa is stalling new housing projects.

“There’s a lot of criticism because people on the outside think it should happen a lot quicker but, in my opinion, the higher the government level, the slower the response, and we definitely need help from both governments.”

Marriott said he is particularly frustrated with the federal government. He wrote the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure & Communities about new affordable housing last fall and received no response.

“This (Liberal) government doesn’t do much for this riding,” Marriott said. “It used to be everybody was treated the same but now it’s very evident that only sitting (Liberal) members hand out cheques.

“It’s so blatant and I’m so frustrated that 9/10 announcements are from Liberal MPs.”

He said he’s talked to Sarnia-Lambton Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu and “she is aware of it.”

On the provincial front, Marriott said he hoped profitable discussions will take place this week at the ROMA conference where a Lambton contingent was scheduled to meet with Ontario’s Deputy Premier, Health Minister Sylvia Jones.

Annualized operational funding for affordable housing is on the agenda for discussion, Marriott said.

Meanwhile, Lambton County has declared affordable housing its number one priority and set nearly \$3 million aside for it.

“We put an additional \$1 million into the fund last year and we are proposing another large increase for that fund in 2024,” said the warden.

“But it’s sitting there waiting to be spent because we don’t have (upper tier government) partnerships yet,” said Marriott.

“Three million dollars can only build about 15 units and that’s not practical.”

The county recently approved \$794,000 in “seed” money for five potential projects to help them get very preliminary work done, but no significant funding for a large new project has been approved for years.

A \$7-million affordable housing project being built by Lambton County on London Road called Maxwell Park Place is nearly two years behind schedule. It was approved in 2021 and 24 units were supposed to be ready by spring 2022. But now officials say it will likely be another seven to nine months before completion.

Marriott said he is aware that a grassroots group of local Rotarians and church leaders who want to build affordable housing, met last week at Grace United Church and invited Indwell.

Indwell is a well-established charitable organization that has successfully built supportive housing for 1,200 tenants in seven Southwestern Ontario communities. Representative July Ryan said her organization is “open to expanding to Sarnia” and has met numerous times with the local grassroots group.

“It’s moving along but the politicians and municipal staff need to be part of the conversation,” Ryan said. The county is responsible for all social housing in Sarnia and the rest of Lambton.

Attendance at the community meeting at Grace United Church greatly surprised organizers who anticipated 15 interested residents and had almost 100 there.

The strong turnout proves a lot of people care and are determined to find solutions to the housing crisis, said organizer John Barnfield.

“This has blown up. You can feel the energy and passion in this room,” he said. “We’re going to build on this.”

Marriott wasn’t at that meeting but Deputy Warden and Sarnia City Councillor Brian White was.

Several times, he was called on to defend the county’s lack of funding projects.

“I think the political will is changing,” White told the crowd. “And I think the administration (bureaucrats) is coming along. I’m not being negative when I say that, but the wheels turn slowly and it takes time to change direction.”

White told the crowd to keep up the pressure.

“Keep demanding better of us,” he said. “The more pressure you put on certain councillors who have a whole other view of what poverty is, the better.”



TOWNSHIP OF WARWICK Student Summer Employment Opportunities

Position Requirements for both postings:

- Full time student in the past academic year and returning to full time studies in the fall of 2024
- Completed their 2023/2024 school term
- A valid Ontario driver's license (Class G of G2) preferred
- Be between 15 and 30 years of age
- Be able to work days, weekends and weeknights during the period of April 21 to August 26th, 2024 (Dates subject to change)

Parks and Recreation Labourers (up to 2 positions)

Position Overview:

This position is responsible for maintaining and day-to-day operation of the East Lambton Community Complex (formerly the Watford Arena), Warwick Community Hall and the Townships outdoor recreation facilities including baseball diamonds, picnic pavilions, gardens, open greenspace and parks. The position is front facing and will work directly with the general Public and will provide event support.

Parks and Recreation Labourers will assist with grass and grounds maintenance, cleaning and setting up facilities, special events, watering flowers and supporting summer programming. Successful candidates will work 30 to 40 hours per week including weekdays, evenings and weekends.

Application Deadline: Monday, February 19, 2024

How to Apply:

Interested applicants are asked to apply online at www.lambtononline.ca/jobs and select **Job # JO124-0799** The deadline to apply is **Monday, February 19, 2024**. The Township of Warwick has partnered with the County of Lambton to advertise this job opportunity. The job description can be found in the job posting from the link above.

Parks and Recreation Summer Programming Support & Labourer (1 position)

Position Overview:

This Summer Programming Support position is responsible for day-to-day operations of the East Lambton Community Complex (formerly the Watford Arena), Warwick Community Hall and the Townships Recreation facilities including baseball diamonds, picnic pavilions, gardens and parks.

The Summer Programming Support position is front facing and will work directly with the general Public in providing quality customer service and also will provide Community event support too the Townships Canada Day festivities, and many other community events.

This position will also act as a coordinator with the Townships Youth Baseball and Youth Ball Hockey summer programming.

This position will assist with grass and grounds maintenance, cleaning and setting up facilities, watering flowers and summer programming support. Successful candidates will work 30 to 40 hours per week and required to be available during evening and weekends.

Application Deadline: Monday February 19, 2024

How to Apply:

Interested applicants are asked to apply online at www.lambtononline.ca/jobs and select **Job # JO124-0801** The deadline to apply is **Monday, February 19, 2024**. The Township of Warwick has partnered with the County of Lambton to advertise this job opportunity. The job description can be found in the job posting from the link above.

Questions regarding these opportunities should be directed to:

Ryan Chamney, Manager
Parks, Recreation & Facilities
Township of Warwick
Email: rchamney@warwicktownship.ca

Job Board: www.lambtononline.ca/jobs

We thank all applicants for their interest, however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted. The Township of Warwick is an equal opportunity employer. The Township of Warwick provides reasonable accommodations throughout the hiring process. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request throughout the hiring process as required under the Township of Warwick's policies and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, personal information is collected under the authority of the Municipal Act, 2001, and will be used for the purpose of candidate selection.

www.warwicktownship.ca