



SYMPHONY'S FINAL FOUR

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The provincial and federal governments have set aside \$8.8 billion to cover housing-related infrastructure costs in an effort to spur development. **DAN JANISSE**

City offers to slash development fees

Council hopes 70 per cent cut will put it at front of line for housing funds

TAYLOR CAMPBELL

In pursuit of nearly \$50 million in grants from senior governments, Windsor is prepared to slash the fees it charges developers by 70 per cent.

On Wednesday, city council voted unanimously to submit an "aggressive" application for funding from the \$8.8-billion Canada-Ontario Development Charge Reduction Program.

Although the program asks municipalities to slash build fees by between 30 and 50 per cent, Windsor has committed to reducing its development charges by 70 per cent — more than any other municipality in Ontario so far, according to city officials.

Why? The application-based funding "will be competitive," said Mayor Drew Dilkins.

"There are over 200 municipali-

ties in Ontario that collect development charges. This approval today ... ought to put us amongst the top of the heap."

Development charges are fees municipalities collect from developers and builders to pay for municipal infrastructure (roads, sewers, water lines, etc.) and services (libraries, public transit, and emergency services) to support growing neighbourhoods. Otherwise, existing taxpayers would bear those new costs, and property taxes would further rise.

Announced on June 1, the joint funding initiative between the federal government and Ontario will cover up to 90 per cent of costs for new housing-related infrastructure, as long as municipalities cut development fees for three years and pay for 10 per cent of their projects.

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MILLAR HOLMES-HILL

Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkins and Essex County Warden Hilda MacDonald are at odds over how to cover a funding gap that threatened services at a homeless centre in Leamington.

The county ultimately voted Wednesday to contribute \$70,000 in one-time funding to help prevent service reductions at the Essex County Homelessness Hub, while urging Windsor to match the contributions. Dilkins said the city does not have additional funding to chip in right now.

A report to county council flagged about \$140,000 in funding pressures that could affect operations at the homelessness hub in Leamington.

Natasha Sheeler, the county's director of health and community services, told council the shortfall stems in part from notification by the City of Windsor this spring that \$70,000 in federal Reaching Home funding would not be available for the 2026-27 fiscal year, leaving a gap in support for the overnight program.

To manage the pressure, administration proposed a temporary suspension of overnight services from July 1

to Sept. 1, a period staff identified as having lower demand.

"We recognize that there will still be impacts to individuals who rely on these services," Sheeler said.

Family Services Windsor-Essex (FSWE), which operates the hub, also identified an additional \$70,000 pressure tied to daytime operations and on-site security costs required to "maintain safe service delivery for clients, staff and community partners," the report said.

FSWE proposed reducing daytime hours from July 1 to Oct. 31, shifting from seven-day-per-week service to Monday-to-Friday operations from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., before returning to full seven-day coverage after the reduction period. The report said about 19 people per day would be affected by the loss of weekend daytime access, based on 2025 data.

Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkins said the county receives roughly 10 per cent of provincial funding allocated to the city — \$2.4 million out of \$25 million — but it only has about six per cent of the region's overall homeless population.

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