

Committee to Establish a Middlesex County Archives

Municipal Act and Responsibility

OFFICERS

Chair – Carol Small
proposedmiddlesexcountyarchive@gmail.com

Secretary – Bev Hughes

Archivist – Carolyn
Bart-Riedstra

MEMBERS

Ekfrid Community
Museum

Glencoe & District
Historical Society

Komoka Railway Museum

London & Middlesex
County Branch, Ontario
Genealogical Society

London & Middlesex
Historical Society

Lucan Area Heritage
Society

Middlesex Centre
Archives

Middlesex Centre
Historical Society

Mossley Post Heritage
& Citizenship Society

Strathroy Historical
Society

Wardsville Historical
Museum

Westminster Township
Historical Society

Representatives from all
Middlesex Communities

Legal Mandate

- ✓ Federal and Provincial Governments in Canada have mandated that public records be officially archived for legal, governance, and historical purposes.
- ✓ The division of records kept usually coincides with jurisdictional boundaries: Federal, Provincial, County, and Municipalities. (Library and Archives of Canada Act, S.C.2004).
- ✓ Ontario has further mandated that preserved public records be available to the public. (Archives Act, RSO 1990; Archives and Recordkeeping Act, 2006; Archives and Recordkeeping Amendment Act, 2019).
- ✓ The Ontario **Municipal Act 2001, S.O. 2001. C. 25 Section 254** further states that municipal offices must preserve certain documents and they are to be publicly accessible. Those records need to be adequately stored. It further indicates that municipal offices could deposit their records in an archives.

Many neighbouring Ontario counties have created their own archives to fulfill their legal obligations and to preserve important heritage materials. These include Elgin, Oxford, Huron, Perth, Grey, Bruce, Lambton, Haldimand, Wellington and more recently in 2020, Norfolk. Middlesex County has not done so yet.

Often records are not easily accessible due to the location of the records in the municipality. They are either stored off-site in another municipal structure or are not available for access to the public. Whether in digital or hard copy, records need to be accessible in a timely manner, especially when there are MFIPPA requests.

Environmentally controlled (EC) storage facilities are necessary for preserving records. The temperature must be 18-21 degrees Celsius, which is colder than an office environment. Relative humidity (RH) should be between 45-50%. If both elements are not met, mold can occur if humidity is too high, and paper can deteriorate if the temperature and RH are too low. Based on the surveys returned from the municipalities in Middlesex County, none of the records are in EC areas. A few municipalities indicated the records are stored in their community centres. While these facilities may have air-conditioning, the RH control is still an issue.

Even if municipal records are covered in Records Retention Schedules as per the Municipal Act 2001, S.O. 2001. C. 25 Section 253, some records have historical value that can be retained for researcher and/or historical value. When records no longer serve administrative value, they could still have cultural value for information. Less than 3% of municipal records are archival. While it might not be a lot, municipal records like tax assessment rolls, building plans, environmental assessments and other documents should be considered for placement in the Middlesex County Archives.