

Here are the highlights from the regular Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, Feb. 12.

- **Support for AMO-Endorsed Resolution:** Council approved a recommendation to endorse a private member's resolution that aims to protect taxpayers from higher property taxes caused by the effect of joint and several liability insurance on municipalities. The resolution was brought forward by Perth-Wellington MPP Randy Pettapiece and suggests implementing a comprehensive, long-term solution for municipalities by this June to address an alarming increase in insurance premiums due to rising litigation and claim costs. A letter distributed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario indicates there are two proposals under consideration, and the provincial Ministry of the Attorney General has asked the legal community for input. One is a modified version of proportionate liability that applies in cases where a plaintiff contributes to an accident, and the other considers a limit on awards so that a municipality would never be liable for more than two times its proportion of damages. AMO has supported the adoption of both measures and notes municipal governments have long advocated for reform because municipalities and property taxpayers are an easy target for litigation. It adds the "heavy insurance burden and legal environment is unsustainable for Ontario's communities." A letter of support for the resolution states "if this situation continues, the scaling back on public services in order to limit liability exposure and insurance costs will only continue." Debate on the motion is scheduled for Feb. 27 in the Ontario Legislature. For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.
- **Council Approves Funds for Appraisal:** Council has approved a recommendation to spend \$5,600 on the Lanark County portion of an appraisal of the CP rail corridor that extends from Smiths Falls to Mattawa. The appraisal is to be done in partnership with Renfrew County and Papineau-Cameron Township and is the next step in the ongoing discussions with CP Rail on the potential sale of the corridor. Renfrew County has taken the lead on the appraisal process. It has secured a \$40,000 grant for the \$69,000 project and has conducted a request for proposals to select an appraiser. The remaining cost is distributed based on the number of kilometres of rail corridor in each municipality. "The independent third-party appraisal will allow CP Rail to potentially receive a tax receipt for donated property," explained CAO Kurt Greaves. "Additional work going forward includes surveys, environmental assessments and bridge inspections." Decisions on further expenditures would come back to council for approval. For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.
- **Name Change for Emergency Service:** The Lanark County Ambulance Service will now be known as the Lanark County Paramedic Service. Council has endorsed a recommendation from the corporate services committee to proceed with the name change in order to recognize the profession of paramedicine and the services provided by the paramedics in Lanark County. Chief Ed McPherson said there have been dramatic changes to pre-hospital emergency medical systems over the years. He outlined several new programs related to stroke and heart attack, as well as increased medication administration and ability to provide effective pre-hospital emergency care. The change in title more accurately reflects the professional description of the service provider, and other ambulance services in Ontario have already changed their names. Chief McPherson noted there are few financial implications. A revised crest is being issued as part of the annual uniform expenditure, and changes to vehicle identification will be completed over the next several years as vehicles are routinely replaced. For more information, contact Rick Hannah, Emergency Services Coordinator, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1701.
- **Upcoming Meetings:** Economic Development, Feb. 19, 5 p.m.; Public Works, Feb. 19 (following Economic Development); Special County Council, Feb. 19 (following Public Works). **Regular County Council, Wednesday, March 12, 5 p.m.;** Community Services, March 12 (following County Council); Corporate Services, March 12 (following Community Services). For more information, contact 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.