

Here are the highlights from the regular Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, March 25.

- **Lanark Lodge Receives Accreditation:** Congratulations were extended to Lanark Lodge staff upon the news the long-term care home had received a four-year accreditation (2014-2017) with commendation. The Lodge underwent the process with Accreditation Canada in November. It is a voluntary two-part process, with the first part involving health-care organizations completing a self-assessment of their status and ability to meet a set of national standards on services and methods of operations. The second part is a peer review. Surveyors from outside of the organization visit and measure 314 standards, meeting with the home's governing body, senior management, staff, residents, families and community representatives. The Lodge participated successfully in 2008 and 2011 as well. "The commitment and collective participation to prepare for the Lanark Lodge accreditation review by county council, staff, residents, families and community partners resulted in a highly successful review for the home and Lanark County, for which we can be very proud," said Deborah Pidgeon, Lanark Lodge Director. Warden Keith Kerr congratulated Lanark Lodge staff for their hard work and commitment to residents. "Accreditation is highly regarded by families seeking placement for their loved ones." For more information, contact Deborah Pidgeon, Director of Lanark Lodge, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 7101.
  
- **Tax Rates and Ratios Approved:** Council has approved bylaws setting the 2015 levy amounts to be collected from ratepayers, as well as tax ratios and tax-capping provisions. In January, council passed its budget with a levy of \$30.7 million to be collected through the towns and townships. "Property values on average have increased through the assessment process, therefore the county's tax rate is slightly lower than last year, which results in a real tax increase in the county portion of the tax bill of well less than 1 per cent (0.7)," explained Kurt Greaves, CAO. Once the tax levy is established, council sets tax ratios, which distribute taxes between the various classes (e.g. industrial, commercial, residential). This done in consultation with local municipal treasurers. "The industrial tax ratio is no longer above the provincial average and the tax increase for that class is no longer restricted under legislation," Mr. Greaves said. "The recommendation is to subject industrial to the full increase in 2015." The treasurers also recommended adopting revenue neutral tax ratios, which ensures reassessment does not shift the tax burden between the various classes. Provincially mandated tax capping provisions, which establish tax protection for multi-residential, commercial and industrial classes, were unchanged from 2014. Mr. Greaves noted the number of properties affected by tax capping declines each year as re-assessment is phased in. The county portion is only one of three components on the tax bill, with the local municipality and education portion making up the balance. For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, County CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.
  
- **Expressing Funding Formula Concerns:** Council passed a motion to write to Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, outlining concerns about the ministry's approach to calculations for nursing and personal care funding and the continued shortfalls it causes. Lanark Lodge Director Deborah Pidgeon reported the issue dates back to 2009 when long-term care homes were mandated to transition to a new funding measure for nursing and personal care. One of the significant changes that resulted from this relates to the focus on special rehabilitation for residents in long-term care. The ministry put a cap in place that sets a maximum for this service. Ms. Pidgeon indicated there are concerns related to the currency of the data being used in the formula. The data is up to two years old, while the number of residents needing special rehabilitation is on the rise each quarter. For 2015, the calculation has resulted in reduced funding

for the Lodge, which is working to absorb through cost-saving measures. For more information, contact Deborah Pidgeon, Director of Lanark Lodge, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 7101.

- **Affordable Housing Plan Approved:** Council has approved a program delivery and fiscal plan for Affordable Housing and Investment in Affordable Housing up to 2020. The plan outlines how service managers use annual funding allocations over the life of the program. The objective is to “improve access to affordable housing that is safe, sound, suitable and sustainable for households across Ontario.” Lanark County’s total allocation for the next six years is \$3.3 million. There are five components to the program. The first three are for capital projects, including rental housing (building or converting new units), home-ownership (providing forgivable loans) and Ontario Renovates (a forgivable loan for repairs and rehabilitation projects). Two operating components include rent supplement for those who need assistance and the housing allowance, which is a subsidy paid to clients to help offset rental costs. In the past, Lanark County has invested in all five components. For this new cycle, Social Housing Manager Sandy Grey recommended an option that “provides relatively consistent funding to the Homeownership, Ontario Renovates and Housing Allowance programs.” She said that while developing new affordable housing units is important, the costs would sacrifice other programs. For more information, contact Sandy Grey, Social Housing Manager, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2401 or Nancy Green, Director of Social Services, at ext. 2101.
- **Housing and Homelessness Update:** Council received the annual report for the Social Services department’s Ten-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, which was implemented in January 2014 after wide-ranging research and consultation with stakeholders across Lanark County. It consists of seven priority areas, including increased access to housing, ending homelessness, working with non-profit housing corporations and cooperatives, working with the private market, coordination with community services, meeting a broad range of community needs, and environmental sustainability. Social Housing Caseworker Emily Hollington outlined accomplishments in 2014, including raising awareness of homelessness through a National Housing Day in Lanark County, a well-attended Attacking Rural Homelessness Forum, a community awareness event, the Raising the Roof Campaign and supports for homeless youth. She outlined the investments made in the affordable housing and Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative programs, as well as the establishment of the Lanark County Housing Coalition and the hiring of a caseworker. The county has been working with non-profit housing providers, has established partnerships with various agencies to assist vulnerable clients with rent subsidies and is showing leadership in energy conservation and greenhouse gas reduction. For more information, contact Sandy Grey, Social Housing Manager, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2401 or Nancy Green, Director of Social Services, at ext. 2101.
- **Upcoming Meetings:** Special Corporate Services (Strategic Planning), April 8, 2 p.m. **County Council, Wednesday, April 8, 5 p.m.;** Community Services, April 8 (following County Council); Corporate Services, April 8 (following Community Services). **County Council, Wednesday, April 22, 5 p.m.;** Economic Development, April 22 (following County Council); Public Works, April 22 (following Economic Development). For more information, contact 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502. Like "LanarkCounty1" on Facebook and follow "@LanarkCounty1" on Twitter!