

Here are the highlights from the regular Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, Nov. 22.

- **Implementing Advanced Care Paramedic Program:** Council has approved the gradual implementation of an Advanced Care Paramedic Program for the Lanark County Paramedic Service. In October, the corporate services committee received a report from LCPS Chief Ed McPherson and a presentation by Almonte General Hospital President and CEO Mary Wilson Trider, Dr. Richard Dionne and Dr. Alan Drummond. Ms. Wilson Trider explained there are three designations for paramedics in Ontario: primary care, advanced care and critical care (ORNGE). LCPS is designated as a primary care paramedic service. She explained advanced care paramedics have more training to transfer acutely ill patients to tertiary care centres, such as greater access to medications and procedures. She indicated it is expected recruitment and retention of staff will be improved for the service if individuals with advanced care training have the opportunity to put it into practice. Aging demographics and chronic medical conditions requiring interventions by paramedics when 9-1-1 is called were also cited as a challenge to be met by advanced care paramedics. Councillors heard the gradual implementation over a period of 5 to 10 years will reduce the financial impact on the county. “This process will allow the county to achieve a major improvement to the emergency medical care currently being offered to our citizens, while at the same time demonstrating the council’s commitment to making solid financial decisions in the best interests of the ratepayers in Lanark County,” the report notes. Like other services, LCPS would aim to have 50 per cent of its full-time staff certified as advanced care paramedics within the next 10 years. Ms. Wilson Trider said primary care paramedics would be paired with advanced care paramedics in each ambulance as the program is implemented, and internal opportunities for upgrading would be offered to staff. She said current staff will not be required to take the training and no jobs will be lost; with the gradual implementation, vacancies can be filled by advanced care paramedics over time. For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.

- **Concerns Expressed about Expert Panel Report on Public Health:** Council has passed a motion directing staff to request a meeting with Dr. Eric Hoskins, provincial Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, regarding the recently released “Public Health within an Integrated Health System: Report of the Minister’s Expert Panel on Public Health.” Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, made a presentation to the community services committee of the whole meeting last week about the report, which is currently out for consultation. Its mandate was to recommend “the optimal organizational structure for public health in Ontario,” ensuring accountability, transparency, improved capacity and equity, support for integration with the broader health system, and leveraging of public health’s expertise and leadership. It also recommended governance and staffing for the new structure. Dr. Stewart outlined several concerns with the report, including challenges that were identified as problematic for smaller health units that are not consistent with the local health unit’s experiences, such as problems retaining skilled personnel and a lack of collaboration with the broader health system. She explained the report proposes reducing the number of health units in Ontario from 36 to 14 and creating regional boards of health. Under the proposal, Lanark Highlands would not be part of the same region as the rest of the county. A CEO position would be created, which would change and minimize the role of the Medical Officer of Health. She said there would be implications related to legislation, funding and transition planning/change management, and that the Board is concerned about a diminished role for municipalities, as well as costs, potential job loss, splitting the health unit and the fact that good collaboration already exists. For more information, contact Leslie Drynan, Clerk, at 1-888-9-

LANARK, ext. 1502.

- **Portable Housing Benefit Framework Outlined:** Council received a report outlining a change to the Housing Services Act that gives municipalities and service managers the option to offer a new program called the Portable Housing Benefit to low-income households. The locally funded benefit is in addition to traditional rent-geared-to-income (RGI) programs. Sandy Grey, social housing manager, explained the portable benefits are tied to the resident, not the physical housing unit as with RGI. This means residents don't have to live in a dedicated unit and can take their housing benefits with them if their needs or preferences change. "Residents have more flexibility to choose where they live with the portable benefit." Ms. Grey added the portable benefit is reassessed annually based on tax returns, which means changes in income do not result in an immediate impact on monthly rent, which supports greater economic opportunities. "This will provide a more flexible and modern form of housing assistance. The intent is to create the foundation for an equitable, portable system of financial assistance that encourages social and economic inclusion." Ms. Grey added it may allow service managers to house people faster because they won't be limited to traditional housing stock. The benefit is calculated annually using income tax returns, but households that experience significant decreases in income or changes may request an in-year adjustment. Various programs provide for similar levels of rental assistance depending upon a family's circumstances. The portable housing benefit and rent supplement eliminate the need for capital investment in an asset. "Lanark County will be able to improve the diversity of housing options by reducing the number of rent supplements or physical units and utilizing the savings to fund some portable housing benefits," Ms. Grey said. For more information, contact Sandy Grey, Social Housing Manager, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2401.
- **Upcoming Meetings: Inaugural County Council, Tuesday, Dec. 5, 11 a.m. County Council, Wednesday, Dec. 6, 5 p.m.;** Community Services, Dec. 6 (following County Council); Corporate Services, Dec. 6 (following Community Services). **County Council, Wednesday, Dec. 13, 5 p.m.;** Public Works, Dec. 13 (following County Council); Economic Development, Dec. 13 (following Public Works). All meetings are in Council Chambers unless otherwise noted. For more information, contact 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502. Like "LanarkCounty1" on Facebook and follow "@LanarkCounty1" on Twitter!