

Here are the highlights from the regular Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, April 26.

- **Urging Provincial Action on Opioids:** Following a presentation earlier this month by Medical Officer of Health Dr. Paula Stewart at the community services committee meeting, council has passed a motion requesting the province to support a local strategy to address the escalating risk of opioid overdoses and deaths. The motion notes Ontario has witnessed increasing deaths over 13 years and that the regional coroner cited 24 opioid-related deaths between 2010 and 2014, as well as 7 suspected deaths in the past 12 months in this region. Individuals participating in the Leeds, Grenville Lanark Public Health Unit's harm reduction program have reported 23 non-fatal overdoses in the past six months. The motion notes prescribed opioids, such as morphine and fentanyl patches and other pills, are being diverted and sold illicitly, and that the nature of opioids is that increasing amounts are needed to get the same high over time, which leads to overdose and possibly death. The amount of fentanyl varies on patches, which leads to a higher risk of overdose. As well, fentanyl is showing up in many other street drugs, such as heroin, fake oxycontin pills, cocaine and crystal meth, and has been seized by police locally. The health unit is working with the community to develop a response to the opioid situation, is leading surveillance of the problem and is ensuring access to and education about naloxone, which can help to reverse respiratory failure from an overdose. It is also working with the community on the social determinants of health, such as poverty, unemployment, lack of social supports and inadequate housing, which can negatively affect the health of individuals and communities, as well as addressing the underlying root causes of substance misuse. In October, the province announced it would be looking at multiple sectors to address the issue, including physician prescribing, overdose monitoring, opioid prescription monitoring, and enhancing harm reduction and addiction services. The county is asking the province to enhance the local response by ensuring all first responders, including police and fire, have access to provincially funded naloxone kits and training, particularly because rural volunteer firefighters are often the first on the scene of an opioid overdose. It also asks that places that support vulnerable people in the community have access to publicly funded kits and training, that a provincially funded education campaign take place, and that additional funds for addiction and mental health services be provided to assist treating people with mental illness in order to reduce or eliminate self-medication with opioids and to help people overcome opioid addiction. The motion is being widely circulated. For more information, contact Leslie Drynan, Clerk, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

- **Tax Rates and Ratios Approved:** Council has approved bylaws setting the 2017 levy amounts to be collected from ratepayers. In December, council passed its budget with a levy of \$32.5 million to be collected through the towns and townships. The net tax increase for the county portion of the tax bill in 2017 was 1.5 per cent. When the tax levy is established, council then sets tax ratios, which distribute taxes between the various classes (e.g. industrial, commercial, residential). This is done in consultation with local municipal treasurers, who recommended adopting revenue neutral tax ratios. "This will ensure reassessment does not shift the tax burden between the tax classes," said County CAO Kurt Greaves. He added the provincial Ministry of Finance has implemented some changes for 2017. "Municipalities can tailor a vacancy rebate program to reflect community needs and circumstances, while considering the interests of local businesses." The recommendation from the Lanark County treasurers was to retain the status quo on the previous 30- to 35-per cent rebate on commercial and industrial properties. The province is also reviewing the tax burden on apartment buildings and has frozen any multi-residential tax ratio greater than 2 per cent for this year. As well,

there is a new property tax and tax ratio for landfill sites this year, including municipal landfill properties. 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.

- **Cross-Border Ambulance Agreements Approved:** Council has passed by-laws authorizing the warden and CAO to sign cross-border ambulance agreements with the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and Frontenac County for a 10-year period up to Dec. 31, 2025. CAO Kurt Greaves updated the corporate services committee earlier this month. He explained the Eastern Ontario Treasurers Group first established a costing formula in 2006 for billing when an ambulance from one municipality picks up a patient across its border. The costing was updated in 2015/2016. "Every ambulance service is affected in different ways by the cross-border issue," Mr. Greaves said. "Cross-border response is always going to be necessary because political boundaries do not reflect the reality of response by the next closest ambulance, which is the best way to serve the public." He explained cross-border billing ensures equity for municipal taxpayers, who fund at least 50 per cent of the cost of ambulance service. "Ambulance dispatch is designed to be seamless across the province, and these agreements are essential to recognize municipal taxpayer equity." For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.
- **Lodge Succeeds at Securing Nurse Practitioner Position:** Lanark Lodge was notified in March that it has received funding for an attending nurse practitioner position as part of a program to bring the service to 31 long-term care homes in the province. In a report to the community services committee earlier this month, Lanark Lodge Director Deborah Pidgeon indicated each Local Health Integration Network is receiving at least two positions, and the Lodge was invited to submit an integration plan in November. Successful applicants had to show a projected or demonstrated gap in access to care, a need for quality improvement in areas that could be supported by the position, sustainable support for the position, and a caseload of up to 175 residents. The new position will collaborate with residents and families/caregivers and the Lodge's health-care team to develop, implement and evaluate the residents' plan of care. He or she will also provide leadership and mentorship to staff to enhance knowledge and assessment skills, and will lead and collaborate in research, education and evidence-based practice initiatives to optimize resident, long-term care home and health system outcomes. For more information, contact Deborah Pidgeon, Director of Lanark Lodge, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 7101.
- **Upcoming Meetings: County Council, Wednesday, May 10, 5 p.m.;** Community Services, May 10 (following County Council); Corporate Services, May 10 (following Community Services). **County Council, Wednesday, May 24, 5 p.m.;** Economic Development, May 24 (following County Council); Public Works, May 24 (following Economic Development). 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!