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Here are the highlights from the regular Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, March 24.

- **Seeking Action on Rail Line** – Discussion continues regarding the proposed shutdown of more than 300 miles of Canadian Pacific track between Smiths Falls and Sudbury. Council unanimously endorsed a motion by the County of Renfrew that followed a meeting of affected parties in Petawawa on March 11, where Councillor Al Lunney (Mississippi Mills Mayor) spoke on behalf of Lanark County. The motion calls upon the federal and provincial governments to commit to a funding program that will permit the economic viability of short-line railways, thereby maintaining valuable railway transportation infrastructure corridors. The motion indicates the loss of rail service from Smiths Falls to Sudbury would represent “a devastating economic impact to an area that has been severely impacted by the current economic recession” and suggests improvements are needed to “all transportation infrastructure to compete on a level playing field for community sustainability.” It notes Canadian taxpayers contributed substantial investments to establish this transportation infrastructure and that it is an environmentally responsible way to transport goods, particularly as energy and transportation costs rise. CP has already advertised its intent to sell the line. If it is not purchased by a private operator or a level of government, CP could begin dismantling it and selling the real estate as early as this fall. Mr. Lunney said it is critical that intensive follow-up on this motion take place, particularly at the federal level. “If we don’t follow up it’s going to happen,” he said. The resolution will be widely circulated to key municipal, provincial and federal players. For more information, contact Peter Wagland, County CAO, at 1-888-9LANARK, ext. 1101.
- **Addressing Evolving Long-Term Care Population** – Staff have been directed to write to the provincial health ministry and the Local Health Integration Network regarding potential safety concerns in terms of integrating complex psychiatric clientele amongst the frail elderly population in long-term care homes. This comes in light of the expanding gap in mental health services for elders residing in the homes, along with the changes to mental health services with the recent closure of psycho-geriatric beds at the Royal Ottawa Hospital in Brockville and the planned closure of beds in 2011 at Providence Continuing Care Centre in Kingston. Council heard the county’s long-term care home, Lanark Lodge, has sought to be responsive by training staff about specific approaches for this distinct client population. Recent favourable compliance reviews show the Lodge continues to work diligently to promote best practices in a long-term care climate where the complexity of resident care is evolving and has been proactive in seeking to safeguard its residents and staff. For more information, contact Deborah Pidgeon, Director of Lanark Lodge, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 7101.
- **Policy Approved for Service Levels on Roads** – Council has approved a compilation of 28 policies regarding service levels for a variety of operating and construction activities on county roads. Fourteen of the policies are mandated by provincial regulations for minimum maintenance standards. The rest are the result of work completed by a consultant as part of the county’s Transportation Master Plan project, which were then reviewed by public works staff and the committee. The policies include such activities as routine and winter patrolling, response to snow accumulation and ice, repairs, lighting, signage, traffic control system inspections, sidewalk and roadway surface maintenance, mowing and brushing, fleet maintenance, community safety zones, work on ditches and catch basins, and more. The policy is to be posted on the county’s website and will be provided to the public to respond to inquiries about levels of service. For more information, contact Steve Allan, Director of Public Works, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 3101.
- **County Stands By Affordable Housing Submissions** – The county is urging the provincial municipal affairs and housing minister to establish consistent ranking for affordable housing project submissions across the province. This follows a request by the ministry for the county, as the consolidated municipal service manager, to prioritize the applications already submitted. The county has declined this request, indicating any change to ranking criterion now, after applications had already been received and forwarded for consideration based on provincial requirements, could be perceived as unfair by bidders. “How can we now change the rules in mid-stream and still maintain the confidence of those who have submitted their applications?” writes Warden John Fenik (Perth Mayor). “Objectivity in these decisions should be transparent.” Council supported its original submissions and urged the ministry to consider each project on its own merits. For more information, contact Nancy Green, Director of Social Services, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2101.
- **Upcoming Meetings** – County Council, Wednesday, April 28, 7 p.m. Community Development, April 7, 5 p.m.; Public Works, April 7 (following Community Development). Community Services, April 14, 5 p.m.; Corporate Services, April 14 (following Community Services). For more information, call 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1501.