

Here are the highlights from the regular Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, Sept. 23.

- **County Seeks Funding Model Review for Long-Term Care:** Following an update from Lanark Lodge Director Jennie Bingley, council passed a motion to ask the province to consider a funding model review and appropriate funding increases for long-term care, and to send the communication to the province's Long-Term Care Advisory Commission. The motion notes that under the current, complex model, long-term care homes are subject to significant annual swings in funding that lead to reduced levels of care while resident care needs are rising. It proposes inflationary increases to base and supplementary funding envelopes to ensure services can be sustained, including additional funding to increase the provincial average of care to four hours per resident per day. At the community services committee meeting earlier this month, Bingley described insufficient and fluctuating nursing and personal care funding. Shortfalls between provincial funding and existing staff levels are covered by the county levy, and capital expenditures are not provincially funded. She said the administrative burden for funding is increasing and becoming more complex, while the actual dollars are decreasing. "The total actual provincial subsidy in 2019 was \$8,224,104, and the revised funding in January 2021 will be \$8,039,208, representing a 2 per cent decrease in total funding," she said. She said the Public Inquiry into the Safety and Security of Residents in the Long-Term Care System found staffing has not kept pace with medical needs of increasingly frail and elderly residents. It urged the ministry to move towards a minimum daily average of four hours of direct care per resident as quickly as possible, which would require funding support and a larger pool of trained staff. "Four hours per resident per day is not unrealistic considering most residents only enter long-term care when they are in need of 24/7 care," she said. "It will be impossible to reach the recommended hours without a significant increase in funding and a provincial strategy to support recruitment into long-term care, particularly for personal support workers." For more information, contact Jennie Bingley, Director of Lanark Lodge, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 7101.
- **Safe Restart Funding Allocated for Child Care:** Council passed a motion to allocate Federal Safe Restart funding for child care, which seeks to help the sector manage the drastic increase in costs for providing child care and early years services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the community services committee meeting earlier this month, Social Services Director Emily Hollington explained costs have increased due to smaller cohorts, reduced capacity, more staff, screening, personal protective equipment (PPE), minor capital projects to support distancing, the inability to share staff among cohorts, increased cleaning and more. The provincial Ministry of Education announced the funding in August, and Lanark County's allocation is \$732,669. The province will use the funds to procure and deliver face coverings to operators and licensed home child care agencies. Service managers, such as the county, will work with operators for additional PPE, enhanced cleaning, additional staff, support for short-term vacancies and minor capital costs. The committee recommended the funds be delivered using the current approved formula for distributing general operating funding, which consists of a points system for a variety of factors. Five per cent will be allocated to the contracted EarlyON provider and 10 per cent to administration. Licensed Home Child Care (LHCC) will receive a flat rate of \$175 per month for September through December per provider administered by the LHCC agency, and remaining funding will be allocated among contracted, licensed child care centres (approximately \$600,000) based on their percentage of pre-pandemic general operating funding. Any unspent funding after Dec. 10 will be reallocated based on need and the funding formula. For more information, contact Emily Hollington, Director of Social Services, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2101.

- **Fire Communication System Upgrade Approved:** Council has approved spending \$51,230 plus HST to upgrade a link within the fire communications system, and to undertake an independent third-party review of the radio network and a dispatch assessment to determine current and future capabilities and needs. The upgrade is to be funded from the emergency services reserve. At the corporate services committee meeting in August, Emergency Services Coordinator Garry Welsh explained radio link components within the system have been discontinued by the manufacturer, and replacement parts are no longer available. Recent repairs have depleted the spare link component inventory, but have ensured the system is stable and continues to operate as intended. “Further equipment failures could jeopardize communication between towers and affect the entire system until parts are replaced,” Welsh explained. The Lanark County fire chiefs have endorsed the upgrade. “Replacing one of the links with a newer unit will ensure uninterrupted operation of the system and provide flexibility for future upgrades.” The work is to be completed before winter, and remaining links can be replaced gradually to upgrade the entire system based on a multi-year plan. For more information, contact Garry Welsh, Emergency Services Coordinator, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1701.
- **Children’s Services COVID Response Outlined:** Council accepted a report by Children’s Services Manager Tammy Kealey-Donaldson regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the children’s services administered by the county from the time of the province calling a state of emergency to present. The closure period for all licensed child care and EarlyON centres stretched from March into early June, with EarlyON moving to full-time remote and virtual programming. Two emergency child care centres were opened to support health care and other frontline workers responding to the pandemic from April to June, which was 100 per cent provincially funded. Kealey-Donaldson outlined the range of precautions, including screening, physical distancing procedures, extra handwashing stations, and individual storage and toy packages. Emergency child care centres closed in June and licensed centres could choose to reopen under strict conditions. All licensed centres in the county chose to open with reduced capacity, averaging 35 per cent in the early phase, but EarlyON centres continued to operate virtually. Over the summer, cohorts could increase gradually, and EarlyON began to offer outdoor programming following health unit guidelines, with programs in Perth, Smiths Falls and Carleton Place. As of Sept. 1, child care centres and before/after school programs are permitted to operate at full capacity, and EarlyON is permitted to resume in-person programming, however strict provincial guidelines have made this a challenge for many programs. Kealey-Donaldson outlined the financial impact of the pandemic related to staffing, personal protective equipment, cleaning, reduced capacity/revenue, fee subsidies, increased administration, retrofits/renovations, individual storage, human resources support, increased recruitment and retention issues, and increased training costs. Challenges in the sector have included funding models, stringent health and safety measures, strict reporting and inspections, and limitations around staffing and the need to support families. “Lessons learned include the importance of child care to the overall economy for parents to be able to return to work. It is further confirmation of how dedicated and professional child care staff are in their efforts to provide service throughout, and it opened our eyes to a new way to offer service - virtually,” she said, acknowledging the resiliency of children during this crisis and the value of community partners. For more information, contact Tammy Kealey-Donaldson, Children’s Services Manager, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2301

- **Upcoming Meetings: County Council, Wednesday, Oct. 14, 5 p.m.;** Community Services, Oct. 14 (following County Council); Corporate Services, Oct. 14 (following Community Services). **County Council, Wednesday, Oct. 28, 5 p.m.;** Public Works, Oct. 28 (following County Council); Economic Development, Oct. 28 (following Public Works). Watch for details about public access to meetings on agendas and through online notifications. For more information, contact 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502. Like "LanarkCounty1" on Facebook and follow "@LanarkCounty1" on Twitter!

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