

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

June 7, 2023

Here are the highlights from the Lanark County Council meeting held June 7, 2023.

Vegetation Management Updates Presented: Council accepted an update on vegetation management plan activities that was presented at the recent public works committee meeting by Climate Environmental Coordinator Elizabeth Gallant.

Gallant indicated since the program began in 2016, the amount of spot spraying for wild parsnip has dropped dramatically and there has been no boom spraying since 2019, while hand removal of the noxious weed has increased significantly. This summer a crew of six summer students and one temporary full-time staff person will be pulling wild parsnip. "County forces are controlling wild parsnip by hand on 370 kilometres or 66 per cent of the county road system," Gallant said. "This is only feasible for very light wild parsnip infestations. Some areas will require targeted spot spraying of heavy wild parsnip patches."

Control of phragmites consists of monitoring and mowing with a remote-control mower two to four times per year in wet areas to prevent spread and seed production. New, young or small cells identified this year will be spaded by hand. A few dry cells may be selected for herbicide in the fall. "Herbicide control has been the only effective strategy to eradicate phragmites at dry sites," Gallant said.

Pollinator habitat restoration has consisted of passive restoration, such as reducing mowing along roadsides to allow for naturalization while removing invasive plants in order to open up space for native species. Active restoration includes seeding following wild parsnip removal, hydroseeding at construction projects, planting, and working in conjunction with the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) on a Monarch Habitat Restoration Project. Other activities have included workshops, education and awareness, tours and training, and participating in the Mayors' Monarch Pledge through the National Wildlife Federation.

Gallant said staff will monitor pollinator restoration projects to control invasive plants. Four different locations along County Road 1 (Rideau Ferry Road) have been tilled and seeded with native wildflower mix and mycorrhizae (fungi) to improve native plant growth. A new pollinator patch is being created on County Road 6 in partnership with CWF. For more information, contact Elizabeth Gallant, Climate Environmental Coordinator, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 3114.

Tourism Activities Outlined: Council accepted a tourism update presented by Tourism and Corporate Relations Coordinator Vanessa Dow at the recent economic development committee meeting. Dow outlined current projects, including a new Trails Map now available, updating the tourism website with a new look and focused content, continuing to support municipalities with \$5,000 toward their tourism projects, updating billboards for a more dynamic approach, and creating social media content and stories that build on existing themes to draw visitors.

Activities moving forward include ongoing collaboration with municipalities and partner organizations, developing publications; partnering with stakeholders to develop a consistent vision and narrative for



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tourism initiatives (branding and identity); and sharing resources by creating a cache of photos for use by partners and seeking other ways to combine efforts.

“This direction for tourism maintains alignment with the 2020-2025 strategic plan while adjusting for new information and collecting data for the next plan,” Dow said. “Lanark County Tourism will continue to provide supportive leadership in the tourism space, serving as a hub of information and amplifying the work of our partners.” For more information, contact Vanessa Dow, Tourism and Corporate Relations Coordinator, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1701.

EORN Plans Proceeding: Council received a report from Marco Smits, policy analyst for the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN), providing an overview of the organization and an update on the cell gap project at the recent economic development committee meeting.

EORN is a non-profit organization created in 2010 by the Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus (EOWC). It is dedicated to improving rural connectivity, supporting economic growth and enhancing quality of life, and helps to create innovative public-private partnerships to address the digital divide and support rural eastern Ontario communities. Phase 1 of the project was completed in 2015 and improved broadband service, and the cell gap project (Phase 2) is underway. Smits explained in Phase 1 was a \$175 million build with a \$260 million value. More than 5,500 km of new fibre was placed and 63 business parks and four First Nations reserves were connected.

He explained the current project is about fixing the gaps in the cellular networks in eastern Ontario. A business plan was submitted to federal and provincial governments in 2017 following detailed analysis. They committed support in 2019, and EORN launched a request for proposals in 2020, awarding a contract to Rogers in 2021. New tower construction began in 2022, and the first ones are now in service. Smits explained new towers are required to fill in the gaps to avoid dropped cell calls. “As vehicles move along a roadway, signal strength decreases the further you get away from the cell tower you are connected to. Unless there is another tower further up the road, your call will drop.”

EORN’s goal is to achieve 99 per cent coverage in eastern Ontario for cell phone calls, 95 per cent coverage for standard service level supporting email, web browsing and social media services, and 85 per cent coverage for high-definition service supporting video conferencing, movie streaming and more. The work is expected to be completed by 2025. The project aims to close coverage gaps, increase capacity, improve public safety (9-1-1) and municipal services (e.g., paramedics, public works), improve economic development opportunities and tourism experience, and build capacity for future deployment of fixed wireless and new technology roll outs.

Investment in the project includes \$150 million from Rogers, \$71 million each from the Ontario and federal governments and \$10 million from EOWC partners. Lanark County’s portion is \$581,851. Nine out of 10 tower upgrades in Lanark County have been completed, with one new build and 16 more planned, along with one co-location completed out of five planned. For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.

Vital Signs Report Presented: Council received the Lanark County 2023 Vital Signs Report presented by Perth & District Community Foundation Executive Director Victoria Gibb-Carsley at the recent economic development committee meeting.

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Gibb-Carsley explained Vital Signs is a community check-up designed to help decision makers. The last report was in 2017. The updated report focuses on collaboration and consists of themes such as health and well-being; children and youth; people at work; belonging, leadership and civic engagement; transportation; environment and nature; arts and culture; safety; housing; and wealth and income gaps. The report is informed by 2021 Census data from Statistics Canada, research projects conducted by local partners and a series of community consultations.

Gibb-Carsley said the county's population has increased by 13 per cent to 75,625 since 2011, and the median age (49) has risen by three years. She reviewed highlights in many of the themes, and said areas of need identified in the report include affordable housing, transportation options, basic income and living wages, mental health supports, affordable and accessible child care, support for community-based solutions, support to access arts and culture (especially rurally), and partnering with community organizations. View the full report at www.pdcf.ca. For more information, contact Jasmin Ralph, Clerk, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

Small Business Advisory Centre Updates Received: As part of its ongoing orientation, council received a report from Cindy James, Manager of the Small Business Advisory Centre, at the recent economic development committee meeting. The centre is a free, confidential resource to help local small businesses start and grow. There are 54 locations across Ontario that receive core funding from the province. The local centre is in partnership with Lanark County, Smiths Falls and northern Leeds-Grenville and has served the community for 35 years.

James explained the centre offers advisory services about business planning and referrals, and it hosts webinars/events, training and programs. It is the local service provider for Ontario programs such as Summer Company and Starter Company Plus. The latter is a competitive training program that has been running since 2017 with 75 successful grant recipients totalling \$375,000. The Summer Company program helps students to develop, plan and start up a full-time summer business with the help of a \$1,500 grant. Bi-weekly coaching is provided and those who complete the program are awarded an additional \$1,500. Since 2000, 82 students have completed the program locally.

James said the new Small Business Centre's www.sbcontario.ca hub connects the 54 centres and offers self-paced e-learning on a range of topics. Last year, the centre fielded more than 1,700 inquiries, conducted more than 350 consultations and offered 37 webinars/in-person workshops with more than 1,200 attendees. Learn more at www.smallbizcentre.ca. For more information, contact Jasmin Ralph, Clerk, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

Upcoming Meetings: County Council, Wednesday, June 21, 5 p.m.; Public Works, June 21 (following County Council); Economic Development, June 21 (following Public Works). **NOTE: There are no regular meetings in July. County Council, Wednesday, Aug. 2, 5 p.m.;** Community Services, Aug. 2 (following County Council); Corporate Services, Aug. 2 (following Community Services). 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!