

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

Council Sets 2021 Taxation Policies: Council has passed by-laws related to 2021 taxation policy, including tax ratios and levy apportionment to local municipalities. It also eliminates tax reductions for vacant and excess land subclasses as of Jan. 1, 2021, refunds the county's portion of landfill taxation to the local municipality and adopts provisions to reduce the number of capped properties in the county.

At the corporate services committee meeting earlier this month, County CAO Kurt Greaves explained the three areas of tax policy determined by council: the levy, tax ratios and capping. Council apportions the tax burden between the various tax classes, determines the levy from each local municipality and decides on the mandatory continuation of tax protection (capping) for the commercial and industrial tax classes. Council passed the 2021 budget in December with a levy of \$37 million and a net tax increase of 1.9 per cent, which is collected through the towns and townships.

In previous years, Lanark County treasurers have recommended maintaining revenue neutral tax ratios to ensure reassessment does not shift the tax burden between the classes. "This is not permitted in 2021 due to the reassessment deferral," Greaves explained, adding properties that did not have a physical change are the same valuation as 2020, meaning starting ratios would match revenue neutral in 2021 in most instances. Consequently, the same ratios are recommended for 2021.

Lastly, with no properties left in the capping program, the recommendation was to adopt all provisions available to eliminate capping by 2023.

The county portion of the tax bill is 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.

County Receives Third Phase of Social Services Relief Funding: Council has passed a motion to approve an investment plan for the third phase of Social Service Relief Funding from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing amounting to almost \$1.5 million.

The funds will be allocated as follows:

- \$360,000 for emergency shelter solutions (hotel/motel support, Victim Services after-hours support, continuation of COVID-19 isolation site)
- \$150,000 for housing with related supports (infection control supports for hostels)
- \$380,000 for services and supports (housing providers, food banks, service providers such as mental health/addictions/counselling, homelessness coordinator to action homelessness study recommendations)
- \$400,000 for homelessness prevention (continuation of rent bank/rent relief)
- \$161,750 for contingency to respond to changing demands

Manager of Housing Services Shawn Stone said staff conducted an internal analysis of the funds received in the first phase and how demands have been prioritized over the course of the pandemic in order to develop the plan for the third phase. "As with the first phase, these are operating funds to continue vital supports and services established to address the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable Ontarians up to the end of 2021," she said. This includes infection prevention and control measures in congregate care settings, ensuring stability in the homelessness sector by continuing current services and supports, and enhancing rental assistance to support households in rent arrears due to COVID-19. Three per cent of the fund is allocated to administration. For more information, contact Shawna Stone, Housing Services Manager, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2401.

Child Care Reinvestment Funding Allocated: Council passed a motion allocating almost \$248,000 in Child Care Reinvestment Funding among contracted, licensed child care centres using a general operating grant funding formula in place before the pandemic. The formula would provide additional points for before- and after-school program spaces. The remaining 10% of the funds would be allocated to administration.

In a report to the community services committee earlier this month, Data Analyst Specialist Emily Cassell explained the Ministry of Education identified under spending across the province that was available for reinvestment for January to March 2021 to support COVID-19-related pressures. Increased costs have included reduced capacity, physical changes to space, more staffing, enhanced cleaning and use of personal protective equipment. Revenues decreased for child care providers for before- and after-school programs due to school closures in January.

Providers will submit receipts by April 10 to be reimbursed up to their dedicated allocation. All unspent funds as of April 10 will be reallocated to centres demonstrating outstanding need. For more information, contact Emily Hollington, Director of Social Services, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2101.

Social Assistance System Transforming: At the community services committee meeting earlier in March, Director of Social Services Emily Hollington outlined preliminary information from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services around a planned transformation for social assistance.

Hollington explained the province's vision is to create a human services model to help people stabilize their lives before and after qualifying for social assistance. It would align and integrate supports across the system and support people in life stabilization. Administrative services such as the provision of financial assistance would be streamlined and uploaded to the province, while municipal service managers, such as the county, would focus on delivering person-centred casework, using knowledge of local community supports to provide activities that support people towards independence and employment.

Hollington explained service delivery has already changed due to COVID-19, with a great deal of time spent on administrative functions. "There are uncertainties about what economic recovery will look like for the most vulnerable and we must be ready to focus on supporting people back to employment, independence and stability."

Hollington noted social assistance “will become a tool in the caseworker toolbox, as opposed to the other way around” and will provide caseworkers the opportunity to focus on system navigation and understanding people’s needs beyond just employment. Hands-on support could include accessing primary health care, housing, child care, parenting and family supports, youth programs, digital access, tax filing, literacy/financial literacy, and mental health and addiction services.

The model is expected to be developed with municipalities and phased in over the next few years, starting with a co-design process this year and a detailed transition plan this fall, with full roll out anticipated to begin at the end of 2024. Details about funding and performance measures are to come. For more information, contact Emily Hollington, Director of Social Services, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2101.

Community Paramedicine Program Proceeding: Council has passed a motion authorizing the Lanark County Paramedic Service to proceed with capital purchases necessary for the implementation of the Community Paramedic Long-term Care Pilot Program.

This follows an announcement by the Ministry of Long-Term Care that Lanark County will receive up to \$3.23 million in one-time funding over four years to support seniors who are on the provincial long-term care waitlist or will soon be eligible for long-term care by providing them with community paramedicine services in their own homes.

Lanark County Paramedic Service Chief Travis Mellema reported to the corporate services committee earlier this month on program activities in 2020. Community paramedics performed about 25,000 COVID-19 tests at assessment centres, long-term care homes, pop-up testing clinics at schools and businesses, and in private homes. They assisted neighbouring paramedic services in conducting swab tests on more than 3,000 people. In 2020, 171 new clients enrolled in the program and 440 home visits were completed. They also were involved with administering influenza vaccines to clients.

Mellema called this a significant milestone. “It allows us to continue to carry on the community paramedicine program and to target people awaiting long-term care. We aim to reduce 911 calls, emerge visits, hospital admissions and delay entry into long-term care.” He thanked council for supporting the program. Councillors expressed their congratulations. Mellema said the program will be communicated to the public through media releases, and eligible people who are already on the list will be prioritized. The list will be fluid and evolving.

For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, County CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.

Upcoming Meetings: Special Community Services, April 14, 1 p.m.; **County Council, Wednesday, April 14, 5 p.m.**; Community Services, April 14 (following County Council); Corporate Services, April 14 (following Community Services). Special Community Services, April 28, 1 p.m. **County Council, Wednesday, April 28, 5 p.m.**; Public Works, April 28 (following County Council); Economic Development, April 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!

– 30 –