

Here are the highlights from the Lanark County Council meeting held Wednesday, Sept. 22.

Ceremony Planned to Recognize Truth and Reconciliation Day: Lanark County will be hosting a ceremony on Thursday, Sept. 30 to recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (National Orange Shirt Day).

Starting at 9 a.m., Lanark County Warden Christa Lowry (Mississippi Mills Mayor) will be joined by Larry McDermott, Ambassador of the Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation, as well as several representatives from organizations in the county that are working towards reconciliation.

The ceremony will be livestreamed through the Lanark County Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/lanarkcounty1>. (You do not need to have a profile to view the page.) For more information, contact Casey Whiticar, Deputy Clerk, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

Registry Week Activities Underway: Council accepted a report by Brooke Coutts, Homelessness Services Coordinator, outlining the point-in-time (PIT) count, homeless enumeration and by-name list provincial requirements that must be completed by the county for 2021.

In a presentation to the community services committee earlier this month, Coutts explained the PIT count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness that takes place on a single night. The enumeration piece involves gathering information about the demographic characteristics, circumstances and needs of those experiencing homelessness in local communities. The by-name list is a real-time, consent-based list of all known people experiencing homelessness. "It includes a robust set of data points that support the coordinated access and prioritization at a household level and an understanding of homeless inflow and outflow at a system level," she explained.

The activities are part of "registry week," from Sept. 20 to 24. This involves help from close to two dozen community partners to collect data about those currently experiencing homelessness so that plans can be made to move them into permanent housing. Sept. 21 was PIT Count Day, and a survey is conducted all week. "The by-name list is with consenting participants and is an ongoing, committee-driven system to support coordinated access to services for homelessness," Coutts said. The committee consists of Lanark County Social Services, Lanark County Mental Health, Cornerstone Youth Services and Lanark County Interval House and Community Support.

Coutts emphasized involvement of community partners and encouraged people to reach out if they would like to complete a survey, which is available through Lanark County Social Services (call 613-267-4200 ext. 2408) and through various community agencies.

For more information, contact Emily Hollington, Director of Social Services, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2101.

COVID-19 Vaccination Policy Approved: Council has adopted a COVID-19 vaccination policy outlining the county's requirements with regard to vaccinations for employees and county councillors.

Interim Human Resources Manager Jennie Bingley explained the draft was released to all county staff and union representatives for feedback and comment. “The pandemic highlights the critical importance of public health measures and the employer’s obligation to provide a healthy and safe work environment for all employees and the residents, clients and public we serve,” she said, emphasizing the efficacy of vaccines in preventing serious illness and reducing transmission.

Bingley outlined employer responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, as well as the county’s commitment to providing a safe home for Lanark Lodge residents and safe and effective services for clients and the public.

Vaccination policies have been a requirement for long-term care homes since July 1, 2021 and, this month, the Ministry of Long-term Care will begin publicly posting home-level vaccination rates to “support transparency and respond to requests for more detailed information about vaccination rates in the long-term care sector.”

In addition, municipalities have been directed to implement policies effective Sept. 7 in certain high-risk settings, including children’s services and developmental support services. This is in addition to the provincial proof of vaccination requirements that commence Sept. 22 for access to certain businesses and settings.

Bingley indicated the Residents’ Council and Family Council at Lanark Lodge have requested a mandatory policy for the home, and she noted five of the largest for-profit long-term care home chains have implemented such policies.

The county’s policy requires mandatory vaccination for long-term care and other designated staff working with vulnerable populations (approximately 250 employees) and sets out exemption and antigen testing requirements and consequences for non-compliance. As of Sept. 20, almost 90% of employees at Lanark Lodge were fully vaccinated. For remaining county employees not in the designated category, vaccination is voluntary but encouraged, and if proof of vaccination is not provided, rapid antigen testing and completion of an education program are required. Vaccination rates for that staff group are not known.

“The policy takes a reasonable approach towards the implementation of mandatory vaccination while protecting the most vulnerable individuals we serve – Lanark Lodge residents,” Bingley said. “It allows some flexibility in that non-designated employees can choose vaccination or rapid testing/education, and it complies with existing provincial directives.”

For more information, contact Jennie Bingley, Interim Human Resources Manager, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1320.

National Childcare Funding Resolution Supported: Council has supported a resolution from the City of Ottawa asking the provincial government to eliminate proposed cost-sharing funding changes in the child-care sector, while reaffirming support for building a national child-care program to help with pandemic response and recovery while benefiting families, children, social well-being and the economy.

The resolution points to federal funding announced in the spring for Early Learning and Child Care and Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care to move towards a universal child care system, and highlights support for a national program that would increase access, affordability, quality and responsiveness. "A national program has the potential to make significant positive impacts and address issues that families and service providers face, both historically and those further exacerbated as a result of the pandemic."

In its request to eliminate the proposed cost-sharing funding formula with municipalities, the city indicates the service system manager responsibilities have drastically increased due to the pandemic in addition to regular system management under provincial legislation and guidelines.

For more information, contact Emily Hollington, Director of Social Services, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2101.

Municipal/Indigenous Relations Steps Approved: Following a presentation at the community services committee meeting earlier this month by the Indigenous Health and Well-being Working Group of the Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) Advisory Committee, Lanark County Council has passed motions related to building municipal/Indigenous relations.

The presentation was a follow-up to discussion held at the county in June in light of the finding of unmarked graves at residential schools and the historical and current impacts of this legacy and inter-generational trauma facing Indigenous peoples. The working group is made up by CSWB co-chairs Elder Larry McDermott and OPP Insp. Karuna Padiachi, as well as Warden Christa Lowry (Mississippi Mills Mayor), Councillor John Fenik (Perth Mayor), Lanark County Interval House Executive Director Erin Lee and CSWB Coordinator Stephanie Gray.

Council supported in principle for the working group to create a work plan that would facilitate a better understanding of healing and reconciliation efforts required. It also passed a motion to widen the vision for the Climate Action Committee and Official Plan process to include Pathways 1 recommendations and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, along with participation and involvement by the Indigenous communities. The third motion was to support and commit to education and training as a Council and as individuals in order to create action in the community.

The working group provided suggested short- and long-term goals around land acknowledgment, education/training, land-use planning, increased understanding around the Calls to Action and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, a possible endowment fund, a video, and equity, diversity and inclusion activities, all of which it indicated could form part of the work plan.

The work also supports activities in the Indigenous Health and Well-being section of the Community Plan for Safety and Well-being, approved by local municipalities. Updates will be brought back to council as work continues. For more information, contact Leslie Drynan, Clerk/Deputy CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

Upcoming Meetings: County Council, Wednesday, Oct. 13, 5 p.m.; Community Services, Oct. 13 (following County Council); Corporate Services, Oct. 13 (following Community Services). **County Council, Wednesday, Oct. 27, 5 p.m.;** Public Works, Oct. 27 (following County Council); Economic Development, Oct. 27 (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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