



MEDIA RELEASE

***For immediate release
Sept. 28, 2022***

Here are the highlights from the Lanark County Council meeting held Sept. 28, 2022.

RGI and Affordable Housing Report Received: Council received an information report outlining aspects of the Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) and Affordable Housing programs and highlighting progress made by Lanark County.

At the community services committee meeting earlier this month, Social Services Director Emily Hollington explained the Lanark County Housing Corporation (LCHC) maintains a 10-year asset management plan for its 517 units, and more than \$2 million was approved for ongoing maintenance and capital repairs in 2022. Under the provincial Community Housing Renewal Strategy, service managers, such as the county, cannot currently sell old and inefficient units to reinvest in new, more appropriate units at this time.

Provincial legislation affects service delivery. The Housing Services Act and its regulations set out eligibility and rent calculation for RGI, and provide provincial oversight and policy direction for community-based planning and delivery of housing and homelessness services. The Residential Tenancies Act outlines residential landlords' and tenants' rights and responsibilities. Eligibility for RGI is prescribed in a regulation that sets household income limit for the size of unit the household occupies and the areas where the unit is located. There are specific amounts regulated for Lanark County. Another regulation requires municipalities to establish an RGI asset limit, which is set at \$100,000 in the county. Assets that are exempt include such things as vehicles and Registered Education Savings Plans. Other regulations set out additional eligibility criteria, the actual rent calculation formula, and specific exceptions. The waitlist administration is prescribed by the province, with priority given to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. There is an appeal process regarding waitlist decisions and processes for complaints.

Hollington provided examples of reasons people cease to be eligible for RGI housing. "Some tenants flow in and out of eligibility due to their employment income," she said, adding the extreme lack of housing availability means tenants have been unable to move into market units, which has prompted the county's Municipal Tools to Support Affordable Housing report.

"A landlord cannot evict a tenant because they no longer qualify for RGI," Hollington said. "Evicting a tenant due to income increase or decrease is discriminatory. Landlords can start charging market rate if a tenant is no longer eligible for RGI. We want our tenants to be successful; creating homelessness is not a solution for anyone."

Under the Affordable Housing program, rents are below average market rate, but are much higher than RGI rent rates. For affordable units, ongoing eligibility is not considered once a household is accepted. Asset limits are higher because the rents are higher. RGI tenants come from the centralized waitlist, but landlords can screen tenants in the Affordable Housing program.



MEDIA RELEASE

“The county’s mandated service level standard is to provide 771 units, and this is achieved through the portable housing benefit, rent supplement, non-profit housing providers and the Lanark County Housing Corporation,” Hollington said. “The county has added 120 units to the service level standards/affordable housing since 2018, and we will meet our service level target for the first time in 2023.” For more information, contact Emily Hollington, Director of Social Services, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2101.

Affordable Housing Grant Program Moves Forward: Council has approved a new Affordable Housing Capital Grant Program, with a funding recommendation to be part of the 2023 budget deliberations.

At the community services committee meeting earlier this month, Social Services Director Emily Hollington explained the grant would be implemented for the county and Smiths Falls beginning in January and is one of the recommendations in the county’s Municipal Tools to Support Affordable Housing Report, which was adopted in the spring and contains 44 actions. Action 28 recommends developing an incentive program to encourage development of affordable rental housing.

The grant program is designed to help cover capital costs associated with new construction, rehabilitation to increase or prevent loss of stock, conversion, addition to existing buildings or units, redevelopment and secondary suites or additional residential units. It would take the form of a forgivable loan registered on title of up to \$25,000 per unit of affordable housing created. The program would be 100 per cent municipally funded, and Hollington has suggested an initial investment of \$100,000, which will be determined during budget deliberations. For more information, contact Emily Hollington, Director of Social Services, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2101.

Planning Tools for Affordable Housing: Council has approved actions detailed in the planning component of the Municipal Tools to Support Affordable Housing Report.

In a presentation to the community services committee earlier this month, County Planner Julie Stewart provided background from the planning perspective and said many actions will be implemented through the update to the county’s Sustainable Communities Official Plan (SCOP). Her report focused on short-term implementation guidelines.

Among the actions for policy and regulations are adding a policy to include the recommended definition of affordable housing, encouraging member municipalities and Smiths Falls to develop housing targets and include them in their official plans, and developing and implementing a monitoring process for the annual housing targets. Other actions focus on conforming with provincial legislation with official plan and zoning by-law updates related to additional residential units on lots, along with policies and guidelines to permit at least one additional unit on partially or un-serviced lots.

For funding recommendations, actions include revising SCOP policy to include a reference to affordable housing with regard to community improvement plans, and to encourage municipalities to

MEDIA RELEASE

ensure additional residential units are exempted from local development charges to conform with provincial legislation.

Staff will prepare a letter to municipalities including the recommended actions and encouraging local official plan policy updates from the report, as well as holding a meeting with local municipal planners and reporting back to the county's Planning Working Group. For more information, contact Julie Stewart, County Planner, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1520.

Revised Plan for Early Years Funding Approved: Council has approved a revised 2022 Child Care and Early Years Workforce Funding Investment Plan to reflect adjustments in identified targets.

In a presentation to the community services committee earlier this month, Early Years Specialist Chelsey Coe explained the fund's objective is to sustain the existing child care and early years workforce to ensure a more stable and high-quality system, promote retention and recruitment, increase the number of staff in order to increase access to high-quality licensed child care and to attract and support an increasingly diverse workforce.

The \$472,363 allocation of workforce funding for 2022 is provided by the province and managed by the county. Coe explained \$275,000 has been committed to a child care conference, training days, marketing, collaboration with Algonquin College Perth Campus on promotion and marketing, training on inclusion/diversity and human resources, and community events promoting early years.

"Funding was originally allocated to extending before/after care staff hours and paying Early Childhood Educator college tuition for those not eligible for provincial grants, but there was far less demand for these areas than anticipated," Coe said.

New targets include developing a professional learning strategy for eligible staff and mentorship opportunities, and to create a workforce capacity and innovation fund to support innovative recruitment and retention strategies. The revised investment will include enhancements to the child care conference, training days and mentorship, as well as increased promotion and marketing. In addition, where priorities from workforce funding initiatives are met and excess funding remains, staff are authorized to redirect funding based on need within the professional learning strategy and workforce capacity and innovation fund. For more information, contact Chelsey Coe, Early Years Specialist, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 2306.

Numerous Resolutions Supported: Council endorsed several resolutions from other municipalities as part of two committee meetings held.

Resolutions from the community services committee included a motion from Kingston requesting increased and sustainable provincial funding for community-based sexual assault centres/organizations be supported for priority consideration by the provincial government and its agencies. A second resolution ask the Solicitor General, OPP Commissioner and Premier's office to make necessary changes to the Amber Alert system to create a new alert called the Draven Alert,

MEDIA RELEASE

which would protect vulnerable children who have not been abducted but are at high risk of danger, injury or death to alert the public they are missing. A third resolution asks for the House of Commons to support Private Member's Bill C-233, which will raise the level of education on domestic violence and coercive control for federally appointed judges.

From the corporate services committee, council agreed to provide a letter of support for a resolution requesting the province to acknowledge the shortage in all health care worker disciplines, including nurses, and to take steps to increase the number of practising physicians in Ontario. It also endorsed a resolution supporting the release of residential school documents pertaining to the Former Mohawk Institute Residential School by the federal and provincial governments and the Anglican Church. Council also agreed to provide a letter of support for a funding application for the Clyde River Flood Plain Mapping project by the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority.

All resolutions will be widely circulated. For more information, contact Jasmin Ralph, County Clerk, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

Seeking Direction on School Bus Stop Arm Camera Program: Council has approved a motion directing the warden to approach the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus to discuss a coordinated approach to the school bus stop arm camera program, and to report back to council prior to the conference delegation deadlines for the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and Ontario Good Roads Association conferences.

In a presentation to the corporate services committee earlier this month, Clerk Jasmin Ralph explained Ontario passed legislation in 2020 to permit the installation of cameras on school buses to capture images of vehicles that pass a bus while it is stopped with lights flashing and the stop arm extended. Images can be used as evidence of the offence, with the registered owner of the vehicle being subject to a fine and receiving a ticket by mail. The stop arm's purpose is to halt traffic in both directions, creating a temporary cross walk.

It is up to municipalities, however, in cooperation with school boards, to implement the camera systems. In December 2021, the Upper Canada District School Board passed a motion encouraging municipalities to implement the system.

Ralph outlined challenges with the program, including clarity of roles between multiple partners (school boards, bus companies and other transportation services, municipal staff at various levels), as well as boundary issues and third-party equipment and/or service providers. The municipal role is unclear, she said, and may involve contracts with the OPP. A lack of data means it is difficult to establish if all or part of the fleet needs to be equipped, and what boundary implications are involved when vehicles cross borders. As well, the impact on the provincial offences system and county staff is unknown, and could involve putting an Administrative Monetary Penalty System for automated enforcement offences.



MEDIA RELEASE

“While the benefits of the school bus stop arm camera are immeasurable – assisting in keeping children safe on our highways – the program is very complex,” Ralph said, noting no upper tier government in eastern Ontario has adopted the system yet. For more information, contact Jasmin Ralph, County Clerk, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502.

Upcoming Meetings: County Council, Wednesday, Oct. 12, 5 p.m.; Community Services, Oct. 12 (following County Council); Corporate Services, Oct. 12 (following Community Services). **County Council, Wednesday, Oct. 26, 5 p.m.;** Public Works, Oct. 26 (following County Council); Economic Development, Oct. 26 (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 –