

United Counties of Leeds and Grenville



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 22, 2009

Here are the highlights from the regular United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Council meeting held Oct. 22.

Local Government Week: Several students attended council meetings to mark Local Government Week from Oct. 18 to 24. Students from Rideau District High School and Gananoque Secondary School were on hand for the governance and finance committee meeting Oct. 8 and the latter group also attended the council session on Oct. 22. Local Government Week provides students with an opportunity to learn about various municipal government procedures. For more information, contact Lesley Todd, Clerk, at 613-342-3840, ext. 2304.

Making Accessibility Regulations Work – Council has approved a motion endorsing the harmonization of standards that are part of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The act aims to make Ontario completely accessible by 2025 and will include four standards and accompanying regulations: customer service (already in effect and to be implemented Jan. 1), transportation, employment and information communication. Counties CAO Steven Silver belongs to a provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services working group established to provide a coordinated and consistent strategy for implementing the standards while considering potential impacts on all organizations in all economic sectors. The remaining three standards are in various stages of public consultation and regulation preparation. For more information, contact Steven Silver, Counties CAO, at 613-342-3840, ext. 2301.

Seeking Stable Funding – Council is asking the provincial government to provide a way to stabilize funding shortfalls in the coming years. At the October governance and finance committee meeting Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer Nigel White outlined predictions for the remainder of the 2009 budget year in light of the economic downturn and highlighted challenges faced going into 2010, including a projected \$452,000 shortfall due to underperforming revenues. With cuts in provincial funding (including the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund) to the counties amounting to almost \$2 million and the savings from the provincial upload of the Ontario Disability Support Program amounting to only \$1.7 million, the counties will be covering \$280,000 from a provincial rate stabilization reserve created to fill the gap. Council passed a motion recommending this provincial Combined Benefit Stable Funding Guarantee be committed for 2010 and retained until alternative funding for the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund is determined. Council has created an ad hoc committee to meet monthly for budget discussions starting Nov. 19 after counties council and continuing until the budget is passed. For more information, contact Nigel White, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer, at 613-342-3840, ext. 2332.

Coordinating with School Boards – Council passed a motion aiming for more cooperation with school boards on school closures in communities as concerns mount over the boards' accommodation review committee process. Because local schools are often considered the hubs of small communities, the motion calls for a better system to address the educational facility needs of residents and suggests school boards partner with municipal councils in decisions regarding education infrastructure. The motion calls for greater accountability in school board decisions and a review of the governance model for school accommodation decisions with an opportunity to appeal and for input from students, parents, the community and the municipality. It also petitions the province to implement a "smart moratorium" on disputed school closings and to provide the opportunity for the education ministry, school boards and municipalities to work together to develop policies addressing issues such as planning for declining enrolments, a mutually agreed upon accommodation review committee process, a review of funding to rural and small community schools and transparency and accountability between municipalities and school boards. For more information, contact Steven Silver, Counties CAO, at 613-342-3840, ext. 2301.

Limerick Interpretive Centre Moves Ahead – Council approved a tender to have Coyote Log Homes build the new Limerick Forest interpretive centre at an estimated cost of \$250,000, which is part of a total estimated project cost of \$320,000. The counties have received \$100,000 from the National Trails Coalition. It is hoped the building will be constructed using red pine logs from the Limerick Forest. Council also acknowledged contributions from the Friends of Limerick Forest, which will be contributing some fixtures for the building and volunteering labour. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year. For more information, contact Leslie Shepherd, Director of Works, Planning Services and Asset Management, at 613-342-3840, ext. 2412... **Continued Page 2**

Thake Announces Bid for Warden – Long-time Westport Mayor Bill Thake announced his intention to seek the warden's chair at the inaugural meeting in December. The head of counties council is selected in a secret ballot by council for a one-year term and is sworn in at the inaugural meeting, which will be held Dec. 9. For more information, contact Lesley Todd, Clerk, at 613-342-3840, ext. 2304.

Ministry to Respond to Service Centre Concerns – Council had an opportunity to raise concerns with the provincial Ministry of Transportation in a question-and-answer session with MTO representative Donna Bickerstaff at the October public works committee meeting. Many issues relate to the closure of service stations along the 401, including signage for fuel stops in communities, the slow pace of the service centre replacement and the lack of centres on the 416 northward, the number of jobs lost in the community due to the closures, the impact of the closures on tourism, the lack of public consultation, the problem of truck convoys navigating community streets for fuel and the hazard of trucks stopping along the entrance and exit ramps to the 401. Ms. Bickerstaff is forwarding the questions to the ministry and council awaits a response. The counties is also working with MPP Bob Runciman to resolve some of these issues. For more information, contact Leslie Shepherd, Director of Works, Planning Services and Asset Management, at 613-342-3840, ext. 2412.

Support for Rideau Corridor Governance Model – Council has supported a proposed governance model for the Rideau Corridor Landscape Strategy that substantially increases municipal representation. The 25-member steering committee would be comprised of 13 municipal representatives along with representatives from affected counties, conservation authorities, the province, First Nations and the National Capital Commission. The move comes following concerns the initial composition did not include enough representation from the municipalities that border the Rideau corridor. The committee has been created to identify the values that warranted the Rideau Canal's designation as a World Heritage Site in 2007. For more information, contact Lesley Todd, Clerk, at 613-342-3840, ext. 2304.

Source Water Protection Awareness – Local councillors are working to raise awareness of the initiatives to protect drinking water at its source under the Ontario Clean Water Act. A provincially funded initiative to prepare source protection plans by 2012 is underway, with a focus on water sources for cities and towns as well as regional groundwater aquifers. The work is being led by local source protection committees comprised of representatives from municipalities, businesses, farms and community groups. Athens Township Mayor John Conley is a member of the Cataraqui Source Protection Committee. There are three source water protection committees in the United Counties. For more information contact Steven Silver, Counties CAO, at 613-342-3840, ext. 2301.

Upcoming Meetings – Joint Services Sub-committee, Nov. 3; Public Works, Nov. 4; Governance and Finance, Nov. 5; Joint Services Committee, Nov. 18; Counties Council, Nov. 19. All meetings begin at 9 a.m. in the council chambers, 25 Central Ave. W., Brockville, unless otherwise noted. *Please note: Non-emergency delegations are heard at committee meetings.* For more information contact 613-342-3840, ext. 2304.