



United Counties of
Leeds and Grenville
25 Central Ave. W., Suite 100
Brockville, ON K6V 4N6
T 613-342-3840
800-770-2170
TTY 800-539-8685
F 613-342-2101
www.leedsgrenville.com

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 25, 2020

The highlights of the regular United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Council Meeting held on Thursday, November 19th, as well as the Committee of the Whole and Joint Services Committee (JSC) meetings earlier this month, are listed below.

Safe Restart Emergency Fund: Counties Council has received a Safe Restart Emergency Fund usage report presented by staff at the Committee of the Whole.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced to Ontario's 444 municipalities earlier this year \$4-billion in emergency assistance to assist with COVID-19 responses. The first stream of funding allocates \$2.16-million to the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. The funds are to support operating costs and pressures due to the pandemic.

Since the pandemic began, Counties staff has tracked all COVID-19 related costs. They have identified the following areas where the money will be used.

Lost Revenues

- Provincial Offences Court (POA) significant revenue decline due to the cancellation of court due to the pandemic. The deficit to date in 2020 is \$392,496 with courts not expected to resume until March 2021 at the earliest. Additional Safe Restart funds will be used to cover the Counties' share of losses in 2021.
- The Province has not updated the Current Value Assessment (CVA) for 2020. This means the Counties will not realize any current value assessment increase (non-related growth) within the 2021 budget. Based on a four-year average, the estimated loss for 2021 is \$712,973.

Operating Costs

- Liabilities related to unused vacation: Some staff members have not been able to use full vacation entitlements due to the pandemic, including paramedics and Maple View Lodge employees. At the year end, an employee has the option to carry over two weeks of vacation or be paid out. Currently the increase in vacation accrual over the 2019 year end is over \$700,000.

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- Short term leave costs: Staff were able to use their short-term disability to cover self-quarantine, the out-of-country travel mandatory 14-day quarantine, or in response to school closures requiring a parent to remain home. The Counties self-finances its short-term disability program. Further analysis at year end will need to be completed to determine the full cost of accessing it during 2020 due to the pandemic.

Miscellaneous

- Physical distancing measures, personal protection equipment, Zoom for virtual meetings, signage, and increased cleaning supplies.

For more information contact Counties CAO Andy Brown at 613-342-3840, ext. 2301.

Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital information system: Counties Council has asked staff to provide a report following a funding request from the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital for \$125,000 per year for the next three years to replace its information technology.

One in five patients at the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital come from the Leeds Grenville area, according to a presentation by Dr. Barry Guppy and Board of Directors Chair Donna Howard to the Counties' Committee of the Whole. The hospital's information system dates back to the 1990s and no further upgrades are available. They noted COVID-19 has shown them the need for a robust internal and external communication system.

The hospital is now in its third year of a 10-year Core Capital Program for new equipment and technology. The program totals \$31-million, of which a large part is to improve the hospital's information system. There is a \$1.6-million annual gap that needs to be fundraised. The province does not fund capital equipment and technology. Five municipalities are supporting the program. For more information contact Counties CAO Andy Brown at 613-342-3840, ext. 2301.

Appointment of External auditors: Council has passed a by-law to reappoint Allan and Partners LLP as external auditors for the United Counties for the fiscal years of 2021-2025.

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The Counties receives approximately \$43-million annually in provincial funding in the areas of Paramedic Service, Maple View Lodge and Community and Social Services with each area having unique funding guidelines and reporting requirements. Allan and Partners have in-depth knowledge of Public Sector Accounting Board standards and provincially-funded municipal programs, which have resulted in the delivery of financial reports in a timely and efficient manner. For more information, contact Treasurer Pat Huffman at 613-342-3840, ext. 2468.

Upcoming meetings: The Committee of the Whole meeting is on Tuesday, December 8th; the Joint Services Committee on Wednesday, December 9th; and the inaugural and regular Counties Council on Thursday, December 17th. All regular meetings begin at 9 a.m. and members will be participating electronically. For more information, contact County Clerk Lesley Todd at 613-342-3840, ext. 2454.

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Media inquiries:

Deanna Clark, Economic Development Officer/media releases
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
32 Wall Street, Suite 300, Brockville, ON, K6V 4R9
613-342-3840, ext. 5360 or deanna.clark@uclg.on.ca
Cell: 613-803-0249