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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 26, 2018

The highlights of regular United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Council Meeting held on Thursday, June 21st and Committee of the Whole and Joint Services Committee meetings held earlier in the month, are listed below.

Counties Council supports cell coverage upgrades: Counties Council approved spending \$40,000 to cover the costs to study and analyze the Canadian Radio and Television Commission's basic service goal of 50/10 Mbps for 90% of residents in eastern Ontario. All thirteen Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus members are contributing to the study. This work will be completed this year by the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN).

Council also committed funds for the EORN Cell Gap Project beginning in 2019. The Counties portion will be a minimum cost of \$625,532. Funds from reserves will be used. Money will be repaid in installments to replenish the reserve starting in 2020 and concluding in 2023. EORN is asking all Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus and Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus member municipalities to contribute to the project.

In a report presented by EORN to the Committee of the Whole, it was noted the mobile broadband/cell gap project will add more than 3,000 jobs to the region. It will improve public safety and health care delivery, support Ontario's push to 5G (5th generation wireless technology) and the new digital economy, and provide additional connection to the Internet. For more information, contact Counties CAO Andy Brown at 613-342-3840, ext. 2301.

Council approves an amendment for hospital funding: Counties Council passed a resolution amending its Hospital Capital Funding Policy to increase the portion taken from the tax levy from .5% to 1% effective January 1, 2019.

In May, Counties Council approved funding three hospital projects. Counties staff then reviewed five financial plan options to fund the requests. The plan chosen spreads out payment of the projects over 12 years, starting with \$75,000 this year to Kemptonville District Hospital.

June 25, 2018

Next year, payments to University Hospitals Kingston Foundation of \$120,000 per annum will commence for five years. In 2020 the Brockville General Hospital Foundation will receive \$212,500 per year over 10 years.

Increasing the tax levy will ensure sufficient funds are available for these commitments and potentially other requests, and maximizes interest revenues by investing reserve surpluses. For more information, contact Counties Treasurer Pat Huffman 613-342-3840, ext. 2468.

Audited Financial Statements approved by Council: A resolution to approve the 2017 Audited Financial Statements has been approved by Counties Council.

Howard Allan and Partners LLP presented its report to the Committee of the Whole meeting earlier in June. Mr. Allan noted the Counties has \$90-million in expenditures. Taking into account the amortization of assets, the Counties budgeted for a slight deficit. Capital assets are approximately \$525-million.

"We are in good financial shape," Counties' Treasurer Pat Huffman said. "Like all municipalities in Ontario, we have an infrastructure deficit which we are working on by updating our asset management and long-range financial plan."

Reserves in 2017 increased by \$4-million. This is due to better revenues. Secondly, expenditures on capital assets were less than budgeted due to paying down debt and increasing the reserves. For more information, contact Counties Treasurer Pat Huffman at 613-342-3840, ext. 2468.

Top local issues to present to ministries at AMO: Counties Council is preparing delegations to meet with Ministers for the upcoming Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference.

The AMO conference is in August and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is now accepting requests until July 3 for delegations with Ministers or their Parliamentary Assistants. Counties CAO Andy Brown reviewed current issues and recommended delegations. The final list includes requests for meetings with the following Ontario ministries:

- **Long-term Care:** Maple View Lodge - request for addition beds and approval for redeveloping into a larger long-term care home.

June 25, 2018

- **Transportation:** Highway Operations Safety Review – Transportation of dangerous goods along Highway 401. Leeds Grenville also would like to see the Highway Safety Review Working Group continue and ensure its recommendations are implemented.
- **Infrastructure:** Upgrading County Road 43 in Kemptville to four lanes. Secondly, addressing the issue of inadequate new infrastructure funds from the federal government.
- **Natural Gas:** Expanding natural gas into rural communities – requires the Ontario Energy Board to grant permission for gas companies to cross-subsidize.
- **Rural School:** Prior consultation with the communities, and consideration of the impact on rural communities before any decisions to close schools.
- **Conservation Authorities:** Improved relations between conservations authorities and the municipalities.

There was also a call for a one-year moratorium on any new legislation that impacts municipalities. For more information, contact Counties CAO Andy Brown at 613-342-3840, ext. 2301.

Feedback requested on the Vacant Unit Rebate Program: The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville are seeking business stakeholder feedback on proposed changes to the Vacant Unit Rebate Program.

Appearing soon on the [Counties website](#), will be a survey you, as a stakeholder, can complete online. The survey includes a short list of seven questions. The Counties is coordinating the stakeholder engagement campaign with input from its 10 member municipalities.

Responses will provide the necessary information to form a final decision on the program. After receiving input, Counties staff will present a report to Counties Council along with recommendations.

The Vacant Unit Rebate Program provides relief for property owners in the commercial and industrial tax classes. The program provides a 30% rebate of taxes for eligible properties in the commercial class and a 35% rebate for eligible industrial class properties.

Beginning in 2017, the province began allowing municipalities more flexibility to tailor programs to local needs. Since then, both upper-tier and single-tier municipalities have requested changes to their programs. Approximately 80% have requested elimination of the program by 2020. For more information, contact Counties Treasurer Pat Huffman at 613-342-3840, ext. 2468.

June 25, 2018

Upcoming meetings: Committee of the Whole Tuesday, July 3; Joint Services Committee Wednesday, July 4, and regular Counties Council on Thursday, July 19. All regular meetings begin at 9 a.m. in the Council Chambers at 25 Central Avenue, Brockville. For more information, contact County Clerk Lesley Todd at 613-342-3840, ext. 2454.

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Media inquiries:

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