

Mayor's Blog – November 19, 2020

As I write this there is one active COVID-19 case in Zorra and 49 in Oxford. The best way to keep businesses open and people going to work, is to follow the rules and not spread the virus. Simple as that.

The best way to keep hospital beds open and stop health care workers from being overwhelmed, is to follow the rules and not spread the virus. Simple as that.

The “second wave” doesn’t come from somewhere else, it comes from us letting down our guard. The virus is still the same as it was in March.

Beginning Monday, November 16 at 12:01 a.m. the Province moved Zorra & Oxford (as part of the SWPH region) into “Protect - strengthened measures” of their COVID-19 plan. A list of affected municipal services along with revised precautions is available from the Township. Zorra Staff continue to consult regularly with Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) about how to safely operate and deliver services.

Please continue to #DoYourPart to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, to keep your community healthy, and businesses and services open:

- Stay home if you are sick
- Practice physical distancing by staying at least 2 metres apart
- Wear a face covering when you can't physically distance
- Wash your hands

Some more details on the SWIFT announcement for Zorra. Of the \$9.8 million to be spent in Oxford \$5.6 million (or 56%) will be spent in Zorra. Of the 3,427 premises and 626km of roads in Zorra there were 57% of premises and 23% of km served by high speed internet before this SWIFT announcement, that will become 69% and 42% after. So while we are not getting to everyone right away, Zorra has got a better start than anyone else. We have gotten much more than what we could have expected, and more than any other municipality is getting. Now Zorra Council has to decide how best to proceed to finish the job.

This year TWO of the three contenders for the Woodstock Chamber of Commerce Outstanding New Business Award were from Zorra! Both Kintore Coffee and Bear & Fox Apparel were nominated and Kintore Coffee won. In many ways both won as they already do business cooperatively, and really we all win because you can cool Oxford County long sleeve Ts and great coffee at the same place!

By far the most common complaint I get from residents is about bad driving. This tells me two things:

1. We need to do as much as possible to address traffic calming and speed control
2. No matter what we do it won't be enough, some people drive terribly no matter what.

Our roads are designed to move people, goods, business; but they also go through our communities, and those communities have a right to feel safe and livable. I am already working on things to implement for Embro, Kintore, Thamesford, and Lakeside. I have ongoing meetings with Staff on each of these situations, and I am optimistic that solutions will be coming this year and next for each of these communities. I have been successful

in achieving Traffic Calming policies at both Oxford County and Zorra Township that give evidence based best practices for where and how to implement which solutions in order to be most effective. Oxford Mayors are meeting regularly with Oxford OPP to review both enforcement effectiveness, and the possible effectiveness of more enforcement.

Also, people need to drive better. There are already speed signs and stop signs, and flashing lights, etc. that people are ignoring. I now have people calling me from villages that already have some of the solutions other communities are asking for, asking for more solutions.

This issue is bigger than Zorra/Oxford. Zorra and Oxford and the OPP cannot stop all of this. People ignore signs and police cannot be everywhere. People need to take personal responsibility and drive better.

Nothing would be quicker, cheaper, and easier than to just throw up a few signs and walk away and say “job done”. I wish it was that simple. But the evidence says that signs have almost no positive effect on traffic, and can have a negative effect (clutter and “sign fatigue”). So traffic wouldn’t be slower, and people (especially our community’s children) wouldn’t be safer as a result, so I won’t do that. I’ll do the work of finding solutions that actually work. I will post updates on specific solutions for communities as things get done. This is an ongoing job.

A pretty impressive group of Zorra residents are doing some great work on inclusion in Thamesford. They are working to make sure that everyone who lives in the village, or who might consider living in the village, feels welcome and valued. I certainly want a community that not only welcomes new people and new ideas, but includes those people and ideas in our future. We are always a stronger community when we welcome new ideas and perspectives. Zorra is a vibrant community that values our uniqueness. Checkout the Thamesford Inclusion Collective on Facebook.

If you choose not to find joy in snow, you will have less joy in your life, but still the same amount of snow. This applies to more than snow. Merry Christmas, happy holidays, happy solstice! Find some joy in this strange season.

Please be calm, be kind, be safe, and do your part.

As always, please feel free to contact me on any issue:

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