

April 28, 2021

Vaccines! Please follow Southwestern Public Health and Ontario Health for your opportunity to get vaccinated and help your community get out of these restrictions. I got my Astra Zeneca vaccine on Monday and I encourage you to get the first vaccine available to you.

As I write this on April 21 there are six active COVID-19 cases in Zorra, 89 in Oxford, and 150 in Southwestern Public Health as a whole, and we are in a provincially ordered, province-wide State of Emergency and Stay at Home Order. While our local numbers are relatively good, that's BECAUSE of the controls in place. Some parts of the province are not doing as well, and patients are now being transferred to our regional hospitals. So COVID or not, local or not, our health care system capacity is strained. There are members of our community who work in, and depend on, these services.

I have always been a fan of science, and of evidence-based decision making. This has been especially relevant during a pandemic. Zorra Township has consistently consulted with, and followed the advice of, our public health experts. On April 17, I took the uncomfortable step of writing to the Premier to ask him to do the same. The strengthening of the Stay-at-Home Order on April 16 did two things that were not supported by science and evidence. It gave police the authority to require any individual to provide their home address and purpose for not being at their residence. I have confidence in our Oxford OPP. They are good people, doing a difficult job, for the right reasons. But I'm uncomfortable with the provincial order giving them both this authority, and responsibility. Any kind of random check has the potential to unintentionally go wrong. That is not what anyone needs. We need to be supporting and encouraging each other through this harder phase, not enforcing.

It also ordered all parks closed. Provincial, and our local Southwestern Public Health, experts have been clear that outdoor activity was safer, and necessary for physical and mental health. There are many residents who do not have access to large backyards and depend on park spaces as a safe place to get fresh air and exercise. I, along with many Ontario Mayors, asked that the province reconsider these aspects of the order, and I am happy that they did.

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
- Wash your hands
- Do not gather with people outside your household

One of the main things I'm looking forward to when this is over is a beer and wings in Brunny's. Or getting a hard time from the regulars in the Highland. But until we're vaccinated that's not likely. These restaurants, retail stores, and their staff need our support.

So please, if you want them there when this is over, and if you can afford it, order takeout. LOTS of takeout.

In April Oxford County Council set the tax policy for 2021 with no changes to ratios. For County tax purposes this will result in:

- the average residential property tax bill decreasing by \$6;
- typical farm related property tax bill will decrease by \$10

For Township tax purposes this will result in:

- average residential single-family house assessed at \$281,000 would see a decrease of -\$6.79 or -0.22%
- average Farmland assessed at \$1,521,265 would see a decrease of -\$8.00 or -0.22%

I have been working for some time now to find a way to achieve improved traffic calming and/or a crosswalk for the village of Embro. With the location of the splash pad in Embro now confirmed, the Pedestrian Study done last year was reviewed and there is a revised recommendation that a full crosswalk be installed on Embro Road / Oxford Road 6 / Huron Street at Union Street in 2021. It will be the same as the one recently installed in Thamesford at the Library.

Ground has been broken for the new Zorra Maintenance Facility (ZMF) at County Road 119 and Road 78. I REALLY wanted to do a groundbreaking for this and celebrate it. But...COVID...so I just left my purple hard hat on the shovel. Maybe we'll get a grand opening and we can invite residents in to see their net-zero building.

Contrary to a media release from OPAL Alliance, the Council of the Township of Zorra has not altered its' position with respect to the Southwestern Landfill proposal by Walker Environmental Group. The Township released a document on May 19, 2020 outlining the Township's position on the landfill proposal. This position has not changed. To view the official position of Zorra Township Council, please access the Backgrounder by searching "backgrounder" on the Zorra website at zorra.ca. Zorra did not pass a motion that appears to favour dumps. It has always been Zorra's position that host municipalities, and only the host, should have the right to say yes or no. This is not new: I have said this publicly. I have said this to local politicians. I have said this to our MPP. I have said this to the Minister of the Environment. This issue is too important to be playing communication games. Zorra has been clear, collaborative, and transparent on this issue from the beginning. We remain open to talk with anyone about this issue. I encourage you to contact your Councillors to ask questions, and express your concerns and opinions.

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

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