

**August 20, 2021**

As I write this on August 20th there is 1 active COVID-19 case in Zorra, 8 in Oxford, and 23 in Southwestern Public Health as a whole.

If we are to move to any kind of future, carefree society without the potential for lockdowns, we must have the highest vaccination rate possible. The evidence is very clear that vaccinations are both safe and effective. There are immunocompromised people in our community, there are people who cannot get the vaccine for legitimate medical reasons, and our communities' children under twelve cannot yet be vaccinated.

For schools, businesses, events, and social functions to fully return without the threat of a future lockdown, vaccination is essential. It is therefore vitally important that every one of us that can get vaccinated does get vaccinated. Please try to understand and help those that are hesitant. Frustration and anger will not help you, them, or our community. Patience, understanding, and encouragement will. Please do your part and vaccinate, and help others to vaccinate!

This year's Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference was again virtual. Zorra asked for delegations to the Minister of Education on rural schools, and the Ministry of Finance on aggregate property taxation. We did not get either, in fact they did not even reply...

I did present three delegations representing Oxford County.

To the Minister of Long Term Care about how the municipal governance model worked well in Oxford managing the pandemic in long term care homes. Oxford operates both paramedic services and long term care services and both departments work extremely well together; giving good reason that Oxford would be an excellent candidate to explore the possibility of using municipal long term care homes as a potential short term medical care solution for certain non urgent patients.

To the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing we requested that they improve the building code more quickly in the light of climate change. Energy efficiency can be improved greatly as Oxford County has demonstrated with several housing projects. Moving the Ontario Building Code towards a passive house standard is a must do sooner than later. While it will cost a bit more up front, in the long run it will mean lower energy costs for homeowners on both their personal utility bills and the cost of energy as a province.

We asked the Minister of Energy to help us improve the opportunities for more local electricity generation through virtual net metering. There is no doubt that transportation and space heating and cooling need to move away from fossil fuels and towards electricity, renewable natural gas or hydrogen. The generation of this new energy will require more investment from the private sector through local generation for local consumption funded by local investments. The current model and restrictions on local generation (net metering and virtual net metering) are not conducive to private or

community investment. Many of our farms are well positioned to do this work, some already are, but need better regulation to allow them to do more.

In May, many of us began to learn what many First Nations people had said for a long time with the discovery of 215 bodies at a “residential school”. There’s no excuse for this behaviour by governments or churches. We need to do more, and in Zorra we do our part. I spent my Canada Day being smudged, talking with a First Nations Zorra resident, and reading the Truth and Reconciliation Report’s Calls to Action. In my July column and blog I wrote that you should “watch for more action on this.” So, for the September 1 Council meeting, I have submitted a motion for Council to debate that because the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports “call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation”, and “Repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius.”, and because A.J. Baker P.S. students asked the Township to help organize a Pow Wow in Zorra; that staff be directed to contact appropriate First Nations representatives and develop a land acknowledgement policy, and a Pow Wow to commemorate it, on or around Canada’s National Indigenous People’s Day in 2022.

When you read this our communities’ kids will be getting ready to return to school. It will be a bit different, and a bit more stressful this year. Please watch for them on the roads.

And vaccinate!

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

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