

October 27, 2022

Another amazing SMILE Cookie week for Andrew Stoddart's Legacy #11Forever! They broke the 18,000 goal that was set for the 2022 #SMILECOOKIE week! It's an honour to ice a few cookies and do my part in this amazing cause to put AEDs in public spaces. And this year there was an option to donate more and have cookies delivered by a Zorra Fire Truck! Cara Stoddart is a legend and treasure to our community, if in doubt just look around: Zorra probably has more AEDs per capita/location than any other!

Applying for a building permit just got easier. Zorra is now using an online program called Cloud permit for building permits. Steps to setup an account and apply are detailed on the Township website, or call the office.

The Zorra Grant Policy provides criteria to allow the Township to financially assist volunteer groups that provide programs, service and events for the betterment of the community that would otherwise not be provided. Deadline to apply for 2023 grants is October 31.

Apply today! <https://www.zorra.ca/en/our-services/resources/Forms/Community-Grant-Application-Form-fillable.pdf>

Municipal elections took place in all of Ontario's 444 municipalities on October 24th. Again, I'm honoured to be acclaimed for another term as Zorra Mayor and Oxford County Councillor. Your new Council will be sworn in on November 15 at 6pm in Harrington Hall and all are welcome to attend.

Our community has done great things.

We've stopped school closures, high speed rail, and a landfill. We've built splash pads, 100% renewable energy buildings that cost us all less, and an 88 space childcare. 7 of 8 budgets below inflation (2018 Zorra budget was 0.1% above inflation).

We need to do more of these things that will define our own community for all of us. Many of these things will be very challenging, and none of them will be quick. But hard things are hard, and our communities have never shied away from that. So we need a plan to get them done.

Below you can read the Strategic Plan items and policy changes I will be bringing to the next term of Zorra and Oxford Councils.

In order to deal with the challenges and opportunities we face I propose we implement a "triple bottom line" approach of evaluating the financial, environmental, and social impacts of all issues. Each of us will weigh these differently on each issue, but these are the things to consider. Financial will not only be property tax impact, but economic development impact (long term property tax impact). Environmental will be short term and local like trees and green spaces, but also long term and broad like climate change impacts. Social will be ensuring that we strive to include everyone, and not just

reactively, we need to encourage everyone's participation. Without as much participation in our communities as possible, we cannot put forward our best effort to to overcome challenges and realize opportunities. Everyone should be able to do their part.

The challenges and opportunities we need to tackle are:  
Housing, we need more quantity, variety, and affordability

- Continue the 100% renewable energy plan
- Childcare – Thamesford will have a licensed space in 2023, we need one in Embro now
- We need to implement a “total life cycle cost model” for all assets and services to best manage our finances and keep tax increases low
- Examine the possibility of more aggressive rebuilding of gravel roads to remove 1/2 load
- Continue to work with other levels of government to bring true high speed internet to every residence
- Continue to protect farmland and green spaces by reducing sprawl and increasing density in serviced villages
- Continue to work the Thames Valley District School Board and the Ontario Ministry of Education to preserve and enhance the role of our schools in our communities

Again, all these challenges and opportunities should be assessed using a “triple bottom line” approach of evaluating the financial, environmental, and social impacts of each.

The Zorra Township policies I propose to pursue to address these challenges and opportunities:

- Zorra needs more than 800 new houses by 2031 for the growth that is inevitably coming, we need policies to get that done
- Secondary Plans to encourage the type of development we want, rather than only reacting to development proposals from developers. A variety of housing where we want it, while minimizing sprawl
- Implement the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan to help include more people, address homelessness and crime
- Total life cycle cost models to better assess the true costs of assets and services
- Implement a robust Asset Management Plan to accurately forecast the maintenance and replacement costs of all assets (buildings and equipment) and plan finances accordingly
- Develop a plan to secure the future contribution of our schools to our communities

Again, all these policies should be assessed using a “triple bottom line” approach of evaluating the financial, environmental, and social impacts of each.

There are some challenges and opportunities we need to advocate and lobby the Ontario government to address:

- Fairer taxation, and improved regulation, of aggregate sites
- Rural communities shouldn't bear the costs of protecting Prime Agricultural Land on their own. The Provincial Government needs to understand that there are consequences to rural Ontario for rightly protecting Prime Agricultural Land on behalf of all Ontarians. Rural communities should not have to bear the costs (reduced growth resulting in reduced services such as schools, hospitals, infrastructure) on their own. The Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) should be increased to previous levels to address this unfairness.
- Our schools are integral parts of our small rural communities. The Province needs to recognize this in changed funding formulas and policies.

I started by highlighting the great things our community has done. We got those things done by hard work, and a plan.

So we need to continue with the same effort if we want to continue to get results for our communities: we need a plan that can actually deliver results.

Please feel free to comment and ask questions. It's not a perfect plan, no plan is, it can get better with your input.

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

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