

July 16, 2021

As I write this on July 16 there is 1 active COVID-19 case in Zorra, 7 in Oxford, and 9 in Southwestern Public Health as a whole. Our local numbers are really good, and that's because of the controls in place and lots of people have chosen to vaccinate! The more of us get vaccinated, and as soon as possible, the faster and SAFER services and businesses can open. Please do your part and vaccinate, and help others to vaccinate!

In May, what many First Nations people had said for a long time was confirmed by the discovery of 215 bodies at a "residential school". These were children. Dead and buried and undocumented. Did their families even know? This school operated until 1978. I was 8. This could have been me except I wasn't taken from my parents... As a member of a society who has benefited from the actions of previous governments, I'm sorry. There's no excuse for this behaviour by governments or churches. I am a proud Canadian. What I am mostly proud about is that Canada always strives to be better. We do not rest on our laurels. We do better today than yesterday. We do better tomorrow than today. To be a proud Canadian is to embrace ALL our history AND learn from it so we can do better. 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. Watch for more action on this.

Once upon a time values debates about the Pride flag were avoided. Times have changed. We are developing our Community Safety and Well Being Plan and one of the things our own residents told us is that equity, diversity, and inclusion are an important root cause and contributor to underlying causes AND opportunities for safety and well being. Once upon a time the discussion of which flags to fly was avoided. Now the question asked is quite rightly "why AREN'T you flying that flag?" I would argue the bigger question is "why don't we WANT to signal that we are as inclusive as we can possibly be?" In June I successfully argued that Oxford County should fly the Pride flag.

On July 7 Zorra Council voted no to the proposed landfill. The next week Ingersoll, South-West Oxford, and Oxford County followed. Many people have many reasons for opposing the landfill. But for me the main reason was that it is clear that extracting resources, expending energy to transform them, trucking them around, and then burying them in the ground cannot be a long term solution to waste. In response to the suggestion that municipalities would have the right to say "no" to a landfill many people concluded that the biggest problem with that was that none would ever say yes, and there would never be another landfill. To that I would say "what's the problem?" Isn't that our desired outcome? Zorra and Oxford have been leaders in waste reduction for decades. This is another opportunity to lead. By making landfills difficult and expensive we can be part of driving the innovation required from the waste and recycling industry. The Province is already moving in this direction, we're doing our part to push them harder. We were given the tremendous power to say "no" to a development that does not fit the values of our communities. But with great power comes great responsibility. The power to say "no" to this landfill comes with the responsibility to greatly reduce our own waste footprint. If we do not invest both socially and financially in significant waste and energy reduction then we are no better than those who would like to truck their waste to Zorra.



Mayor's Blog

Many people deserve thanks for this. In particular Mayor Margaret Lupton (she'll always be "my" Mayor). Margaret took a lot of heat over this issue over the years. Horrible accusations were made. None of it was deserved. She ALWAYS had the best interests of her communities at heart. Much of the ability this council has to deal with this issue is as a result of the leadership she provided in the past. Those who plant trees, knowing that only others will enjoy the shade, are public benefactors. We, are her beneficiaries.

Of course Ernie Hardeman and Jeff Yurek who recognized the need and developed and pushed for the legislation that allowed us to vote "no". We also need to thank Ingersoll Mayor Ted Comiskey. He worked tirelessly to get municipalities the right to say "no". Ted and I certainly don't agree on everything. But we have always agreed on this issue. We had a very public disagreement about the details of Bill 197, but it did not distract us, as we always shared the same goal. There would have been no legislation for the Province to develop if Ted had not pushed for it.

Finally, the people of Zorra and Oxford. To all the people who reached out to Council and had constructive conversations about this issue, we owe our thanks. I am always better at my job when I am informed by conversations with residents. Thank you to the people of Oxford. This is your community, this is your will, this is your victory.

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

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