

November 23, 2022

In October Zorra lost Bruce Brebner. Bruce served his community as a Firefighter for over forty years. Everyone who serves their community deserves our thanks, but someone who risks, and ultimately gives, their life in that service so that we can all be safe deserves a special thanks. I'm grateful that Zorra Fire was able to provide a respectful and public thanks to Bruce and his family for his service.

The municipal election was on October 24th. Thanks to all who ran, you all contributed to the debate about how to advance our communities. There are two new members of Zorra's five-person Council, Kevin Stewart in Ward 1, and Crystal Finch in Ward 4.

On November 15th the new Zorra Council was inaugurated and had its first working meeting the next day. The first order of business was to elect a Deputy Mayor. Council chose Ward Two Councillor Katie Grigg as Deputy Mayor for the entire four-year term (previously it rotated between each councillor for one year). I'm very happy they did, as having a four-year Deputy Mayor adds stability and a back up to the role of Mayor especially in advocacy with other governments. I'm highly confident that Katie can fill this role and play a larger leadership and advocacy role for Zorra.

Oxford County Council has six new members out of ten total. At the County, the "Head of Council" (or Warden) is chosen by the ten members of Council from amongst each other. At the Inaugural meeting on November 23rd, I was nominated and elected as Warden of Oxford County for the full 2022-2026 term. This is both a new challenge and a new opportunity. While it will necessarily mean more work, it will mean more connections to other organizations and a greater opportunity to partner regionally with other municipalities and advocate for the things Oxford residents need.

I see a lot of potential in both of these Councils to set priorities and service levels, and advocate for our communities so we can meet the challenges and opportunities our communities will face.

Both Zorra and Oxford are beginning their budget processes intending to complete them in January. Please watch for updates on the process as the budget(s) largely set municipal service levels and property taxes.

Bills 23 & 39 are now the single largest issues in municipal government in Ontario. Bill 23 the "Mores Homes Built Faster" act is anything but. It is actually about transferring costs from developers to residents, opening up natural spaces and farmland to sprawling development, and turning municipalities into dictatorships. Bill 39 the "Better Municipal Government Act" is also a misnomer. It actually proposes provincially appointed heads of council with near dictator powers. This will functionally turn municipalities into nothing more than regional offices of the province. How will any municipality ever lobby the provincial government on concerns of residents when the head of council is appointed by

the province? Why will anyone ever run for any local council when the mayor is functionally a dictator? If these changes go ahead unchallenged democracy in local government is dead in Ontario. I intend to fight this strenuously.

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

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