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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mayor Marcus Ryan's Statement on Regional Government Review

NEWS

On January 15, 2019, the Provincial government announced a Regional Government Review of municipalities in Ontario. On February 6, I met with the two government appointed special advisors, Ken Seiling and Michael Fenn.

At this meeting I made clear Zorra's position and clearly stated the reasons for that position, along with the opportunities I see for Zorra and Oxford in the future.

- Zorra welcomes this review as an opportunity to find efficiencies and opportunities for improvement in service delivery
- we favour the current two-tier structure
- amalgamation into a single-tier is not acceptable
- the most effective implementation of any potential changes identified in the review would be if they were implemented by the municipalities themselves

The current two-tier structure allows Oxford municipalities to supply the region's interests for services such as high level land-use planning in the County Official Plan, regional roads, social housing, and cost effectively supply expensive scalable services like water and wastewater. Oxford's lower-tier municipalities are able to provide local services such as local roads, recreation, emergency services, building permit approvals, and local planning approvals in a highly responsive and flexible way.

Through this effective two-tier structure, we provide our residents with high quality and affordable public services, while also being highly flexible and responsive to our communities' needs.

One needs to make a clear distinction between municipal government and local government. This distinction was made clear by the establishment of local community councils when the City of Toronto was amalgamated. The fact that local councils were created, made it abundantly clear that Toronto City Council was a municipal government and not a local government. Oxford, with its lower tier municipalities has a very efficient, effective, highly integrated version of this already in place.

As a "local government" Zorra has been able to give special attention and a high focus of energy to very local issues: rural schools, high speed rail, a recent large plant closure, and

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detailed planning development applications. Our small size and “closeness” to our residents and their issues and opportunities allows us to be highly responsive and flexible in responding to them.

We strive to make Zorra better by doing our part. Zorra is a progressive, environmentally conscious, economically strong, and prosperous. The current government structure has contributed directly to this and we look forward to continuing on our positive path within the current government structure.

If the Province has recommended or desired outcomes from the review, they would be most effectively implemented by municipalities and more specifically, a “made in Oxford” solution would be appropriate for Oxford County.

We want the best future for Zorra and Oxford. We believe we are the best to decide how to achieve that future.

We should decide.

The special advisors aim to have their recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing by early summer. They will not be consulting publicly but I am told there will be an online submission opportunity. I will continue to discuss the review with my regional colleagues and welcome suggestions and feedback from Councillors, staff, businesses, and our residents.

BACKGROUND

Located in the heart of southwestern Ontario, Zorra Township has a population of approximately 8,300 people in a rural/urban setting.

MEDIA CONTACT

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