

February 21, 2024 Blog

It was my honour as Warden to present The Agricultural Hall of Fame Award to Marian Sterk. The award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the agricultural sector, and someone who has shown an unwavering dedication to creating a better rural community and stronger industry as nominated by OCFA members. Marian could hardly be more deserving of this award.

I'm happy to report that as part of ongoing safety improvements to transportation Oxford Council is implementing an additional Community Safety Zone (CSZ) in the village of Embro on Embro Road / 37<sup>th</sup> Line / CR 6 / Huron Street from John Street to Halladay Street. Implementation of CSZ's at designated areas where safety is of a greater concern, validated through the County's CSZ criteria and warrant process, will increase safety and assist in deterring speed-related infractions through traditional enforcement (and automated enforcement, if implemented in the future). Implementation of these additional nine CSZ's throughout Oxford will result in a total of 29 CSZ designated areas on the County road network throughout various communities within Oxford County. Data is collected on an ongoing basis to measure the effectiveness of CSZs and all traffic calming measures, and changes are then made accordingly.

In February Premier Ford made some comments about how municipal politicians shouldn't be "gouging" people on their residential property tax bill. I responded to the Premier explaining that Provincial taxes are kept down by debt and downloading services onto municipalities. In the most recent Oxford budget, the three biggest drivers were ambulance, long term care and housing: all services that should be 100% provincially funded. Oxford residents pay more than double what the provincial and federal governments COMBINED pay for affordable housing. Mr. Premier, downloading services and costs to municipalities doesn't reduce the tax burden on residents, it just changes which politicians collect the taxes.

Lastly, some big changes to the staff leadership at Zorra Township.

While sad to see long time Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Don MacLeod retire later in 2024 (more on that as the day approaches...), I am very happy to announce that the current Director of Finance, Diane Larder, has been selected as the Township's new CAO. Given the chance to go through a recruitment process or promote Diane, in the end, it was clear that Diane was the best decision for Zorra. Since joining Zorra Township in 2021, Diane has shown commitment and a strong focus on inspiring service excellence, innovation, collaboration, and workplace cultural development.

Additionally, I am announcing an organizational restructuring. The Township of Zorra will see the number of municipal departments reduced from six to two. This is a proactive step to prepare Zorra for the challenges facing municipal government as fiscal pressures mount on local governments. We are continuing to deliver services while finding efficiencies and opportunities in how we manage new roles and responsibilities. We're respecting the hard-earned dollars of our residents by streamlining operations while

setting ourselves up to foster a collaborative and positive open-for-business approach. Under the organizational restructuring, Public Works and Recreation will now fall under the Public Services Department. The Corporate and Protective Services Department will encompass, Building/Drainage, Fire & Emergency Services, Finance and Legislative Services. See the website for the full press release.

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

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