



Mayor's Blog

April 21, 2025 Blog

Hundreds of workers laid off at CAMI in Ingersoll. I spoke with Unifor Local 88 CAMI plant chair Mike Van Boekel and Ingersoll Mayor Brian Petrie immediately to assure them that Oxford County is there to support. Their members are our residents, our neighbours.

The Ontario government announced that "strong mayor" powers are being extended to 169 more municipalities. Zorra and Oxford are not among them, but some other Oxford municipalities are. The stated intent of the powers is to get homes built. But locally Zorra Council just approved over 1,000 homes and another municipality with strong mayor powers turned down 250. It doesn't work.

I have been clear from the day the legislation was first announced that it is a bad thing for our local democracies. There is no price that is worth paying to reduce our local voice in our communities. It is fundamentally undemocratic to effectively transfer voting power from Councillors to the Head of Council. It gives a Mayor the power to introduce their own budget and pass it with an artificial majority. It gives a Mayor the power to hire and fire senior management team members. Once given these powers by provincial law, a local bylaw cannot take them away or limit them. It reduces transparency and accountability on behalf of our local communities. Just because your democracy is being taken away by legislation, doesn't mean it isn't being taken away.

Woodstock's "strong mayor" not only voted against a positive planning report for 254 homes on the OMAFRA property, but now also decided to appeal the Oxford decision to approve it. Oxford County spends almost \$10 million a year on housing and homelessness (combined property tax, provincial and federal money). How does that end without building homes?

How do we prevent sprawl without building homes in our largest communities?

How do we get people out of encampments without building homes?

"Strong Mayor" powers were supposed to be for building homes. If they're voting against building homes, it makes you wonder what they're for?

In a way, I think Trump is good. I mean he's obviously a horrible person and worse leader. But his presence has forced us to look at some things differently and that's good.

Now we KNOW where simplistic world views and policies lead.

Now we know where blindly accepting conspiracy theories leads.

Now we KNOW where being hostile to differences leads.

Now we KNOW where thinly veiled dog whistles of intolerance lead.

It's harder for people to try to get away with it, and it's easier for us to recognize it. That's good, because it was already there.

It puts politicians like me on the hot seat, where we belong, to answer clear questions. Questions that are clearer now, and require clearer answers, than before Trump.

It's easier to see what people, including politicians, ACTUALLY stand for.

So while he's obviously horrible, we now clearly know what that looks like in government. We can recognize it, and where it leads.

And that's good. Because I don't want any of it.

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

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