

Mayor's Report- Thursday April 15, 2021

It has been 4 weeks since our last regular Council meeting. In those few short weeks we have moved from ice and snow to open and high water in our municipality along side the Ottawa River! The unpredictable year continues to send the message that you can't beat "Mother Nature". We have been able to complete 2 of our 3 boat launch projects despite the unexpected quick rise of water. The third boat launch at Deux Rivieres will be remediated for safety this year and be first on the schedule for 2022!

Friday March 19th was a day of exciting announcements that will benefit our community. The Eastern Ontario Rural Network (EORN) announced that Rogers Communications has been awarded the contract to improve the coverage and capacity of cell networks in our region. In the afternoon I had the pleasure of joining Minister John Yakabuski, Mayors D'Eon, Reinwald and Sweet at the DRDH for the announcement of 76 additional LTC beds to be housed in a new building at the hospital campus.

On March 23rd, I attended the Ontario Power Generation telephone town hall along with many other participants. This meeting focussed on OPG's operations on the Ottawa River. High water concerns were raised by those who were affected by the 2017 and 2019 floods downstream. I would recommend a visit to the following website for current data about our part of the river – www.opg.com/water

At the March 31st Renfrew County Council Zoom meeting we heard from three delegations. The first was the chief medical officer of health for the RCDHU Dr. Rob Cushman. He continues to be very concerned about the data he is seeing and in particular the 3 variants of concern (on that day there were 12 cases of the variant). The rate of change is alarming, as well as high-risk contacts. The more contact tracing that must be done means there are fewer vaccines being distributed – it should be the other way around. The second delegation was from the LTC Director Shelley Sheedy describing the Miramichi Lodge COVID outbreak that ended on March 30th but sadly resulted in 2 deaths. Finally, The Renfrew County District School Board presented their Strategic Plan with a video and PowerPoint. The school board has expanded its elementary FL2 programs in Madawaska Valley and Deep River.

A number of retirements and a new manager were announced at the same March 31st meeting:
Long Term Care Director (Bonnechere Manor & Miramichi Lodge) Shelley Sheedy, 25 years with COR.
Renfrew County Housing General Manager, Carol Neill, 20 years with COR and 40 years of involvement in social housing.

At the Development & Property Department, Kevin Valiquette, Manager of Real Property Assets has been with the COR since 2002 and Charles Cheesman, Manager of Planning Services who has served our County since 1988.

Corporate Services welcomes a new Manager of Human Resources, Greg Belmore.

On April 8th (STAY AT HOME order in effect that day) the local mayors met virtually with the DRDH CEO Janna Hotson. The hospital has been very busy, and capacity has been high, but they are not experiencing the same surge in patients as other areas at this time. It was noted that any COVID-19 positive patients in our area would be sent to the Pembroke Regional Hospital, or to a COVID-19 designated hospital in Ottawa if they required more acute services. Vaccine clinics are now taking place on a regular basis at the Lion's Hall in Chalk River. At a virtual meeting that afternoon, RCDHU Dr Cushman expressed his grave concerns to all municipalities as he did on March 31st. 60% of the active cases are the UK variant. He continues to emphasize that we need better public cooperation. As municipal leaders we must do our part to spread the words of caution to our citizens, implore people to abide by the Stay-at-Home order, mask and distance when out of their small bubbles!

Mayor Debbi Grills