

Mayor's Report – Saturday August 22, 2020

I hope all of my fellow Councillors have enjoyed the wonderful summer weather during our July break.

I have attended 2 Deep River and District Hospital Mayors' meetings since June. During this time the province has moved to Stage 3 and we have moved to monthly electronic meetings. CEO Richard Bedard reported that the hospital is back to 70% in the Emergency Department and patients often present with more serious conditions than usual. There has been a full inpatient load in the medical unit with a temporary 130% surge (hallway medicine) in the past weeks. Diagnostic imaging is also resuming non-urgent outpatient services. Along with our obvious COVID-19 concerns as school resumes, we also need to prepare for flu season usually beginning by the end of August with usual spikes by Thanksgiving. It is my hope that HCM can host a flu shot clinic here in the municipal hall with the acceptable precautions in place. COVID-19 testing continues to be done by RC VTAC. A schedule of testing sites and times can be found at www.rcvtac.ca or the Renfrew County Health Unit at www.rcdhu.com. The next Mayors' meeting is scheduled for September 10th.

On August 12th, I attended the County of Renfrew Health and Social Services Committees, and the Renfrew County Housing Corporation AGM and monthly meeting - it was virtual marathon on Zoom! As noted in today's correspondence the number of doctors in the Renfrew County is decreasing. The numbers show that there are presently 24,000 people without a family physician, soon to be approaching 30,000 and beyond. The Renfrew County Virtual Triage Assessment Centre (RCVTAC) is a unique solution that has helped thousands during the pandemic. Hopefully our upper tier can convince the provincial government that this approach can prevent "hallway medicine" in our rural communities.

The Emergency Management Service (paramedics) is still coping with the availability of medical grade PPE. The supply chain reliability for these items has been an issue since the beginning of 2020 and the costs are skyrocketing. The service delivery of this department is vastly different from last year and has become considerably more costly. The Long Term Care department also shares the PPE concerns of EMS. It was noted in the LTC report the PPE should be sourced by the province and then distributed to the homes.

The Renfrew County Housing Corporation reports that all tenant issues are presently being dealt with by phone calls to tenants, as opposed to the issuance of notices for non-payment of rent. As would be expected during these difficult financial times, the arrears in rent payments are climbing.

The Social Services Department reported that Ontario Works (OW) has provided a much higher number of one-time emergency assistance payments since March. The OW offices continue to serve all clients remotely. Child Care & Early Years presented their reopening plans that include the training for all of their providers. It will be a slow and cautious opening of the various child care centres throughout the county.

Mayor Debbi Grills