

Mayor's Report – Tuesday February 15, 2022

Happy Canada Flag Day! On February 15, 1965, the red maple leaf flag we know was inaugurated in a public ceremony on Parliament Hill. Thousands of Canadians gathered as the Canadian Red Ensign was lowered and, at the stroke of noon, the new National Flag of Canada was hoisted. Prime Minister Pearson's words on the occasion resound with hope and determination: "May the land over which this new flag flies remain united in freedom and justice ... sensitive, tolerant and compassionate towards all."

It has been 4 weeks since our last regular Council meeting. All of the meetings I have attended since that time have been virtual. It is good to be meeting in person today.

On the morning of January 20th, I attended a DRDH Mayor's meeting in the morning. CEO Janna Hotson reported healthcare systems were trying to move people out of hospitals to free up beds as COVID numbers climb. In our area the vaccination rate remains high for adults, but numbers for the 5-to-12-year group were poorer. That afternoon, Mayors of Ontario were invited to a conference call with Premier Ford, Minister of Health Christine Elliot, Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing Steve Clark and Minister of Finance Peter Bethlenfalvy. At that time, 1 million vaccination shots had been administered since the new year. It was noted that there was an unstable supply of rapid tests, thankfully that has changed for the better and testing kits can now be sourced at all 3 Deep River pharmacies (call ahead for availability).

At the January 26th COR Council meeting, Warden Robinson announced that she was reappointed as the Chair of the EOWC; the Ontario Winter Games to be held in COR have been postponed until February and March 2023 due to Omicron and a 1.6% budget had been passed on January 17th. The first delegation of the day was CNL's CEO and President Joe McBrearty presenting "Priorities: Vision 2030". The Perry Group Consulting Limited followed with an overview of the first stage of the COR digital strategy review.

February 9th was my committee meeting day. At Health Committee, Emergency Services reported the Community Paramedic Program continues to support vulnerable populations including those who remain in their homes while COVID positive. EMS is taking the next step with a soon-to-be implemented rapid analyzer known as ID NOW - this test delivers high-quality molecular positive results within 15 minutes. ID NOW targets coronavirus as well as other viruses including influenza. The Renfrew County Housing Corporation, Manager of Real Estate, Kevin Raddatz informed Council of a site meeting for the design of the new multi-residential housing project in Pembroke. Completion date for this project is March 2023. At the Community Services Committee, Ontario Works reported that caseloads are up and expect that trend to continue.

At the February 10th RCDHU area Mayors' meeting, Dr. Michelle Foote reported that our case summary numbers are usually 2 weeks behind the provincial numbers. However, the COR numbers are remaining fairly stable. As expected, congregate settings report the highest numbers. Dr. Foote stressed the importance of a 3rd vaccine dose to get ahead of the latest variant. A 4th dose has also been happening in LTC facilities. School based clinics throughout the county are inviting students, staff, parents and guardians to vaccinations during the instructional day and following dismissal.

Mayor Debbi Grills