

Town of Erin

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Well folks, as you know – this will be my final Mayor’s Report with the Town. I’d like to depart from my usual Report on activities, and share with you a summary of my views from the last two terms of Council.

First, I have to say that being chosen by the residents of this town to lead them and this community (not just once but twice) has been the privilege of my life.

The trust that has been placed in me to serve as Mayor of Erin for the past eight years has been an honour, and I believe that I have exercised that duty to the very best of my ability for the betterment of everyone.

It has also been a pleasure to work with two great Councils. The last eight years has seen respectful debate, and a return to decorum – and Council should be commended for that. And I would also like to take a moment to personally thank each member of Council for all of your support over the years.

Being the Mayor for almost a decade, I have been party to a lot of change. And while Council has had too many successes to list them all here today, a few items are worthy of mention.

Most notably, which will come as no surprise to anyone, is how this Council has had the vision, the foresight, and the resolve to take action on the wastewater file. This issue began well over a decade ago with the SSMP report, which was largely left to collect dust. It fell to this Council, and the one before it, to pick up the mantel and see this project through to conclusion. Looking at where we are today – with the project being awarded and raising \$200M from the private sector (and

not taxpayers) this Council should be proud of what we have accomplished together in such a short period of time.

We have also respected taxpayers and their hard-earned tax dollars – returning a surplus to public coffers annually, and investing record amounts into our reserves. We have also invested in public assets like new Fire Trucks, to ensure our ability to respond to emergency situations – protecting our public. When I took office the majority of our fleet was over 25-years old – and now we are on track to replace the entire fleet within a few years.

Climate change has been described as the defining issue of our time, and this is also an area where Council has been active. We have banned plastics in our public facilities, we are electrifying our vehicle fleet, we have partnered to install solar panels on our arenas, will soon be installing EV charging stations, and importantly, we will be working towards decommissioning 5,000 septic tanks that are polluting our groundwater and aquifer. This is tremendous progress – but despite these great actions, we all know there is still more to do.

We have prepared for our future by creating new long-term strategies to guide how we will grow, where we will invest, and how we will achieve our shared vision for the Erin we strive to create. We have lived our values, and realized my promise of being a “Future Focused” municipality.

The future however is not without its challenges. There has also been a sea change in recent years of increased online hatred and abuse, adopted by the keyboard warriors who would rather tear down our democracy, than be a constructive part of it.

This is very evident south of the border, but in Canada we have not escaped unscathed as it’s an issue here too.

I must commend my elected colleagues both here and at the County for their tenacity in the face of hatred and ignorance. Stepping forward to serve your

community is not for the faint of heart – and no one deserves to be subjected to unjustified hatred and disrespect for giving of themselves and their time in the service of their community. However, to quote Abraham Lincoln, “its not the qualified voters, but rather the qualified voters who choose to vote that constitute political power”. And it is those people, and not the destructive keyboard warriors who contribute to the fabric of our community and to our society.

The future of our community requires, like in life, meaningful two-way engagement. I was proud of Council for passing a Citizen Engagement Charter – signaling our commitment to bringing our residents into the decision making processes at the Town. This has been largely successful, with engagement now being the norm and simply a matter of ‘just what we do’. I know that the new Council will continue to build upon this trend and the work we have done to date. Engagement also means capitalizing upon the intellectual capital that exists in Erin. I am continuously impressed by the local experts we have on a wide variety of subjects in our community – and I encourage those people to step forward to volunteer serve on a town committee and help ensure we build the tomorrow we all want to see.

As I reflect upon the past two terms of Council, I ask myself are residents better off today that they were 8-years ago. I think the answer is a resounding yes, and our actions show how we have worked to improve and make people’s lives better. I have always said that there is a time to come on the stage, and a time to leave it. I have accomplished what I have set out to do, and I have kept my promises to the residents of our community. Having accomplished all that I committed to do – I feel its now my time to leave the stage to make room for the next generation of leaders for our town.

I'd like to leave you all with one of my favourite comments by President Ronald Reagan, which I think summarizes how we should strive to live our lives, not just in public service but more generally.

It's as relevant now as it was when he first spoke the words: *"Live simply, love generously, care deeply, speak kindly, and leave the rest to God"*.

Thank you Council, thank you staff, thank you residents, and most importantly – thank you to my loving wife Dianne for sharing me with the community these last eight years.

Sincerely,

Allan Alls

