

Mayor's Report

Tuesday, February 28, 2023



Thank you for ice storm response

We're already at the end of February and tomorrow we welcome a new month. March is always busy and usually we get some warm days so I'm looking forward to that.

First, I want to take a second to thank our City staff for their work during the ice storm last week. I saw crews out working long hours to ensure roads were safe for residents to travel on and really appreciate the great job they did.

Healthcare in Port Colborne

At our last Council meeting, I provided a fairly long update about the changes coming to healthcare in Port Colborne. I want to reassure everyone that I continue to work closely with staff and Council to make sure that Port Colborne residents have access to the quality healthcare they need.

Yesterday, I attended a roundtable meeting with Federal Economic Development Minister, Filomena Tassi and Vance Badawey, MP for Niagara Centre to discuss healthcare challenges and funding in Port Colborne. We were hosted by the fantastic team at Bridges Community Health Centre, who are delivering primary care in combination with health promotion and illness prevention services.

Taralea McLean, Executive Director at Bridges, spoke at the roundtable about the community health centre model and their focus on community development and health promotion. She explained how vulnerable populations in Port Colborne receive much needed healthcare and assistance navigating the system.

With the changes coming to the hospital system in Port Colborne, I appreciated the first-hand look at what other community-based services are available, especially for seniors, children and youth, newcomers to Canada, families or individuals with low incomes, and those experiencing homelessness.

Equity and fairness in access to critical services like healthcare is very important, and I am committed to continuing to work with elected officials at the provincial level, our EMS partners, the team at Niagara Health and other key stakeholders to ensure that residents of Port Colborne continue to have equitable and fair access to healthcare.

Niagara Regional Budget Approval

Last Thursday, Niagara Regional Council passed the 2023 budget, and this year was a particularly challenging budget year for everyone. As a member of Regional Council, I was hoping we would be able to have a lower regional increase to the tax levy, however I know that staff worked very hard to reduce it as much as possible.

The 2023 regional budget includes a 7.58% increase to the levy – with funding for two new ambulances that will ensure we can continue to rely on our EMS services going forward. It also includes funding for major provincial projects such as the new hospital in South Niagara. Global inflation and lingering effects of the pandemic also contributed to the high tax increase.

Strategic Planning Session

This past Saturday, Council and senior staff had a strategic planning workshop to discuss community issues, emerging trends, and opportunities facing the City over the next several years.

This overview generated a fulsome discussion about the strategic priorities that should be incorporated into a new strategic plan, which will be a living document that will guide Council, staff, and the community for this Council term.

Council and staff also reviewed the preliminary results of the community survey issued last month. We received nearly 500 responses and I'd like to thank residents of Port Colborne and key stakeholders who completed the survey. Your input matters. It's important to Council that our strategic plan reflects community priorities and focuses on creating an exceptional smalltown experience in a big way.

Staff have been directed to come back to Council with a draft strategic plan this spring.

Marine Strategy

This coming Thursday, senior staff and I will be participating in a roundtable discussion with the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Transportation and other public sector organizations as well as business and industry partners to discuss the province's proposed Ontario Marine Strategy.

Port Colborne has been very active with its government relations and advocacy strategy on this issue, and we look forward to continuing our discussions the Ministry of Transportation.