

**Paul McQueen**  
**2020 Warden's Closing Remarks**  
**Thursday, November 26, 2020**

County Council, staff and the viewing public, it has been a privilege to serve you for the past year as Grey County Warden. One of the highlights of my career took place on the evening of December 3, 2019 when I was inaugurated as the Grey County Warden for 2020. That evening was the pinnacle of my political career. I looked forward to the coming year, representing the County of Grey at functions across the County and in Ontario.

At our first County meeting I introduced the concept of having 3 separate committees, attainable (affordable) housing, climate change taskforce and reintroducing the Warden's committee. On December 18<sup>th</sup> the CAO Kim Wingrove, the Director of Long-Term Care, Jennifer Cornell and I delivered the application for 62 additional long-term care beds for Grey Gables to Minister Bill Walker at his Owen Sound Riding office.

I began the term meeting individually with County Councillors to discuss their initiatives, thoughts or concerns and get to know them and their municipality better. My intention for this year was to go to all of the Municipalities and meet their council and staff.

In January we attended the ROMA (Rural Ontario Municipal Association) Conference in Toronto and hosted the Grey County Hospitality Room. My wife Cindy and I rushed out to purchase supplies and with the help of my fellow

Councillors we hosted a fantastic hospitality room. Over 100 different people dropped in from counties across the province, including a few Ministers, socializing, networking and even playing a competitive game of euchre.

In February Business continued as usual at County Council and many of us attended the OGRA (Ontario Good Roads Association) Conference , where we met with ministers and attended educational sessions. The World Health Organization was talking about the Coronavirus that had hit China and was slowly progressing across the world.

And then there was March, when the world was glued to the television or radio, listening to news about an approaching pandemic spreading across the globe. Life was temporarily put on hold as we all tried to grasp the reality that a serious pandemic was looming. We had many meetings trying to plan how to move ahead. On March 26<sup>th</sup> at 5:02pm as Warden I declared a State of Emergency, which we are still in. We began emergency meetings to discuss how best to move forward and protect the public, all while trying to process the influx of information being downloaded on us from higher government.

The Province changed legislation to allow municipal governments to make changes to their Procedural Bylaw to enable us to conduct electronic meetings. Thanks to Heather Morrison, Rob Hatten and our IT department we were able to start meetings via Teams and Zoom, software some of us had never heard of before. We started to move forward with day to day operations of the County but in a totally different capacity. Working from home, trying to stop the spread of

COVID-19. We have learned many new terminologies this year such as social distancing, flatten the curve, social bubble, community spread, self-quarantine, Zoom fatigue and second wave (which we are currently in).

We have all become quite accustomed to hearing the chief medical officer of health for Grey Bruce, Dr. Ian Arra talking about COVID-19 and how to protect ourselves and our families from contracting the virus. He repeats the following mantra:

- “Wash your hands”
- “Wear a Mask”
- “Watch your distance, ideally 2 metres”
- “Wear your mask correctly”
- “Avoid Crowds”
- “Stay home if you are sick”
- “Avoid close contact with those from outside your household”
- “Avoid travel to areas with higher transmission and minimize non-essential travel”
- And last week he added, “Be kind, be calm, be safe.”

I want to thank Dr. Ian Arra and his health team for all the work they have done for Grey County especially for the past 9 months, working tirelessly to try and keep the virus out of Grey & Bruce Counties, and keeping us up to date on the COVID cases in our communities. I’d also like to thank all the front line workers, police officers, paramedics, fire fighters, doctors, nurses, PSWs, those working at long-term care homes keeping our seniors healthy and safe, mental health

workers, social services partners, pharmacists, grocery store clerks, restaurants, gas stations, convenient stores, farmers, truckers and so many more who continued to work, providing services to all of us during such a troubling time.

This year was the first year that the AMO (Associations of Municipalities of Ontario) conference was held virtually in August. We were still able to listen in to sessions, have delegations with Ministers, there was a chat room and an online trade show. The underlying common theme was increasing high speed internet across Ontario.

A couple of highlights from the past year was the creation of the Agricultural Advisory Committee and the introduction of the GTR (Grey Transit Route) in September. This year Grey County acquired 32 acres in Durham for the redevelopment of Rockwood Terrace, this will also create opportunities to address housing needs in the area. On Friday November 20<sup>th</sup>, Ontario's Long-Term Care Minister Merrilee Fullerton announced that the application for 62 additional beds for Grey Gables was approved, along with many more across Ontario. This was welcome news for our aging community to know that there will be more Grey County Long-Term Care beds to care for our elderly in the future. We delivered the application at the beginning of my term as Warden and it's satisfying to hear the news of acceptance just before the end of my term as Warden for 2020.

This was not the year that I had envisioned when I became Warden on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, but together we have adapted, worked through the process and

accepted the new norm. As we stated many times, “Together we will get through this”. But it isn’t over. We have to continue to lead our communities to follow the advice of Dr. Ian Arra.

I would like to thank Kim Wingrove, our CAO and Grey County staff for all the work that you do every day to run the County especially during such a difficult time. The limited times I did go to my office, Kim was already there working, and still was there long after I left.

Thank you to Penny Colton for keeping me organized and looking out for my best interests as Warden.

Thank you to my family, Grey Highlands Council and staff for your support during the past year.

I would like to close by reading a poem by J.E. Morris of Owen Sound:

### **The County of Grey**

If you happen to live in the County of Grey,  
You’ll live in a happy contented way  
For that’s where our boys grow big and strong  
That’s where our girls break out in song  
In no other place could you live so long  
And love the living every day

If you take a drive through the County of Grey  
You'll see dairy cows and herds of beef  
And acres and acres of the maple leaf

If you take a drive when the leaves come loose  
You'll see plenty of apples for apple juice  
Apples to eat and apples for pie  
For Grey is the home of the northern spy

We build some ships to sail the seas  
Raise some chickens and keep some bees  
We grow garden stuff and fruits galore  
There's bread and cheese in every store

Our bacon and eggs they can't be beat  
For we feed our hogs on cream of wheat  
We pay our taxes and say our prayers  
Though none of us are millionaires

We live like kings on the land we till  
And come and go of our own free will  
And the people who live here every day  
Are the salt of the earth in the County of Grey.

Thank you.