MINISTER'S ZONING ORDER (MZO) — A LITTLE COMMON SENSE NEVER HURT ANYONE

Apparently, several keyboard warriors on social media have been trying to peg me as either pro-MZO or anti-MZO. Well, keep guessing! I've been called worse things by people who don't know me.

Here's the reality.

While in business, every decision I made came down to two things:

1. **The PROS** — Why should I do it?
2. **The CONS** — Why shouldn't I?

It's called weighing the options. A concept that seems to have gone missing somewhere between Facebook and the comment section!

The reality is that a lot of time and energy are being spent arguing over an issue where we have no direct decision-making authority. The Minister's Zoning Order was initiated by the provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. MZO is not a municipal decision.

So, does it really matter whose side you're on? We can argue until the cows come home, but the province still holds the steering wheel.

And by the time 15,000 homes are built, my beard could be down to my feet. At that point, I'll need a building permit just to get it through the front door!

THE CONS — LET'S NOT SUGAR-COAT IT

- Increased traffic. Getting across town could become an Olympic event.
- Increased noise. The birds may have to shout to be heard.
- Agitated residents. And who could blame them?
- Increased pollution.
- Added costs and pressure on infrastructure.
- Existing industry may decide to leave.
- New industry may decide we're not the place to be.

These are real concerns, not imaginary monsters under the bed.

THE PROS — THERE'S ANOTHER SIDE TO THE COIN

1. Tax revenue

With average residential property taxes of approximately $4,000, 15,000 homes could eventually generate a gross $60 million annually. That represents roughly a 34%

addition to our current municipal revenue, excluding the capital budget and subject to the usual financial realities.

That's a considerable amount of money. Of course, the tax bill doesn't magically pay for everything. Roads, water, sewers and other infrastructure have this inconvenient habit of costing money too!

2. Jobs

Building 15,000 homes would require an enormous workforce: planners, architects, concrete installers, framers, carpenters, painters, roofers, landscapers and many others.

But here's the catch: we don't have all that labour sitting around Dunnville waiting for a phone call. Many workers would have to come from outside our municipality.

3. Infrastructure and more jobs

Roads would need widening, new roads would need building, and water, sewer and hydro infrastructure would need installing.

That creates more work and economic activity. It also creates bills that somebody has to pay. Unfortunately, infrastructure doesn't accept good intentions as currency!

REALITY CHECK: HOW LONG ARE WE TALKING?

Let's assume 500 homes are built and occupied each year.

At that rate, 15,000 homes would take 30 years to complete — and that clock starts only after the necessary infrastructure is in place.

Thirty years!

That's long enough to see three decades of fashions come and go, several generations of smartphones, and enough municipal meetings to wear out a few chairs.

And here's something worth thinking about: based on the figures above, if 500 homes were added annually and property taxes increased by 1.18% per year, the additional tax revenue could have a significant effect on the municipal tax picture over that period.

Hmmmm. Maybe this deserves more thought than another 47-comment Facebook argument.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Whether you're pro-MZO or anti-MZO, arguing about which team you belong to won't change who issued the order.

We know 15,000 homes won't appear overnight. There's no giant housing machine sitting behind Town Hall with a big red button marked *BUILD EVERYTHING*.

So, take a breath, enjoy life, appreciate the blessings we have, and let's spend a little less time shouting at each other and a little more time thinking critically.

With the election approaching, examine each candidate carefully. Look beyond the hot air, undeliverable promises and impressive-sounding words that say absolutely nothing.

Ask yourself:

- Does this person understand the issues?
- Do they have common sense and business sense?
- Do they have the experience and credentials to make informed decisions?
- Can they distinguish between what they control and what they don't?

Because promises are easy to make. Delivering them is another matter entirely.

Remember: a little common sense goes a long way. And unlike a 15,000-home development, common sense shouldn't take 30 years to build!