

Individual(s) **Correspondence**

Kris Sangers to Township of Wilmot - December 20, 2023

The purpose of this email is to bring awareness and fair judgement to the potential permanent closure of the bridge located at River Road and Oxford-Waterloo Road.

While many of you may not travel this corridor, others do and you need to realize it plays a critical part within both of your townships.

We seem to be forgotten since we our road is shared between two townships, and we are located in an area that seems to portray we are not viable to the communities. But if you were to look at the statics in our area, you would find how much our road was used before the temporary closure of the bridge and how important it really is.

We have outlined a letter and attached it to this email. We feel our voices need to be heard and given the attention and respect we deserve.

We have many members of the community willing to stand behind us if we are able to put this motion before council.

We would like to be included in any talks, meetings or discussions that concern our part of the community

Township Staff to Kris Sangers - December 20, 2023:

Good evening Kris, we've been waiting on a structural inspection report before we consider next steps on the Oxford Waterloo road bridge. As noted previously, follow up with Blandford-Blenheim and reporting to Council is still required. I expect any long term recommendations for the structure will include public engagement as well.

Glad to chat further when we have more information.

Township Staff to Kris Sangers - May 23, 2024:

Good morning Kris,

We received the structural report for Oxford-Waterloo bridge. The report outlines immediate structural needs and near-future replacement requirements. Wilmot Staff have prepared a report for the Wilmot Council meeting agenda on Monday May 27th with recommendations to keep the structure closed, and to investigate further on decommissioning. The report can be found at the following link: <https://pub-wilmot.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=8810>. I note the report outlines further communication with residents in the area, so depending on direction received on Monday evening from Council, we will plan to reach out to those in the project area.

Feel free to reach out to myself or Chad (copied) if you have any process or procedure questions on the report or items following report consideration.

Kris Sangers

Kris Sangers to Township Staff – May 26, 2024

Greetings Jeff and Chad,

I'm sure by now you would be expecting an email from me that would not agree with your findings, and yet, I appreciate the email and information you have provided me. However, the last correspondence that Jeff and I had was December 2023. I have been on the Wilmot Township website looking for any indication of this topic to be discussed and was unable to find anything. And now I receive this letter 4 days prior to the Wilmot Township Council meeting that will take place on Monday, May 27, 2024. Thank you for so much notice.

I would like to start off by quoting the words on the bottom of each page of Wilmot Townships Infrastructure Report.



Wilmot is a cohesive, vibrant and welcoming countryside community

wilmot.ca

Welcoming Countryside Community? I'm not sure how you can put this phrase on each page of a report that is purposing a closure and decommissioning of a bridge that has been in existence for over a hundred years? Oxford Waterloo Road bridge has providing an opportunity for all residents near and far to get from one side of the Nith River to the other.

I feel we would not be in this position if Wilmot Township took matters seriously long before the Ice Jam that caused so much damage to the bridge. Had it been properly repaired and not bandaged over the years, it still might be a viable bridge that so many people enjoy.

It's always about money and it always will be. The Townships only want, "in town' work completed to attract tourism and are not willing to put forth the effort in rural communities that are often forgotten.

Yes you spent millions of dollars to upgrade the bridge on Bridge Street between Tye Road and Puddicombe Road, BUT, on Monday, May 27th, the bridge will be closed yet again for repairs which means we need to put on lots of extra kms one way to access the other side of our own road. I would love you to put a camera just to see how many commuters this will affect and how mad they get when they have to turn around. Plus I would like to know (and sorry if I sound disrespectful) what Engineering company did not understand that water flows down hill? How did they not see that the South side of the bridge was not properly stable to handle any extra water that would flow down. My husband and I are common residents and even we noticed that the soil would give way at the bridge. Sorry but I am so frustrated over this whole area that I used to love and respect.

I looked at the 3 options and of course I disagree with the first one; Full closure and decommission.

Individual(s)	Correspondence
	<p>I have accepted the fact that you will not re-open the bridge for car traffic, but, I implore you to look at a revised version of #2 and open the bridge for walking and biking trail. We do not need light weight vehicles crossing the bridge and ripping up and down the road.</p> <p>Our rural community could use more nature opportunities to explore the area since our main roads do not provide bike lanes.</p> <p>I could go on and on about this whole situation but I have a feeling you already know where I stand on the issue.</p> <p>Even just today, I spoke to numerous families that were fishing on the bridge, around the bridge, under the bridge, along side the bridge and I said, "be ready, they will be closing the bridge for good". They looked at me and said "what"? we just assumed the bridge would be opening up soon.</p> <p>So you may 'think' we are limited residents but I know that residents in the area have no idea what you have been planning.</p>
<p>Bill Dunker</p>	<p><u>Bill Dunker to Township of Wilmot - May 31, 2024</u></p> <p>I live at [REDACTED] in Wilmot Township [REDACTED]. I have lived here for over 50 years and as a P.Eng retired feel the bridge should be repaired to accommodate light traffic and allow time to plan for a new structure. Over the years the bridge has played an important role in our neighborhood connecting us to neighbours and the surrounding communities. The bridge also supplies an alternative route for fire police and ambulance services. The township has replaced bridges over the Nith on Bridge St and Holland Mill Rd. Why not Oxford Waterloo Rd?</p>
<p>Kris Sangers</p>	<p>Which option will it be? I'm at a loss.</p> <p>Greetings,</p> <p>I appreciate the jobs you have, honestly. I know you are faced with many challenges trying to please the residents plus keeping your Counsellors in the loop that reports to "Tax Paying Residents".</p> <p>Since [REDACTED], I am sending this information to them since I find it necessary to do so. I am not trying to play the blame game here but this is getting more frustrating by the minute. I am also including Jeff Molenhuis and Chad Woodhouse to understand how transparency is not happening with residents.</p> <p>Jeff Molenhuis: I have corresponded with you and different Wilmot Staff members at various times over the years but this is an email I received from you on December 20, 2023:</p> <p>Good evening Kris, we've been waiting on a structural inspection report before we consider next steps on the Oxford Waterloo road bridge. As noted previously, follow up with Blandford-Blenheim and reporting to Council is still required. I expect any long term recommendations for the public engagement as well.</p>

Individual(s)**Correspondence**

You left me with wishful thinking and I felt you understood the needs of us "limited" residents. I have a few emails between both of these correspondences but I will get to the point.

Josh Brick; Your correspondence to me on May 6th, 2024 said the following:

We recently heard back from Wilmot regarding the OSIM report results.

Based on the repairs/ improvements letter that was provided (including recommendations and associated costs for necessary work) we understand that Wilmot intends to proceed with opening the bridge to pedestrians and light utility vehicles (e.g. ATVs, snowmobiles, etc).

This was good news to me! At least it wasn't full closure so there is hope.

Back to you Jeff Molenhuis;

How do we go from December 2023 to May 6th of hopeful thinking to shutting the door on residents.

I received an email from you on May 23, 2024 and you included a report that Wilmot Staff will be recommending a FULL CLOSURE AND DECOMMISSIONING of Oxford Waterloo Road Bridge 37B-OXF. This report was published in the K-W record and was put on the agenda for the Wilmot Township Council Meeting on Monday, May 27th, 2024. No communication was given to residents.

I attended the May 27th Wilmot Township Council meeting and I know for a fact that Wilmot Township Counsellors did NOT endorse the Full Closure and Decommissioning of OW bridge.

June 3rd, 2024, I have now been notified that Blandford-Blenheim Township will be presenting the recommendation of Full closure of OW 37B-OXF on June 5th.

I'm asking this question:

How is it that Wilmot Township staff still presents Option #1-Full Closure to Blandford-Blenheim when Wilmot Counsellors did NOT endorse this? I feel Wilmot Township should be advising Blandford-Blenheim of the updated report that includes 'Wilmot Counsellors' did NOT endorse Full Closure/Decommission.

This should not be about money but transparency as to what is happening within our Townships. I now know, without attending regular Council meetings, residents have no idea what is happening.

Individual(s)	Correspondence
	<p>Please get on the same page and let residents know what is really happening.</p> <p>Or let me know if I am mis-reading reports that you are both sharing with me.</p> <p><u>Township Staff to Kris Sangers - June 4, 2024</u> Good morning Kris,</p> <p>The report was presented to Wilmot Council with recommendation to investigate closure/decommissioning. Staff make recommendations based on technical information and best practices, which is the basis for the Wilmot report. We provided options that could be considered in place of the recommendation. Each option presented outlined the need for further contact and engagement with various stakeholders. Wilmot Council in principle endorsed Option 2 Remain Open to Light Vehicle and Pedestrians Only; and directed staff to investigate further impacts, communicate with local residents and various stakeholders, and provide a follow-up to Council during the 2025 Budget Process related to anticipated costs needed for the endorsed option.</p> <p>I see that Josh Brick has responded regarding the Blandford-Blenheim report. We hope to work collaboratively on the next steps of Option 2 as outlined to Wilmot Council, subject to Blandford-Blenheim Council approval. I trust this is of assistance.</p> <p><u>Kris Sangers to Township of Wilmot - June 4, 2024</u> I appreciate your quick response to my inquiry and for clarifying what will be presented to Blandford-Blenheim Council. Communication with local residents is very important and I look forward to future engagement on this topic</p>
<p>John & Andrea Black</p>	<p><u>Andrea Black to Township of Wilmot - June 5, 2024</u> Dear Jeff and Chad,</p> <p>We received communication from a neighbor regarding the future of the Oxford-Waterloo Rd. bridge. The report from staff to Wilmot Council suggested that resident input was requested.</p> <p>Resident numbers are small because this is a farming area, so there are few houses. However, I hope this will not affect the decision. I would hope we have the same rights of being heard regardless of how many we are.</p> <p>We are a family of seven [REDACTED]. We would like the bridge opened to vehicle traffic. Here are our concerns.</p> <p>COMMUTE My husband commutes to Stratford twice a day. When the bridge was open, he would head west on Oxford-Waterloo across the bridge and then continue north and west to work. Now, he has to go east to Puddicombe then back west across bridge. This inconvenience costs our family time and money.</p> <p>LOST JOBS Our teens used to milk goats at a barn [REDACTED]. It is located at the far west end of Oxford-Waterloo Rd. Since our teens were too young to drive, we would take them to and from work. Once the bridge closed down, the driving distance increased by</p>

Individual(s)**Correspondence**

approximately 16 kms per milking shift as we would have to go around a "country block" four times - there and back for drop off and there and back for pick up.

Due to the unreasonable amount of driving for a teen job, they had to quit working there, which was both a disappointment and a loss of income at a good employer.

LEFT TURN ONTO PUDDICOMBE

The left (north) turn onto Puddicombe from the west side of Oxford-Waterloo Rd. is tricky at the best of times. The road is 80 km/h, which means most people are traveling 90-100 km/h. There is a large curve as you come up Puddicombe from the south, plus a downhill drop from the north.

To compound matters, there are usually either crops growing in the southwest field or the ditch grass is uncut. Currently, the grass is over 2 ft tall and seriously obscures driving sightlines.

At our request, Blandford-Blenheim erected signs warning of a hidden intersection, but the turn is still dangerous.

For these reasons, we used to avoid the intersection as much as possible. Now, we are forced to use it all the time. These stressful turns are not helpful for our teens who are just learning how to drive.

UNUSUAL ACTIVITY AT THE RIVER

While we have no way to confirm what is occurring at the bridge, we strongly suspect the area is used by those engaged in illegal activities, such as selling drugs.

As I am at home most days, I am able to observe the traffic patterns. I have noticed several high-end vehicles driving up and down Oxford-Waterloo Rd. There is very little to attract them to our area - no parks, no scenic views, no mansions where they might have friends to visit. Furthermore, people in sports cars very rarely like driving on gravel roads for fear of stone chips.

Logically speaking, we should only be seeing farm vehicles and the cars and trucks of local residents, of whom there are few. Why, then, are there Audis and Mercedes on our road? This situation is beginning to make us very uneasy. We know that neighbors have contacted the police about this, but the police cannot be present 24/7.

LOSS OF SENSE OF COMMUNITY

We have five children under 18. When we moved here in 2020, I was quite comfortable allowing them to bicycle down to the bridge and ride on the path along the river which a neighbor has cleared for public use.

Now, I do not want them down there on their own. What if they stumble across a drug deal? Are their lives then in danger? Because I don't know the answer to this, I live with some fear.

Individual(s)	Correspondence
	<p>Our culture is built first on God, next on families, then on communities (made up by families). If we care at all about preserving our culture, we need strong communities. This situation at the bridge is eroding our community and our trust.</p> <p>Out here in the country, people still wave at each other on a gravel road. There is a general sense that we are all working towards the same goal - mutual respect and lives of peace.</p> <p>That is disappearing. The guys in the sports cars are not the waving type. There is no sense that they have the same goal we do.</p> <p>This is, perhaps, the biggest problem of all with allowing the bridge to decay. But you cannot grasp why this is important unless you know what it means to live in a community of trust.</p> <p>CONCLUSION You cannot put a price on a good community. Our society has become focused on money and blind to people. We are real people. These are not just words on a screen.</p> <p>We want to safely travel the roads which our tax dollars pay for. We want to go to work, do our part to build up society, and live in peace.</p> <p>You have the power to help make this happen. Please do the right thing</p>
	<p><u>Township of Wilmot to Andrea Black - June 6, 2024</u> Hi John & Andrea, Thank you for your email. We acknowledge its receipt. Please be advised that all inquiries will be documented as public record. Further outreach to stakeholders will be conducted at a later date.</p>
<p>Michael & Donna Procher</p>	<p><u>Donna Procher to Township of Wilmot - June 5, 2024</u> Dear Jeff and Chad,</p> <p>Please know that we heartily endorse the statements in the email (below) from our neighbours [REDACTED]. We live [REDACTED].</p> <p>We, too, have noted excess traffic on our road, despite the clear signs indicating this road is a dead end. If drivers do make a mistaken turn on to this stretch, they will turn around on our driveway. We, too, have wondered about drug deals. We've also noted cars travelling very slowly both ways.</p> <p>Every care was taken to reconstruct the beautiful new bridge on Bridge Street, including the recent upgrade. Perhaps similar care could be taken with the O-W bridge.</p> <p>At the very least, considering installing a number of security cameras at the bridge, as well as greatly increasing police presence so that if there were drug deals (as we suspect) the dealers would become aware of heightened security and would discontinue using this road.</p>

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	<p><u>Township of Wilmot to Donna Procher - June 6, 2024</u> Hi Donna,</p> <p>Thank you for your email. We acknowledge its receipt. Please be advised that all inquiries will be documented as public record. Further outreach to stakeholders will be conducted at a later date.</p>
Irene & Peter Lass	<p><u>Irene and Peter Lass to Township of Wilmot - June 5, 2024</u> Please forward this note to Blandford Blenheim and Wilmot Township mayors and councillors:</p> <p>To Mayors, Council Members and staff of Blandford Blenheim and Wilmot Township</p> <p>As taxpayers in both Blandford Blenheim and Wilmot Townships, we are shocked and surprised that removing a bridge on a county boundary road is being considered. It makes no sense to close this bridge for many reasons. The safety of homes in the area due to lack of easy, quick access of fire, police and ambulance services is of utmost importance.</p> <p>We were originally informed that this bridge closure was temporary while the emergency replacement of bridge street bridge in Wilmot was completed to divert traffic so extra traffic would not damage this bridge. Oxford Waterloo Road bridge was repaired a few years ago and was deemed safe and now engineers have deemed it unsafe to reopen??? What happened to the repairs that were done previously at significant cost and why has it been deemed unsafe now? This is a county boundary road that has shared responsibility between 2 municipalities that should not even be considered being closed. This was always a well used road by many.</p> <p>We want access through our community and to our neighbours. For us personally, it is a connection from one of our farms to the other. Without it, we will be forced to drive our slow moving farming equipment an extra 10 km and on main roads, which makes it dangerous for us and for others. This was manageable on a temporary basis. It is unfortunate over the years that many full dump trucks have damaged this bridge. We have called the township over the years telling them heaving trucks have been using it. The heavy equipment crossing was not enforced and the bridge was damaged. Very disappointing.</p> <p>We strongly request that you consider the full reopening of this bridge for our community. Thank you for your consideration!</p>
	<p><u>Township of Wilmot to Irene and Peter Lass - June 6, 2024</u> Hi Irene and Peter Lass,</p> <p>Thank you for your email. We acknowledge its receipt. Please be advised that all inquiries will be documented as public record. Further outreach to stakeholders will be conducted at a later date.</p>
Wilmot Township to Kris Sangers	<p><u>Township Staff to Kris Sangers - September 4, 2024</u> We wanted to keep you in the loop with the ongoing updates regarding bridge 37/B-Oxf. Currently we are in the midst of drafting a letter with updates which will be accessible to you on Wilmot Engage once posted. For now, we wanted to inform you that</p>

Individual(s)**Correspondence**

Township staff have developed two preliminary designs for a multi-use trail to support Council's decision of keeping the bridge open for pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

Design one consists of a multi-use trail beginning east of [REDACTED] field entrance and ending on the east side of the bridge, terminating before the intersection of River Road. A traffic turnaround for road maintenance purposes will be established on the west side of the bridge, just west of the start of the proposed trail and east of the field entrance [REDACTED].

Design two consists of a multi-use trail beginning just east of the existing driveway access to property 966637 Oxford Waterloo Road, continuing over the bridge and terminating before the intersection of River Road with a proposed turnaround for road maintenance purposes located just west of the beginning of the trail section on the west side of the bridge.

Regarding both designs there will be two barricades implemented. However, with design two, the first barricade would be placed just after the existing driveway access to property 966637 Oxford Waterloo Road. As such, there would be no access to [REDACTED] current field entrance and a relocation would be required. If design two is chosen, we would need to relocate the field entrance between the start of the projected trail and the driveway access [REDACTED].

When a final decision is made, we will be in contact again to discuss next steps and further action. For right now, we just wanted to inform you of the current updates we have.

Kris Sangers to Township of Wilmot - September 4, 2024

I know you are just the messenger, however, I am sorry to say this, but Wilmot has not been the most transparent Township to work with. I am very thankful you have included us in your proposal, however, you are ALL forgetting how important this bridge has been to the community. We lay at the bottom end of Wilmot Township so it's not a priority.

I will say, I am very thankful it will be a walking/bicycle path instead of allowing ATV's to cross the bridge. This is the first I have heard they have changed their minds to remove ATV's.

Since [REDACTED] is part of the equation, Option one is the choice and is the only choice.

If you do Option two, you are blocking access to [REDACTED] farm land. We rely on that part of [REDACTED] land for tractors and combines to plant and harvest [REDACTED] crop.

I would like to see a drawing of what both proposals are or a meeting with Township staff with us is beneficial to ensure the security of [REDACTED] land.

Also, when you say 'when a final decision is made', are you going to take our voice/selection into consideration or is Wilmot Township just going to do what they want to do.

Individual(s) **Correspondence**

Thank you for keeping me in the loop.

P.S. Will there be "no exit" signs erected before people enter or do we have to keep looking at the ugly orange barricades [REDACTED] that have been standing for the last 5 years. I would love some input on this if possible.

Township Staff to Kris Sangers - September 5, 2024

Thank you for your prompt response. We truly appreciate your feedback, and it will be considered as we finalize the design.

The current options are still conceptual, and further refinement will take place as we proceed. Additional public engagement opportunities will be provided, including a post on the Township's engagement webpage to gather community feedback.

Regarding the orange barricades, they are temporary traffic control measures until a permanent solution is in place. We will ensure proper signage is installed to inform drivers of the road closure before they enter the area.

Township Staff to Bill Dunker - September 4, 2024

We appreciate your input regarding bridge 37/B-OXF and we wanted to provide you with an update. As of May 27th, Council has decided to keep the bridge open for pedestrian and bicycle usage. Currently, we are in the midst of developing a letter which will be accessible to you on Wilmot Engage outlining this.

Township staff have now developed two preliminary designs for a multi-use trail to support this decision.

Design one consists of a multi-use trail beginning east of 966654 Oxford Waterloo Road's current field entrance and ending on the east side of the bridge, terminating before the intersection of River Road. A traffic turnaround for road maintenance purposes will be established on the west side of the bridge, just west of the start of the proposed trail and east of the field entrance [REDACTED].

Design two consists of a multi-use trail beginning just east of the existing driveway access [REDACTED], continuing over the bridge and terminating before the intersection of River Road with a proposed turnaround for road maintenance purposes located just west of the beginning of the trail section on the west side of the bridge.

As the proposed work will be conducted [REDACTED], we want to ensure that you are kept up to date with the ongoing project.

**Wilmot
Township to
Bill Dunker**