

Good evening councillors and committee of the whole,

My name is Phil Wendland. I have lived in Wilmot Township, in Petersburg specifically, since 2014 with my wife and daughter.

Thanks for having me here tonight to speak on the issue of the Drinking Water System in our neighbourhood.

No doubt you'll have received many emails with many questions so far, in particular over the last week. Including the ones I sent, which did not make it onto the agenda before the deadline but I believe will be included in the minutes of this meeting.

Largely these emails are due to an apparent push to seek approval to proceed with the drinking water system upgrade on what seems to be short notice.

Users of the Drinking Water System received a copy of the agenda for this evening on Dec 28th, a little over a week ago. That has left us with little time to examine the information, some of it new, being presented tonight.

And no doubt all of you haven't had much time to examine it and consider the implications either.

Unlike other taxpayer funded projects, users of this system are the ones that will be on the hook for the entire cost of this upgrade, as such we deserve to be stakeholders in the process.

It is our money being spent. And we won't even be owners of the system, or receive free water, despite the large forecast expenditure.

For most of us this will be the largest home related expense outside of our home acquisition cost, whether it ends up costing \$50k or \$30k. It is a big deal. And again, unlike other home related costs, we will not own anything more after this is done.

The level of scrutiny we are giving this should be a given. You yourselves would no doubt do so as well in our shoes.

As such, I believe that a higher standard of consultation needs to be in place for this project than for others managed by the Township. I believe we are owed this.

A week of time between the agenda being set, including information new to us, before a vote to proceed may be acceptable for other projects, but not for this one.

This is what has led to all of the questions that have been asked by email and at this meeting tonight. Things just aren't clear.

While there was public consultation last May and October, and the township did post answers to some of our questions on the Engage Waterloo Region site, that was a little more general in nature.

Now there are more specifics and new unknowns. And we, understandably, have more questions. Especially as a longer term water strategy and environmental assessment is being undertaken by the region in 2027 and can't be brought forward.

The watermain work is a large portion of the costs being presented and it would be a shame if our money is spent to upgrade it only to find out that water will be piped in from Waterloo, or elsewhere, as the region and Wimot grow.

Would staff be so eager to proceed if it wasn't us paying most of the bill?

We'd like to sit down with staff, and maybe even MTE, and get specific answers to our questions.

Email responses to our questions are appreciated but this type of one-off 1 on 1 communication leads to not everyone being on the same page,

and no one having a single source of true information. And no doubt it is inefficient for staff and all of you.

It also leads to confusion. Which, again, is not great given the large dollar figures being put out there for this project.

The Engage Waterloo Region site is a decent platform for recording questions and answers but we need some sort of method, or communication system, where further questions and answers can be compiled and recorded.

And also so that the ongoing questions that will ultimately come up as we move through this project can be answered and put on public record.

Why should you care? You don't live in our neighbourhood and what happens in this matter doesn't materially affect you.

You voting to go ahead is pretty easy and we couldn't even cast a vote against most of you in the next election to show our displeasure.

That said, you should care as ultimately we are all neighbours in Wilmot Township. It isn't a big place, population wise anyway.

We've probably passed each other at the no frills getting groceries, or while visiting circle k for slushies in the summer, or while having wings at ejs or dinner the scan and dram.

Some of our kids likely go to the same schools, and almost most certainly will when they go to WO.

Maybe you just see it as similar to having to put a new roof on your house or installing a new septic system. Just part of life and, in particular, part of home ownership.

The difference is that in those cases we could scrutinize costs, ask questions and get answers, and have some say in the outcome. And ultimately, we would own that roof or that septic system.

This project has the potential to cost us substantially more than a new roof or septic system and, so far, we are only being treated as the owners in terms of having to pay the bill.

So I ask that you consider our point of view that answers should be provided to our questions and that the decision to move ahead be put on hold until that opportunity has been provided.

Speaking for myself, but likely other neighbours too, we can be available more or less immediately to sit down but I understand that it takes time to set something up.

Maybe a goal of mid or late January would be a good time to target.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Phil Wendland

