

From: Dorothy Andy Wilson <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Destruction of Wilmot Farmland

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To: natasha.salonen@wilmot.ca, stewart.cressman@wilmot.ca, harvir.sidhu@wilmot.ca, kris.wilkinson@wilmot.ca, Steven Martin <steven.martin@wilmot.ca>, Lillianne Dunstall <lillianne.dunstall@wilmot.ca>, clerks@wilmot.ca

Dear Mayor Salonen, Councillor Cressman, Councillor Sidhu, Councillor Wilkinson, Councillor Martin and Councillor Dunstall,

My husband and I moved to [REDACTED] in 2011 after living in [REDACTED] for 38 years. It was returning to familiar territory for me having grown up in [REDACTED]. One of the things I enjoy about this area is being surrounded by thriving agricultural operations and having easy access to lovely natural areas like the Schout Wetlands. Soon after we moved here and started attending Zion United Church, I became a member of the Green Team there which subsequently morphed into the Nith Valley EcoBoosters. Before moving here, I had a long history of being involved in environmental issues. My involvement in environmental issues ramped up with the introduction of the provincial government's Bill 23. Here we are now with another major issue that is basically a continuation of our province's total disregard for the long-term planning that is required to protect our environment. That issue is, of course, the provincial government's support of the land assembly project in Wilmot.

The mayor and at least some of our councillors have indicated that there is support for the land assembly project in our community. I find that hard to believe when you take into account the abundance of "Fight For Farmland" signs that dot lawns and roadsides in this area and beyond in addition to the attendance at rallies, letters in the paper and delegations to both Wilmot and Regional Council. I am convinced that a majority of residents in Wilmot are opposed to the proposed expropriation of 770 acres of farmland. That does not mean that those in opposition are against development. It means that they want the development to take place in a more appropriate location. The Official Plan passed by all communities in Waterloo Region in 2022 indicated which areas are appropriate for industrial development and the land in question was not one of them.

There are many disturbing things about the proposed expropriation of the 770 acres in Wilmot. For me the top two issues are the potential impact on the Region of Waterloo's water supply from a large industrial operation at this location and the disregard for the importance of farming as critical for long term food security.

The location of the land in question is close to a water recharge area for the Region. As you know the majority of our water in Waterloo Region comes from aquifers that are accessed by municipal wells. Because of pollution of the local aquifer in the past, the town of Elmira relies on getting water from elsewhere in the Region. We cannot risk contaminating any more of our municipal water sources. With the proposed increase in population in the Region, access to clean water is going to be a critical issue in the near future. The risk of water contamination is also a risk for private wells belonging to neighbours of the proposed industrial site.

Permitting the destruction of prime farmland which hosts successful farm businesses threatens food security and economic sovereignty for our municipality, our province and our country. We have come to realize recently that the United States is not the friend we thought it was and Canada needs to institute measures to protect our sovereignty. One way of doing this is to protect our farmland and agricultural economy. Southern Ontario has some of the best farmland in the country. Farmers cannot move their farms to northern Ontario as has been suggested by Premier Ford. As an aside, protecting farmland is also beneficial for the environment. Many farms have woodlots, hedge rows, creeks and wetland areas in addition to the cultivated fields and all of those features have environmental benefits such as carbon capture and habitat for wildlife, some of which are essential pollinators.

Mayor Salonen and Councillors, do you realize that not taking a stand against the proposed expropriation is making your constituents question your ability to represent them? I know you work hard and have had to deal with several serious issues since taking office. However, I believe your stance on this issue will be what is remembered by your constituents and that memory, based on your actions to date, will tarnish your reputations. If you choose to align yourselves with the values of the majority of this community, you will demonstrate that you are good leaders and are willing to stand up for your community and its long-term health and well-being.

I am asking you to vote in support of a motion on transparency. I also want you to vote in support of a motion declaring that Wilmot is **not** a willing host for a mega industrial project on the lands proposed for that development. Your constituents are counting on you to act like the responsible leaders we thought you were when you were voted into your positions on Wilmot Council in 2022.

Dorothy Wilson

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