

From: [REDACTED] Krista Straus
To: [Natasha Salonen](#); [Lillianne Dunstall](#); [Steven Martin](#); [Kris Wilkinson](#); [Harvir Sidhu](#); [Stewart Cressman](#); [Clerks](#)
Subject: Wilmot and Bill 5
Date: May 24, 2025 5:17:41 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open any attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor Salonen and Wilmot Township Council,

I am writing to respectfully urge Wilmot Council to oppose Ontario's Bill 5, the *Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act*, or, at minimum, to seek clarification from the Province regarding its implications for our community.

While Bill 5 is a provincial matter, other municipalities, including Toronto and Kingston, have taken a stand against it, and Oxford County Council recently voted to request further information from the Province. I believe Wilmot Township should take similar action to protect our community's interests.

The proposed land assembly in Wilmot is now being mentioned by other municipalities, with Oxford County's warden referencing our township as an example of potential risks associated with provincial overreach, even without a Ministerial Zoning Order or Special Economic Zone designation (*The Woodstock Sentinel Review*, 2025). This situation underscores the need for vigilance. Your inaction to declare Wilmot as an unwilling host is now opening us up to potentially more government overreach. As well, if this land goes through, it will be setting a dangerous precedent. Other farmers in Ontario (and in Wilmot) may have to face similar issues if we fail to protect our farming community.

Bill 5, particularly Schedule 9, raises serious concerns by allowing the creation of "Special Economic Zones" where developments may be exempt from critical regulations, including the *Endangered Species Act*, *Environmental Protection Act*, *Ontario Heritage Act*, municipal bylaws, and potentially labour

and environmental laws. Such exemptions could exacerbate existing issues observed at the Wilmot site, including soil erosion and crop loss, despite current safeguards. The vague criteria for designating “Special Economic Zones” and identifying “trusted proponents” further heighten these concerns.

Toronto Zoo’s CEO, Dolf DeJong, testified at the legislative committee studying Bill 5, warning that it could lead to “the erosion of biodiversity and the loss of species at risk” and he opposes this bill (CBC News, 2025). I think we should listen to the Toronto Zoo over any politician's beliefs that this Bill will do the opposite.

Indigenous groups have also expressed opposition, citing threats to Indigenous rights and environmental protections.

In April, I contacted MPP Mike Harris to seek clarity on whether the Wilmot lands, if developed, would be designated a “Special Economic Zone.” Despite follow-up attempts, I have received no response. I respectfully request that the council seek answers from the Province on this matter, specifically:

1. If this land assembly goes through, will it be designated a “Special Economic Zone”?
2. What criteria will determine “Special Economic Zones” and “trusted proponents”?
3. What safeguards will protect Wilmot’s environment, farmland, and community interests under Bill 5?

While I understand the council’s hesitation to directly oppose provincial policy, silence may embolden further overreach.

References to Wilmot alongside St. Thomas by Minister Vic Fedeli and in discussions at Queen’s Park about Bill 5 suggest our township is at risk of being targeted for such designations.

I have noticed that a Conservative MPP recently spoke out against aspects of Bill 5 concerning the Dresden Landfill. This is what the world needs from our politicians. We need you to speak up. I urge this council to take a proactive stance by either opposing Bill 5 or requesting detailed clarification from the Province to protect Wilmot's interests.

And please note there are many in our community that will never write or call you but they are opposed to this Wilmot Land assembly.

Thank you for your dedication to our community and for considering this matter.

Sincerely,

Krista Straus of New Hamburg

PS Please add this correspondence to a future Council Agenda Package