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Presentation to the Township of Wilmot

April 4, 2022

Zone Change Application, Jackson Harvest Farms

Hallman Pit 1922 Witmer Road

Special Council Meeting

Honourable Mayor, Councillors, and Guests,

My name is Kevin Thomason. I am a long-time Wilmot resident and community advocate from Cedar Grove Road.

After three years of meetings, delegations, and presentations, along with countless letters, e-mails, and phone calls what is there left to say that you haven't already heard?

Yet, you see people lined up here by the dozens to speak tonight. This is new. In past decades, so many aggregate operations were approved in our township and region with far less citizen input or objection.

But as this Council demonstrated firsthand just the other day, with the unanimous approval of a motion calling on a moratorium on gravel pits, we are in a new era.

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People are worried and increasingly speaking up for the future that they want to see. Climate experts are increasingly panicked, and an entire generation of young people are already suffering from climate despair.

The people are protesting this pit and every pit. Your decision here tonight while it carries the guise of a simple Zone Change, we all know, will change these lands forever - from agricultural and natural heritage lands to an extractive industrial designation.

As much as there is the false hope and pipe dream of rehabilitation, there has never been an acre of gravel pit returned to productive prime farmland in Wilmot Township. Almost every aggregate pit ever approved in Ontario, languishes in some forlorn, depleted state with at best, tufts of grass here and there, scattered, abandoned piles of dirt with puddles, ponds and water bodies in various states of disarray.

We all know that pit rehabilitation is a joke in Ontario. Even Wilmot Township's own pit is more of an embarrassment and liability than something to brag about.

We all know that despite all the conditions listed for this pit, there will be few inspections, if ever, and no enforcement or follow-up as pit after pit across our province has proven repeatedly.

We know that not nearly enough aggregates are recycled, and that there is little effort to improve practices because of the way that aggregates

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trump everything in Ontario, and there are such tremendous profits to be made.

This is not sustainable in any way. There is no correlation between the destruction and actual need. Aggregate mining is out of control and is irreparably destroying much of the best farmland that we have while also threatening and destroying our precious groundwater.

Our community has no pipelines to Great Lakes. We are solely dependent on our local watershed for all our water needs and we must live carefully within the carrying capacity of our lands.

Some of our watersheds in Wilmot Township are already severely stressed and compromised. With huge growth forecast and thousands of more township residents to feed and sustain in the years ahead, we can't be destroying our farms, aquifers, groundwater recharger areas, and losing millions of litres of water like this.

Our planet is at the breaking point.

It is time to say No, and ensure that our grandchildren are proud of our legacy.

Our region is renown for being pioneers - be it the blue box that is now a global standard, ESPA areas, our Countryside Line, rapid transit, no smoking bylaws, and so many other things that are now taken for

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granted. Yet at the time, each one of these things took bold politicians going out on a limb and taking big risks. Opposition to every single one of these incredible initiatives was daunting and there were tremendous battles at the time.

Across Ontario municipality after municipality has been unanimously approving declarations for aggregate reform and moratoriums on seeing any more farmland destroyed for yet more gravel pits. We are already losing 175 acres of rural and farmland each and every day in Ontario.

Canadians are demanding better. But we need more than words and rhetoric. I don't think that any elected official who has called on Doug Ford to act with this recent moratorium actually believes the Premier is really going to do anything - anything but ignore them completely.

We know the provincial aggregate standards are too lax, outdated, and have been skewed dramatically to be in the interests of the operators - not the greater public good.

However, things are changing rapidly. There is a provincial election in just a few weeks, a municipal election in just a few months. We only have 91 months remaining to half our greenhouse gas emissions by an astounding 50% just to meet our Paris Accord Commitments by 2030.

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So many concerning aggregate pits, urban sprawl subdivisions, industrial developments, and attacks on our natural ecosystems are being appealed by increasingly concerned citizens that even with last week's OMB funding increase announced by Doug Ford, it will still be years before all these cases are heard. By then our world will have changed even more dramatically.

Wilmot citizens are not going to be upset to see our tax dollars spent at the Ontario Land Tribunal and in court protecting our local farmland, water, and communities. We are all here tonight because we are upset that our government isn't meeting our expectations, matching our values, and doing enough towards the future that we are increasingly so concerned about.

We all want to be on the right side of history. We all need to draw a line in the sand (or gravel), and we want you to stand up tonight and say No.

Please be the leaders that we hoped that we had elected. Be brave, for citizens remember positively the people who stood strong by their values and took bold actions, while also being extremely cynical at those who call for a gravel pit moratorium one week, and then astoundingly approve a new gravel pit the following week.

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In Conclusion,

We have no gravel shortage in Wilmot. This sand and gravel has laid here for millions of years and there will be lots of time to figure things out in future years if there ever is a need.

We must do better. Please reject this zone change application tonight. It is not in the best public interest, nor the Township's best interest.

Please ensure that Jackson Harvest Farms doesn't become Final Harvest Farms.

Thank you,

Kevin Thomason

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