

[REDACTED]  
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January 13, 2024

Dear Clerk Jeff Bunn,

I am addressing this to the Corporation of the Township of Wilmot Clerk as I want it to be deemed as official correspondence to be recorded on the agenda for Wilmot Council's next general meeting, probably Monday, January 15, 2024.

Mr. Bunn, you will please note that this communication is also copied to all 6 members of the Council as well as the C.A.O., Sharon Chambers. Of course, you will also convey this communication to them as a normal part of your duties.

I write this after reading a "news article" included in the January 13, 2024, online version of the *Waterloo Region Record*, written by reporter Bill Jackson, titled, "*Referendum could determine permanent plan for Wilmot's controversial prime minister statues*".

At the time of my reading, there were also appended 5 "comments" submitted by readers. The tone of all 5 seemed to be supportive of the statues being resurrected from storage and/or critical of a previous Council or paint being poured onto public property.

I would suggest that 5 comments, which appear to be leading in one direction for potential future action, do not represent the values, principles, and interests of Wilmot Township citizens as a whole. This method of gathering opinions or "positions" has no more statistical validity than the anecdotal survey method used originally by the First Peoples Group in 2021. There is no way to determine who these commentators are – whether they live in Wilmot Township or not.

The article indicates that a Wilmot Councillor appears to suggest a potential strategy for addressing an as-yet unaddressed situation in Wilmot Township – "*What do we do with the statues?*", and a step towards that is to consider a potential referendum.

It is my considered position that such a step, conducting a referendum, is premature, politically risky and does very little to address the fundamental, problem underlying the whole decision-making process regarding this and other issues in Wilmot.

That concern was recognized by the previous Council in its July 5, 2021 omnibus “Resolution No. 2021-141” which is the most recent direction by any Wilmot Council of actionable steps, including the issue of the statues.

The concern was stated as follows: “*Committing to transforming community engagement and consultation processes in Wilmot Township in a way that encourages greater openness, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making.*”

I suggest, through the Clerk to all Councillors, that this concern was a significant contributing factor in the defeat of potentially returning candidates from that previous Council and significant in the election of a completely new slate of present Councillors.

I encourage Councillors not to “blow it” by rushing forward without a comprehensive, broad-based, “due process” consultation with Wilmot citizens. It is my position, that a referendum on the simple question of ‘what do we do with them’ is premature and will not address citizens' concerns about how the Council consults with its voters nor, more significantly, address any potentially festering emotions around the specific issue of ‘the statues’.

Notice the first thing that the motion directs has to be done - ***creating a working group.***

This motion of July 5, 2021, is the last actionable direction given by a Wilmot Council on the statues issue. Unless the Council rescinds that resolution, it stands as the Township’s current position regarding a business item yet undone. If the Council ignores the motion, then it is repeating the errors of past Councils. The omnibus “Resolution” had 6 actions described:

1. Endorse the report from the First Peoples Group. **Done**
2. Remove and store the statues and discontinue any further expansion. **Done**
3. Terminate the agreement with Createscape. **Done**
4. Staff report back to the Council with an implementation plan for the next 2 action items. **Not yet done** (Fortunately in my opinion.)

5. Create a working group. **Not yet done**
6. Commit to transforming community engagement and consultation....”  
**No identifiable actions that could be interpreted as transformational – yet.**

What is the stated goal of the previous Council as legislated direction to subsequent Councils? See 2. b) “*Committing to transforming community engagement and consultation processes in Wilmot Township in a way that encourages greater openness, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making.*”

I suggest that the goal of the Council and Wilmot citizens is to develop a process that allows for all Wilmot citizens to have the invited opportunity to share their values, principles, understandings of what they believe to be ‘good’, ‘right’, ‘fair’, ‘just’, and ‘in the best interests of the public good’, particularly on questions of high public interest such as ‘the statues’.

I firmly believe that **the process, the answer, to how to address this issue** is not with a premature referendum, but rather is described in the July 5, 2021 motion itself. “1. a) *Creating a working group comprised of a balanced representation of the individuals and communities within Wilmot Township to discuss, develop and suggest plans for the implementation of next steps centred on community cohesion and healing.*”

I repeat keywords:

- creating a working group
- balanced representation
- individuals
- communities
- within Wilmot Township
- discuss, develop and suggest plans
- next steps
- community cohesion
- healing

**THIS VOTER’S SUGGESTED POLITICAL PROCESS RE. “STATUES” AND “ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION:**

Follow the sequential steps described in the standing resolution No. 2021-141, as follows:

1. Direct the C.A.O. and staff to prepare a report for the Council which describes a potential plan for creating a working group as per the specific criteria described in Resolution 2021-141, 1. a), and the report be submitted to the Council by \_\_\_\_\_. (date – February 19, 2024, for example).
2. The Council **receives** the report from the staff, (The Council does not *accept* it as it has not been reviewed by the Council as a whole to ensure compliance with all the criteria specified in the motion and as may be specified in addition by the Council. The Council may also choose to consult professionals who have experience in demographic analysis, training meeting facilitators, structuring statistically valid surveys and questionnaires, data collection, data analysis, etc. so that the working group has the required skills to perform its tasks.)
3. The Council directs its staff to develop a suggested action/implementation plan, for subsequent approval by the Council, that would include, for example:
  - identifying the criteria for eligibility for such a working group,
  - a strategy of advertising for working group members,
  - a confirmation/vetting process for verifying qualified candidates for the working group,
  - suggesting the mandated scope of responsibilities for the working group.
4. The Council **receives** the draft action plan from staff and determines an optimum path forward. **It is my suggestion that the Council create and implement not only a working group to discuss, develop and suggest plans for public engagement and consultation. I highly recommend that the Council subsequently empower this working group to lead the engagement and consultation process itself regarding the statues issue. The working group's public engagement and consultation on one issue would serve as an initial model of the commitment by the Council to openness, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making.**
5. After the Council has received the working group's report of its discussions, and suggested plan for transforming community engagement and consultation, and has approved its contents, then the Council should:

- authorize the working group to implement its plan of suggested engagement and consultation processes on the issue of the statues,
  - provide appropriate training to the working group's members so that they are skilled in conducting engagement and consultation meetings with the public, and efficient methods of collecting and interpreting data results,
  - create a budget and timeline for the working group that would include access to Wilmot Township's existing resources such as facilities in which to hold consultation meetings with citizens, meeting supplies (poster board, markers, post-its, easels, etc.), existing staff for advertising, printing, typing, data collection and analysis,
  - publicly advertise the scope and purpose of this entire plan for public engagement and consultation to "get ahead of any reactionary curve" in a proactive manner. This would include publicly specifying that this is a "made in Wilmot" test model for public engagement and consultation using the Prime Minister Path project as its topic, and recognizing that this process is to facilitate public discussion, the sharing of ideas, the compilation of any action recommendations by the public,
6. The Council directs staff to implement the steps in the process sequentially. The intent is that the Council determines and directs the timing and scope of each step in the process.
  7. The Council **receives** "regular" reporting by staff to individual Councillors and the Council as a body regarding progress by the working group's engagement and consultation progress.
  8. The ultimate goal is to have a working group report back to the Council with its findings. This full process of engagement and consultation by the working group has the purpose of empowering Wilmot Township citizens to talk, listen, teach, learn, share their truths, and recognize others' truths in a socially structured positive environment, with the potential bonus of differing truths becoming mutually understood and potentially reconciled with the truths of others.
  9. At the end of the working group's process of engagement and consultation, no decision has been made regarding what action the Council might take regarding, "What do we do about the statues?" However, the working group's report should give the Council a very good indication of the thoughts and recommendations of the Wilmot public. The Wilmot public.

10. The Council **receives** the working group's engagement and consultation report and decides on potential future action on the Prime Minister Path project. It is at this time, after careful deliberation, that the Council makes an action decision which it introduces as a resolution/motion at a General Meeting of the Council. That decision might include the option to conduct a referendum, knowing that at that time all Wilmot citizens had opportunities to 'have their say' shared in public and recorded as data, and now they would get to vote. A referendum on an emotionally sensitive, potentially divisive issue, before people have had a chance to share, talk, listen, teach and learn from each other in an environment that encourages calm, socially mature conduct, would be premature.

## CONCLUSION

It is my recommendation that the Council at its next general meeting consider passing a motion similar to the following:

**“It is moved by Councillor \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Councillor \_\_\_\_\_, that the C.A.O. and staff prepare a report for the Council which describes a potential plan for creating a working group as per the specific criteria described in Resolution 2021-141, 1. a), and the report be submitted to the Council by \_\_\_\_\_. (date)”**

Sincerely,

Barry Wolfe,



Copies:  
All Wilmot Councillors  
Sharon Chambers, C.A.O.