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**Sent:** Saturday, February 24, 2024 4:18 PM

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**Subject:** Schneider Family's Call to Action (#OPAA-01-23)

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Dear Mayor Natasha Salonen & Wilmot Council members; Steven Martin, Stewart Cressman, Lillianne Dunstall, Harvir Sidhu, Kris Wilkinson,

We are writing to urge you and your fellow members of Wilmot Township Council to approve without further delay the planning and severance applications (OPAA-01-23 and ZCA 01-23) that the **rare Charitable Research Reserve** and the Schneider family submitted to you in March 2023, so that the family's planned donation of **over 230 acres of pristine natural lands can proceed**.

**How we are connected to your office:** Ryan and I are local residents concerned about the recent media reports stating the primary obstacle to these approvals and this donation is the township planning staff's proposed requirement that a parking lot be built on or near these lands. We work at your local public health unit and local hospital as a health promotion research analyst and medical doctor. There is overwhelming scientific evidence to support that spending time in nature can lower levels of stress and improve mood. Please help us support the wellness of our community by preserving spaces for people to spend time in nature.

The township planning staff's proposed requirement that a parking lot be built on or near these lands is ill advised and unnecessary, for several reasons:

- When the donation proceeds, these lands will continue to be used in the same way that they have for decades. Lack of a parking lot has not created any serious problems before, so there is no need to build one now.
- These lands are among the most ecologically significant in Waterloo Region, and part of the Laurel Creek Headwaters Ecologically Sensitive Landscape. The whole point of the proposed donation is to conserve them in their current state. A parking lot would have numerous unacceptable impacts on this environment.
- The Schneider family and **rare** have proposed alternative solutions such as traffic-calming measures and enhanced signage to improve roadside parking around these lands, and at the Council's May 2023 meeting, it was decided that planning staff should work collaboratively with the City of Waterloo to have such solutions in place by the end of 2023. That deadline has not been met.

As you know, Jane Schneider is well into her nineties and would like to see the donation that she and her husband had planned become a reality while she is still here to see it. It would be a shame not to honour her wishes in this regard. It would also be a shame if the public were

deprived of such a unique, special gift simply because Council had not been determined to work collaboratively and timely with all concerned parties to overcome whatever obstacles stood in the way.

Once again, we urge you to take proactive measures to cut through the red tape and make sure that these lands remain open for the public to enjoy in their current state for generations to come.

We believe in your role and the leadership position you hold to advocate on our behalf, we hope that this is a topic you are also concerned about. Please help us preserve, protect and advocate for nature.

Sincerely,

Laura Aguiar, MPH & Dr. Ryan Scanlan, MD

Residents of [REDACTED]