

From: Ecumenical Working Group <ecumenicalworkinggroup@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2024 2:46 PM
To: Lillianne Dunstall <lillianne.dunstall@wilmot.ca>; Stewart Cressman <stewart.cressman@wilmot.ca>; Steven Martin <steven.martin@wilmot.ca>; Natasha Salonen <natasha.salonen@wilmot.ca>; Harvir Sidhu <harvir.sidhu@wilmot.ca>; Kris Wilkinson <kris.wilkinson@wilmot.ca>
Cc: Sharon Chambers <sharon.chambers@wilmot.ca>; Clerks <clerks@wilmot.ca>
Subject: Prime Ministers Path

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Dear Members of Wilmot Council,

The Wilmot Ecumenical Working Group on Indigenous/Settler Relationships supports the staff recommendation of proceeding with option 1 as outlined in the report, CAO-2024-03 Prime Minister's Path: Options for Next Steps, that is being presented to Council on Monday, February 26, 2024.

Our group was established in 2017 to respond to the TRC's 94 Calls to Action, in its specific calls to the churches. All interested churches and individuals, regardless of their affiliation with a faith community, are welcome to be part of this endeavour. We aim to promote understanding of the history of Indigenous communities in this area and beyond; create space for and facilitate relationship building between Indigenous and Settler people; and raise awareness of Settler privilege.

Over the years we have hosted numerous events that have attracted between 40 and 80 people. Just last week, at the Wilmot Heritage Day, we were pleased with the attention that our exhibit got. These experiences have shown us that our community is interested in learning more about Indigenous history and culture and how relationships with Indigenous people can be enhanced. We also know from our involvement in this work that there are many who feel they do not have a voice in what goes on in our community. In particular, Indigenous people prefer to remain invisible and silent because of past trauma caused by colonial structures.

Because of what we have come to learn about our community, we strongly support the recommendation made by the staff in their recent report, that is to "Maintain Current Direction and

Create a Working Group Comprised of a Balanced Representation of the Individuals and Communities within Wilmot Township."

Of course it would be nice to have the issue of the Prime Minister's Path settled quickly, but at what cost. Is this Council willing to risk continuing divisions in our community because people have not had the opportunity to listen to others with differing views and work on some mutually agreeable paths forward. As stated in the report "*First Peoples Group indicated that the divisiveness and challenges that the Township faced with extreme polarization runs much deeper than the Prime Minister's Path project alone and that by discontinuing any further commitment to the project would not erase the fear, harm, hate and division in the community. They advised that working to restore relationships and community cohesion will not only take dedicated effort but it will also take time.*"

A thoughtful and measured approach to dealing with the Prime Minister's Path must be undertaken. That is what the staff is recommending and what our group wholeheartedly supports.

Gladys Bender, Co-Chair and Dorothy Wilson, Secretary

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Wilmot Ecumenical Working Group

on Indigenous/Settler Relationships

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