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**Sent:** September 16, 2024 12:01 AM

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**Subject:** Potential expropriation of 770 acres of farmland in New Hamburg for industrial use

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Dear Mayor Salonen and Wilmot Councillors. The purpose of this e-mail is to reinforce the concerns that the **Nith Valley EcoBoosters** first expressed to you in a March 25, 2024 e-mail about the potential expropriation of 770 acres of farmland in New Hamburg for industrial use. Many issues continue to concern our group, but I will focus on just two of them.

The first is the negative impact of losing 770 acres of farmland. Farmlands feed us and protecting farmland is essential for long term food security. Almost all of the 770 acres in question are currently producing food. There are a few small home parcels that comprise less than 2% of the land holdings, but even they have extensive home gardens. In addition to producing food for our community, this farmland is increasingly important as we deal with the climate crisis. Woodlots, wetlands, and other vegetation on farms are a source of carbon capture which is important for mitigating climate change. In June 2024, Climate Action Waterloo Region presented a report indicating that the Region is not on track to meet its 50% greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2030. In order to reach the target, annual GHG emissions need to be reduced by approximately 215,000 tonnes of CO2 each year which is equivalent to 46,421 gas-powered passenger vehicles driven for 1 year. We therefore cannot afford to remove 770 acres of carbon capture farmland which are helping to reduce greenhouse gases.

Wetlands on farms enhance biodiversity; provide habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife; filter pollutants from the water before it soaks into the ground; and help to control flooding. Tinkering with wetland systems opens the literal floodgates and future lack of water purification systems nature has freely provided. Trees on farms provide oxygen; absorb carbon; cool the environment; capture, store and filter rain water; and provide habitat for insects, birds and other wildlife. Wetlands and trees are vital for the long -term environmental health of our community, the country and, indeed, the entire planet. Invocation of colonization-style planning which sees land as “empty” and only useful if it is developed, is not helpful for the future health of human and business life in Ontario. Indeed after 150 years we are now seeing the devastating effects of climate change and human suffering caused by colonization-style planning and development employed by previous national and provincial governments. We do not need that colonization-style planning to be repeated. Wetland systems, natural spaces and green corridors are essential to our health and well-being. Preserving these systems requires the highest level of legal and moral protection. If the proposed expropriation of land proceeds, the wetlands and trees in this area

would be threatened. We cannot afford to lose 770 acres of farmland, wetland and trees.

The second issue I would like to focus on is the potential negative impact of the expropriation of this land on our drinking water. The 770 acre area abuts the edge of the Waterloo Moraine and is only a few hundred metres from primary groundwater recharge areas. These are the areas of sand and gravel through which rainwater flows to become drinking water for people throughout Waterloo Region.

Numerous springs and creeks are also located in this area. Most of the farms to the south are dependent on the water run-off from this area. For example, farms such as Tim and Eva Wagler's grows 500,000 lbs of cabbage and produces thousands of pounds of sauerkraut that is almost entirely dependent on irrigation and run-off coming from this area. If the moraine starts to be used for industrial development or gets polluted, it compromises that water supply and increases the chances that our drinking water would eventually have to come to the region by pipeline from one of the Great Lakes.

Since most of our drinking water comes from ground water, it makes sense to do everything possible to protect it. This is why the Region of Waterloo has a Source Protection Plan that is intended to protect municipal wells from activities that could contaminate our drinking water. In addition, according to its website, the Township of Wilmot is committed to providing safe drinking water to its residents. Local citizens are encouraged to conserve water and adopt behaviours that protect water from contamination. It follows then, that our Region and municipalities should not allow any activities that could jeopardize our water sources such as permitting industrial development that is very close to municipal wells which could happen if these 770 acres are expropriated.

In the past, Waterloo Region has had a reputation for thoughtful planning that has protected farmland and environmentally sensitive landscapes. Farmland, water, wetlands, woodlots and wildlife are all natural assets that must be protected. The Nith Valley EcoBoosters urges you, and all Wilmot councillors, to stand with the citizens of Wilmot Township and say NO to this proposed land expropriation.

Tom Knezevich

Chair



**Nith Valley EcoBoosters**

- committed to achieving and supporting  
a long-term healthy environment

in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships  
through education, action and collaboration.

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