



PRESS RELEASE

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Wilmot Farmers and Citizens Are Unwilling: Are Wilmot Township's Mayor and Councillors Willing Hosts?

Wilmot Township, April 23, 2024

During a recent visit to the Waterloo Region, Ontario Premier Doug Ford addressed the ongoing significant protests in Wilmot Township surrounding the forced expropriation of 770 acres of prime agricultural land. Premier Ford, who previously encouraged municipalities across the province to prepare shovel-ready plots for business development, emphasized that development should only occur with willing hosts.

Specifically, the Premier said “We’re just asking regions around the province: assemble land. But there has to be a willing host. If they’re not willing, then just move on. That’s what it comes down to.”

Wilmot farmers and citizens have made clear by the thousands that they are unwilling and will not be willing hosts for this development scheme that is so incongruent with all existing planning and Official Plans. Local meetings have been packed to capacity, over 30,000 signatures have been collected on petitions, hundreds of lawn signs stating opposition now line area streets, and thousands of letters, e-mails, and calls have been sent to silent municipal and regional elected officials who refuse to comment.

Notably, esteemed figures including Senator Rob Black, NDP MPPs, Green Party MPPs, Liberal MPPs, and Liberal MPs and Green Party MPs have all publicly voiced their support for the community and expressed serious concerns. Several politicians have also created additional petitions advocating for transparency, comprehensive information disclosure, and a reassessment of alternative sites.

Wilmot Township residents are questioning whether their elected officials agree with their concerns or if they are acting as willing hosts for massive development. **Quite simply, we are asking if the Wilmot Mayor and Wilmot Councillors are willing hosts for this regional industrial mega-site contrary to the vast majority of citizens and area farmers.**

Are our elected officials who are going against all previous planning and have not even held a single public meeting or provided any information about what is proposed for this site willing to sacrifice irreplaceable farmland, contamination of the Region of Waterloo water supply,

negatively impact agriculture throughout Wilmot, as well as risk so many environmental and water issues without even a single study?

Is Wilmot Township unwilling or willing to compromise its foundational values for the sake of Provincial and/or Federal Government funds?

Concerned citizens of Wilmot Township have mobilized a significant grassroots movement. "This project must not proceed without basic planning, study, and meaningful community engagement, it's absurd that it has even gotten this far" emphasized Alfred Lowrick. "People are appalled by this, and we certainly are hearing that citizens are unwilling." According to Kevin Thomason, Vice-Chair of the Grand River Environmental Network, "This expropriation isn't even necessary at all, especially when there are numerous alternative sites available that offer greater advantages and have fewer negative impacts on our vital agricultural lands, groundwater, and environment."

Premier Doug Ford's remarks on the matter underscored the importance of collaboration, public engagement and adherence to long-term planning such as our Regional Official Plan developed through proper planning processes spanning years and input from thousands of people. The Premier's comments also highlighted the need for mutual consent and shared objectives – all of which are missing in this current situation.

In response to the Premier's clear comments and criteria, Alfred Lowrick, speaking on behalf of the Fight for Farmland group, issued a direct challenge to Wilmot Township Councillors and the Mayor – Are they going to represent their constituents or are they going to force this mega-development on the unwilling without even so much as a single public meeting?

The community seeks clarity and assurance regarding their stance on this pivotal issue that impacts profoundly all of Wilmot Township as well as the wider Waterloo Region and Southwestern Ontario.

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