

April 3, 2024

Ms. Karen Redman, Waterloo Region Chair
Ms. Natasha Salonen, Wilmot Township Mayor

CC:

Waterloo Region Councillors:

Doug Craig, Robert Deutschmann, Jim Erb, Sue Foxton, Michael Harris, Chantal Huinink, Colleen James, Jan Liggett, Dorothy McCabe, Joe Nowak, Sandy Shantz, Berry Vrbanovic, Kari Williams, Pam Wolf

Wilmot Township Councillors:

Stewart Cressman, Lillianne Dunstall, Steven Martin, Havir Sidhu, Kris Wilkinson.

City of Kitchener Councillor for Ward 9: Debbie Chapman

MP's and MPP's

Aislinn Clancy, Kitchener Centre MPP
Mike Harris, Kitchener-Conestoga MPP
Catherine Fife, Waterloo MPP
Mike Morrice, Kitchener Centre MP
Tim Louis, Kitchener-Conestoga MP

Government of Ontario

Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Marit Stiles, Leader of the Opposition, Ontario
Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade
Terence Kernaghan, Critic, Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade
Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs
John Vantoff, Critic, Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Affected Farmer, Alfred Lowrick

Dear Ms. Karen Redman and Ms. Natasha Salonen,

Re: Concern about Land acquisition in Wilmot Township, Waterloo Region

I am addressing you both as appointed spokespeople for Waterloo Region regarding the recent and sudden offers by a US based company to purchase "shovel-ready" farmland in Wilmot Township on behalf of the Region for a rumoured industrial development.

I spent a good portion of my growing up years in Wilmot Township on a thriving dairy farm that is still in the family. I now own a home in the City of Kitchener and work for the University of Guelph.

The challenge of "development" cuts across urban and rural communities. So often those of us in a city have little sense of life in the country, especially for farmers, though we benefit from their labour and production in tangible and life-giving ways, everyday. The slogan, "Farmers Feed Cities," is not just a slogan, it is a truth we ignore at our peril. In the same way, cities also provide services to rural dwellers that they would be hard-pressed, at least in this modern era, to do without. We need each other.

It is imperative, therefore, that I speak out against taking prime and actively farmed land out of production for a rumoured industrial project with the following concerns:

1. As some have noted, agriculture is industry in Canada – so this move pits one type of industry against another! Why is factory production more relevant or beneficial to the economy and community than agriculture? Why not work at creating “shovel-ready” land using what is already degraded as asked by affected farmer, Mr. Lowrick, in his [presentation to Wilmot Council on March 25?](#)
2. Waterloo Region has stood tall in its commitment to a hard boundary between the city and the country – because we care about the environment and have a holistic view of a healthy, mixed economy. How does this development relate to that policy?
3. I am deeply saddened by, and disappointed in, the secrecy of the project to date. I do understand there are times when a quiet approach makes sense, but strict NDA’s immediately cause mistrust and quickly become counterproductive to communication and dialogue. I strongly encourage you as leaders to find your way to clarity, openness, and transparency with integrity – first with those most directly impacted: the farmers; and then with us, the broader community who are watching and concerned.

Yours Sincerely,

Mary Lou Klassen
Kitchener, Ontario.
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