

**Region of Waterloo**  
**Engineering and Environmental Services**  
**Growth, Development, and Sustainability**

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**To:** Regional Council  
**Meeting Date:** February 10, 2026  
**Report Title:** Sustainable Use of Water Resources for Municipal Supply (1980 Policy on Water Taking - Wilmot Township)

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**1. Recommendation**

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo rescind the 1980 Policy on Water Taking-Wilmot Township (commonly referred to as the 1980 Policy) to allow the transfer of surplus water to the Mannheim Service Area, while continuing to protect long-term water supply for growth in Wilmot Township, as outlined in report EES-WIM-26-003, dated February 10, 2026.

**2. Purpose / Issue:**

The Wilmot Centre Wells have sufficient capacity to meet the forecasted growth needs of Baden and New Hamburg through to 2051, while still supporting the transfer of approximately 30 L/s of additional capacity to the Mannheim Service Area, where there is a current water capacity constraint. To do this the 1980 Policy needs to be rescinded.

The 1980 Policy on Water Taking - Wilmot Township is a Council resolution passed in 1980, and amended in 1984, that guided the use of water from production wells in Wilmot Township. Since 1980, the Mannheim Water Treatment Plant was commissioned and there have been significant advances in groundwater science, technology, and monitoring that protects the current and future water supply needs of Wilmot Township.

**3. Strategic Plan:**

Optimizing the use of local water supply resources supports the Region's Strategic Plan – Homes for All, by ensuring an adequate drinking water supply for future residents and businesses.

#### **4. Report Highlights:**

- Drinking water sources in Waterloo Region include groundwater wells and surface water from the Grand River. The Region operates a complex water system that is unique as it is the largest municipality in Ontario to rely primarily on groundwater for its drinking water.
- The Region plans water servicing holistically for residents throughout Waterloo Region via the Water Supply Strategy Update. This type of approach is more efficient, more sustainable (because pumping can be distributed to where it is needed regardless of boundary lines), and more cost effective.
- As the Wilmot Centre wells can supply sufficient water for both current and future forecasted growth needs in New Hamburg and Baden, 30 L/s of excess capacity can immediately be transferred to the Mannheim Service Area where current water constraints have been identified
- This requires rescinding the 1980 Policy that guided the use of water from production wells in Wilmot Township and restrictions on its use in Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo (Tri-Cities). The need for the 1980 Policy has been replaced by a more protective measure, namely the Region's groundwater and surface water monitoring network, which provides scientific data to inform decisions to protect local groundwater resources.
- The 1980 Policy creates challenges in managing municipal water takings by adding significant operating complexity and expense.
- The ongoing Water Supply Strategy Update is developing a plan to meet future water supply needs for the Integrated Urban System through to 2051, which may include sources from Wilmot Township. The Water Supply Strategy Update, expected to be completed in 2027 will confirm alignment between updated growth forecasts and system capacity.

#### **5. Background:**

The Region of Waterloo's Integrated Urban System (IUS) provides drinking water to Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, and some communities in the Townships of North Dumfries, Wilmot, and Woolwich. The IUS is made up of two individual service areas - the Mannheim Service Area and the Middleton Service Area.

For the communities of Baden and New Hamburg in Wilmot Township, water is supplied from the New Hamburg Water Treatment Plant and the Wilmot Centre Wells. When considering the water needs for Baden and New Hamburg through 2051, it was identified that additional water supply is available from the Wilmot Centre wells to support the Integrated Urban System. This aligns with the holistic approach to meet

community water supply needs throughout Waterloo Region.

Based on population growth forecasts through the Water Supply Strategy Update and water use per capita rates in the 2025 Water and Wastewater Monitoring Report for the Baden – New Hamburg Water System, the average day demand for Baden and New Hamburg is forecasted to be approximately 49 L/s in 2051. This represents an increase in demand of approximately 48% (or 16 L/s) in comparison with 2024 average day demands (33 L/s as per the 2025 Water and Wastewater Monitoring Report).

It is noted that the additional 30 L/s of water from the Wilmot Centre Wells can be reallocated to the Mannheim Service Area which also benefits the Mannheim Village area of Wilmot Township, which is supplied by the Mannheim Service Area.

If growth in Baden and New Hamburg were to exceed these forecasted 2051 demands, operational adjustments could be made to optimize water supply transfer to best meet the overall needs of the communities in Waterloo Region. In addition to supply from the Wilmot Centre Wells, there is also an opportunity to optimize supply from the New Hamburg Water Treatment Plant to meet water demands from future growth. Additional opportunities for future water supply sources in Wilmot Township, and across the Region, will continue to be investigated.

After a capacity constraint was uncovered in the Mannheim Service Area, staff recommended the transfer of approximately 30 L/s of excess capacity to the Mannheim Service Area, to help alleviate the constraint. To do this the 1980 Policy needs to be rescinded.

### **1980 Policy on Water Taking - Wilmot Township:**

The 1980 Policy on Water Taking - Wilmot Township is a Council resolution related to water takings from drinking water production wells in Wilmot Township to supply the Tri-cities (which forms the majority of the Integrated Urban System). The water is supplied from three separate well fields: Wilmot Centre, Mannheim West and Erb Street. The limits are based on an annual volume determined using 1978 volumes from these well fields. The 1980 Policy was adopted based on concerns from Wilmot Council and residents that a valuable local resource was being transferred out of their community for the sole benefit of supporting growth in urban areas. The focus of the 1980 Policy was primarily between the years of 1980 and 1990, before the Mannheim Water Treatment Plant was built and commissioned. On August 21, 1980 Regional Council approved the Water Taking Policy (1980 Policy). The terms of the 1980 policy approved by Regional Council are summarized in Appendix A.

The time frame outlined above represents a period where water shortages in the Tri-Cities were being experienced and the long-term solution of building the Mannheim Water Treatment Plant was under development but still needed time for implementation.

The 1980 Policy was revisited by Regional Council on April 26, 1984 and the following direction amended the reference in Item 6 to the making of a decision regarding the development of additional water supplies in 1983-84:

*“THAT the Policy on Water-Taking in Wilmot Township remain in force until such time as the final results of the Master Water Supply Study are available for discussion with Wilmot Council”.*

The updated direction from Council is summarized in Appendix B.

### **Protecting water supply for growth in Wilmot Township:**

When considering additional water supply opportunities, it is important to emphasize that the Region’s approach is to sustainably meet local water demand first.

### **Advances in groundwater science and regulations:**

In the intervening 45 years since the Council resolution, there have been many protective regulatory changes and scientific advances affecting the planning and operation of the Region’s municipal water supply systems. The Region has used these advances in groundwater science, technology and monitoring to effectively and sustainably manage groundwater takings from the local aquifers. In addition to traditional monitoring associated with Provincial regulations, the Region implemented the Wilmot Centre monitoring program in 1997 that reviews groundwater and surface water conditions. The Wilmot Centre monitoring program locations are provided on a map in Appendix C. This map also shows monitoring locations required to support the Wilmot Centre Permit to Take Water.

### **Optimized Region-wide solutions:**

As water demands increase to support a growing population, it is important for the Region to manage municipal water takings on an integrated and watershed basis. Water supply aquifers are large, geographically extensive hydrogeological features which are a shared resource; these aquifers are not confined by municipal boundaries, and water taking rights are managed and approved by the Province in accordance with the Ontario Water Resources Act. Further, the Integrated Urban System has evolved from primarily servicing the Tri-City area to also servicing many rural communities within the adjacent Township including the community of St. Agatha within Wilmot Township. This allows the Region to spread out pumping over more sources and Region-wide areas, which reduces reliance on peaking of individual well sources. In turn, this will help minimize the risk of water level impacts to private well owners from potential over-pumping in localized areas. The flexibility to provide Region-wide solutions also improves efficiency and reduces overall costs for residents.

## **New water supplies needed for the community:**

The ongoing Water Supply Strategy Update is developing a plan to meet future water supply needs for the Integrated Urban System through to 2051. As per Council report EES-WAS-24-008, dated October 28, 2024, the Water Supply Strategy Update is reviewing new additional water supply opportunities throughout Waterloo Region, including from areas that are not within the geographical boundary of the Integrated Urban System.

## **6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public**

### **Area Municipalities:**

As part of the Water Supply Strategy Update, a Planning and Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC) was formed. Representatives from all area municipalities are included on the PTAC, and two meetings have been held to date. Information shared with PTAC members regarding the WSSU included the approach for new water supply opportunities. This approach included looking for new water supply opportunities throughout Waterloo Region, including areas that are not currently in the Integrated Urban System.

### **Public:**

Council report EES-WAS-24-008 made available to the public on the Region's website outlined the approach for new water supply in the Water Supply Strategy Update, which considers opportunities for new water supply throughout Waterloo Region, including areas that are not currently in the Integrated Urban System.

Providing a safe, sustainable water supply to the community is the Region of Waterloo's top priority. More information on the Water Supply Strategy Update is available on the Region's webpage (<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/water-supply-strategy.aspx>) and through EngageWR (<https://www.engagewr.ca/watersupply>). The Region has also established a webpage dedicated to Water Capacity ([regionofwaterloo.ca/watercapacity](https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/watercapacity)).

## **7. Financial Implications:**

	<b>Current Year</b>	<b>Future Year(s)</b>
<b>Budget Impact?</b>	No impact	No impact
<b>Capital Plan Impact?</b>	No impact	No impact

## **8. Conclusion / Next Steps:**

The Wilmot Centre Wells have sufficient capacity to meet the forecasted growth needs of Baden and New Hamburg through to 2051, while still supporting the transfer of approximately 30 L/s of additional capacity to the Mannheim Service Area, where there is a current water capacity constraint. This requires rescinding the 1980 Policy on Water Taking - Wilmot Township.

Protective regulatory changes, advances in groundwater science, technology, and implementation of the Regional environmental monitoring program provides enhanced levels of confidence and oversight for the sustainable use of water resources in Wilmot Township.

The ongoing Water Supply Strategy update is developing a plan to meet future water supply needs for the Integrated Urban System through to 2051, which may include sources from Wilmot Township. The updated Strategy is expected to confirm alignment between updated growth forecasts and system capacity. It will come back to Council in 2027 and lay out the path forward to meet the 2051 growth target needs across Waterloo Region.

## **9. Attachments:**

Appendix A: Policy on Water Taking in Wilmot Township, April 1, 1980

Appendix B: Portion of Council Direction adopted April 26, 1984

Appendix C: Wilmot Centre Monitoring Program Map

**Prepared By:** Kaoru Yajima, Manager, Engineering and Planning

Geoff Moroz, Manager, Hydrogeology and Water Programs

**Reviewed By:** Amy Shaw, Director, Water and Wastewater Operations

**Approved By:** Mathieu Goetzke, CAO, Region of Waterloo