

Next steps to safeguard Wilmot groundwater supplies

Dear Chair Redman and Members of Regional Council,

I am writing to express my deep concern with Council's decision to rescind the 1980 Wilmot water agreement.

This decision is not simply an administrative update to an outdated policy. It removes a longstanding safeguard that was put in place for a clear and well-documented reason: to prevent the harmful impacts of overpumping on Wilmot's groundwater system. Historical evidence dating back to the 1970s demonstrated that excessive regional pumping caused interference with private wells and contributed to the drying of streams and wetlands. Those risks have not diminished—they have intensified.

Council's decision appears to disregard both this historical record and the compelling present-day evidence provided by residents. Individuals came forward to share firsthand experiences of wells running dry and wetlands disappearing. These accounts were not speculative; they reflect real impacts already occurring within the system. To proceed without meaningfully addressing these concerns signals a troubling dismissal of both community knowledge and hydrogeological reality.

At the same time, the aquifer is under increasing pressure. Ongoing development on the moraine continues to reduce recharge capacity, while demand for groundwater grows. In this context, removing protections—without establishing any clear, enforceable replacement measures—represents a significant and unjustified risk.

I recognize the urgency of addressing the development freeze in the Mannheim service area and the economic consequences that come with it. However, enabling additional water-taking without first securing the sustainability of the source is not a responsible solution. It shifts risk onto Wilmot residents and the natural systems that depend on this aquifer.

If Council believes the 1980 agreement was outdated, then it had an obligation to replace it with a modern, science-based framework that provides equal or greater protection. Rescinding it outright, without such a framework in place, is a serious failure of due diligence.

I urge Council to take immediate corrective action by:

1. Establishing clear, science-based limits on groundwater extraction
2. Implementing robust, transparent monitoring and public reporting

3. Protecting remaining recharge areas from further loss
4. Creating enforceable mechanisms to address and remedy impacts to private wells and ecosystems

Groundwater is not an unlimited resource, and the consequences of mismanagement are long-lasting. This decision risks repeating known mistakes, with potentially irreversible outcomes.

Council must demonstrate that it is prepared to govern not only for immediate pressures, but for the long-term health and resilience of the region. I ask that you reconsider this decision and act swiftly to put meaningful protections in place.

Sincerely,

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