

Dear Ms. Redman,

What's the Region's fundamental goal: reducing emissions OR continuing life as usual? It can't be both.

The news below was certainly a gut punch for those of us who live and work in our beloved but polluted downtown Elmira. And here we volunteers were, so naively psyching ourselves up to raise almost \$1 million for trees on our downtown core!

As much as the Woolwich staff have tried to put a positive spin on the news, the folks who actually use Elmira's downtown core on a daily basis cannot help but feel deep defeat. Our Region has literally instituted years, and years, and years, and years of delay.

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## Greening a priority as Arthur Street delays continue

Region has pushed back reconstruction project again, so township focuses on Elmira core improvements available in the meantime

**Steve Kannon**  
Observer Staff

**THE REGION HAVING PUSHED BACK** for at least four years plans to reconstruct Arthur Street in downtown Elmira. Woolwich is still looking to do some revitalization work. The bulk of the improvements will have to wait until the road project gets underway, however. The Elmira BIA, for instance, has put on hold some of the improvements it plans for the core. The likes of large planting cells, which would nurture trees planted along the urban strip, will have to wait until the road and sidewalks are dug up. Still, there are some greening plans in the works, notes BIA chair Jon Clay, who got an additional \$17,000 in funding from the township in this year's budget. Last year, the Business Improvement Area group spent more than \$30,000 to augment greenery in the core, some \$20,000 more than it would in a typical year. The township itself is continuing preparations for when the Region of Waterloo moves ahead with the Arthur Street project. Some \$75,000 is earmarked in the budget for design work, said Jared Puppe, Woolwich's director of infrastructure services. "Some of the areas that we're looking to revitalize are the public spaces. As well as doing some land valuation for areas that we think we would like to explore to become public spaces, namely the parking areas ... the Wyatt Street parking lot," he said. While the latest delay in the regional project gives the township some time for extra planning and setting aside money for the reconstruction, the work needs to get done in a timely fashion, Puppe noted, pointing to the watermain that needs to be replaced. "Maybe there's some good takeaway in that it gives us a little more time to sort of cobble together some dollars, because it's a pretty significant undertaking," he said.



The region has pushed off plans to reconstruct Arthur Street until at least 2027.

"The tricky part for us is going to be if they kick that down the road far enough ... it leads us into needing to look at replacing the watermain. We were willing to sort of forego that, thinking that the timing would work out and roll the dice, but if that gets too far down timeline..."

"The region is going to have to do something. They cannot leave that pavement condition the way it is for any length of time."

Long delayed, the Arthur Street reconstruction plan has been pushed back again, though the region will move ahead with some other work, including the second phase of the Church Street East project.

"If approved, Church Street East construction would start later this year, Arthur Street bridge work at Canagagigue Creek would be completed in 2025, and Arthur Street reconstruction would start in 2027 with an expected completion in 2029," said Boris Latkovic, a senior engineer, design

and construction, with the region.

Woolwich Mayor Sandy Shantz, who sits on regional council, said she's pushing to bring the timeline forward, noting the work is long overdue. Likewise, the township is pushing the region to expedite plans for a bypass route to prevent trucks from passing through the downtown. Revitalization of Elmira's core is particularly reliant on that truck bypass, she said.

In the meantime, not everything's on hold. Along with greening projects through the BIA, the township and volunteer groups, Woolwich is also looking at opportunities that would see developers make use of underused land in the core area.

"What we're looking to do is sort of pick the pieces that are under our purview that really don't rely on that reconstruction project, and then start to incrementally bring those online," said Puppe of the potential for work getting done ahead of the regional project.

In 2016, when I read about the magnetite in car/truck exhaust, linked to Alzheimer's, that go directly to the brain, I reassured myself it was only a matter of 20-30 months till we'd have Arthur Street trees again to absorb some of this soul-destroying pollution.

Brain damage due to a mix of two types of iron, called ferric and ferrous iron. molecules is known to occur very early in the course of Alzheimer's disease.

That was some 84 months ago now. And here I sit: no bypass, breathing and eating pollution from some 450 trucks per day, for multiple years to come, as I walk to the

library, bank, shops, and pharmacy. Yes, we seniors are supposed to live where we can walk everywhere.

I was 68 when I read that article. Now I am 75 and still breathing/eating that deadly air surrounding my downtown home, wondering if I'll be the first in my family with Alzheimer's? I'm wondering about the brains of the kids who live downtown and the retail workers, after four more years of magnetite directly to the brain.

Woolwich! Remember us? Our volunteers took years off their lives, diligently prepping and delegating to the Region in 2022 helping shape that brilliant ROP. Our Council showed leadership as the first rural township to vote to preserve all existing farmland in the recent ROP. Our volunteers have led and monitored the chemical contamination and cleanup in the local aquifer for over 30 years. If you want more examples of our Woolwich leadership in the Region, I'm thinking Mayor Shantz had a substantial list.

And who do you think will be out there fighting on your team when the Province decides our new ROP doesn't suit them?

In 2023, why is there

- big money and support for an airport,
- forcing 19,000lb emissions per flying hour/per plane
- into our 5-10 km deep troposphere,
- yet not enough money to lower the emissions in a gem of a community that has already taken a giant hit for the team?

The issue is leadership. Studies show that kids' mental health is being damaged by a leadership that is not acting in accordance with known science, thus jeopardizing a livable future for all. I'm with the kids on this one, but feeling a little less blue I imagine, as I have already lived an unimaginably rich and long life.

For me, this delay creates a liability.

At the same time, I thank you for all that you do - I couldn't and am deeply grateful that you can.

Kindest regards,

Sandra Bray



Woolwich Climate Action, ClimateActionWR, GreenWR, Climate Reality Leader, Assuring Protection for Tomorrow's Environment (APT Environment), Co-founder, 1989, Board Member, current Woolwich CleanTech, Tour/Directory, Developer, GREN, Member

*Private sufficiency+Public luxury=Sustainability*