

Corliss Olson
24 -74 Autumn Ridge Trail, Kitchener, ON, N2P 2M5

Council, Region of Waterloo
150 Fredrick St.
Kitchener, ON, N2G 4J3

July 30, 2024

Dear Regional Council,

I have been studying the proposed development for Wilmot Township requiring the acquisition of Number One Prime Farmland in Wilmot. Given the dearth of information coming from Council and/or the Provincial Government, and using a straightforward, common-sense approach, I must conclude that this venture is one of the most misguided, inadequately researched, and poorly presented proposals that I have ever seen.

I am strongly urging Council to back away from this idea before it is totally beyond redemption.

There are many reasons to reverse course on this proposed development.

First, Ontario does not have limitless arable land, much less Number One Prime Farmland. While we will need jobs, we will need farmland so that workers can be fed. It is more than a truism that farmland, once lost, cannot be recovered.

Second, the potential harm to the environment, including water tables, air quality, and green space, greatly exceeds the potential gains. This area is consistently described as “shovel ready.” It is not. There are no existing provisions for sewer, water, and infrastructure required by industry. And that should not be surprising: this is *farmland*, not an industrial space. The costs of providing sewer facilities and access to clean, potable water once this area is destroyed by industry will be astronomical. It is clear that these costs have not been factored into this scheme, and neither has the time required to build such infrastructure.

Third, there is substantial opposition to this scheme, both within the Wilmot community and beyond, and for good reason: there has been no proper public process, no transparency, no environmental impact assessment, and no consideration of viable alternatives, of which there are many. There are, indeed, no “willing participants.”

Fourth, as the Chair and various officials have stated, this project is purely speculative. What audacity to risk these critical resources: the land, the water, and the environment, for a speculative adventure to benefit unknown individuals and corporations with no guarantee of future benefits to citizens. And certainly no such benefits could outweigh the crushing loss of this farmland and risk to the water supply.

Fifth, the recent plowing under of a crop within weeks of harvest is a clear manifestation of poor planning, poor management, short-sightedness, and, quite probably, maliciousness in the single-minded pursuit of a wrong-headed idea. (I cannot use the word: “plan” as we have seen no such plan.) The sheer waste of this much needed and valuable crop is nothing short of negligence, squandering \$160,000 in revenue.

Sixth, I do not appreciate the stretching of the truth when told that “one third of the land has been acquired.” Calculations prove this statement inaccurate, and it is clearly designed to persuade people that opposition is futile. Please note that such exaggeration is an affront to public participation and, therefore, democracy, and has not gone unnoticed.

I trust that with this letter you are well-informed on my opposition to this project. I can assure you that almost everyone I have spoken to – and they are many - share my concerns. While I clearly have no power beyond that of an average citizen, I should think that these concerns might suggest to you that your political futures are at risk in continuing to ram through this project. We electors want people on Council who a) respect due process and community input; b) are capable of understanding long-range planning and implications of irreparable harm to the environment and endangerment of life-giving resources; and c) support a vision of our Region that sustains life through agriculture, safe water, and protection of our precious resources. We are not interested nor supportive of speculative ventures which threaten our food security and well-being.

Lastly, I would beg you to consider the perspective of the Indigenous elders and plan with consideration of the seventh generation. This wise principle alone shows the folly of the Wilmot land grab.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



Corliss Olson (Ph D)
cpolson11@gmail.com

Cc:

- Alfred Lowrick, Spokesperson for the Fight for Farmland Group
alowrick@gmail.com
- Waterloo Federation of Agriculture
200 Hanlon Creek Boulevard, Guelph, ON N1C 0A1
- Kevin Thomason, Vice Chair, Environmental Network, kevin@smartgrowthwaterloo.ca
- willmotlandowners@gmail.com