

Presentation to the Township of Wilmot  
January 4, 2022  
MZO Request for 1265 and 1299 Waterloo Street,  
New Hamburg  
Special Council Meeting

Honourable Mayor, Councillors, and Guests,

My name is Kevin Thomason. I am Wilmot resident and I was shocked to find a notice posted to the Wilmot Township website late on Christmas Eve about this Special Council Meeting for an MZO request. The announcement was only one sentence with few details.

While MZO's have become so ubiquitous and despised elsewhere in Ontario, we have largely avoided them around here – with the exception of the Blair Amazon warehouse fiasco still unfolding in Cambridge, to the dismay of their Mayor and Council, and the Glass Plant MZO disaster in Stratford.

The timing of this Wilmot MZO is incredibly concerning –announced at Christmas, with the Special Council Meeting being held right at dinner-time on the first day back, with little ability to reach Staff or Councillors over holidays to get answers, and no opportunity for local media to

inform the public - all during the most serious COVID-19 outbreak of the pandemic.

For the first week concerned citizens could learn almost nothing – not even Councillors that we finally reached had any knowledge other than the MZO was likely for some sort of development leapfrogging the Pfenning Organic Farm.

When Township Staff briefly returned between Christmas and New Year's, we finally started to get some information and at 6:30pm on December 29<sup>th</sup> a Staff Report was finally released that was a staggering 158 pages in length including consultant's reports, maps, and studies – certainly someone had been working on this for a long time.

Even more astonishing is the scope and scale – this is homes for thousands of people, in an entirely new village with apartment buildings, senior's homes, employment lands, stores, a transit hub, and even an Agri-hub – whatever that is.

Unfortunately, while it initially appears that this MZO is just about two beautiful farms, it could have far-reaching consequences for the entire province. It appears that the sole purpose of this MZO is to bypass the Regional Official Plan Review that is currently underway, and destroy the proper regional growth and infrastructure planning process, by having the Minister randomly order the approval of these developments, in isolation, with little regard to all the integrated

planning, environmental assessments, and public engagement usually required.

This absurd use of this Christmas Eve MZO by Wilmot and developers to get growth at any cost could be considered Planning Terrorism.

Should this MZO bomb be approved by Wilmot, it will likely set off a chain reaction of competing MZO's from previously co-operative neighbours such as North Dumfries and Wellesley Townships. Tremendous animosity will likely ensue as area developers and municipalities all race for their own MZO's to get their desired growth too, and 40+ years of shared success here in Waterloo Region will be at jeopardy.

Wilmot will have pulled the trigger and launched an unprecedented attack on our Regional Government and neighbours – purposely seeking to cut them out and bypass our upper-tier with this MZO – destroying the ability for the Region of Waterloo to guide growth, intensify our core areas, co-ordinate plans, protect our countryside, and continue our incredible success.

Almost everything that we take for granted today is a result of good planning, collaborative governments, and communities working together, that will no longer exist when it is a free-for-all of developer greed, and municipalities bypassing local and regional planning

processes, for an avalanche of MZO's from the Minister and Premier, who we know are so eager for development at any cost.

So much of our success in Waterloo Region has come from doing this integrated, progressive planning better than most others – creating the smart growth, balance and results that most other communities only dream of. However, people too often underestimate how long it takes to create good things, and how quickly it can all be destroyed.

There are numerous other concerns. While these proposed developments have all the current jargon, shiny objects, and hot buttons, it actually appears to be more of a design for a Prison Camp of Commuters with row after row of square boxes crammed as closely together as possible, with little greenspace or creativity.

The only parks are located in the furthest corners and as distant from the senior's home as possible. Lots are so narrow that entire front lawns will be almost all driveway and so close together there will be little ability for on-street parking or even grass. This is not progressive or award-winning. We need a more compelling and desirable community – not the cheapest possible.

There are also concerns about the Alpine Fertilizer Plant, pressures on the Countryside Line, the need to intensify existing communities, better utilize our existing infrastructure, and ensure that we are living within

the carrying capacity of the our already overwhelmed Nith River watershed – particularly as we face an uncertain climate future.

There are so many troubling questions about the rush, the MZO, the holiday announcement, and if this sort of destruction of prime farmland even appropriate anymore?

According to the provincial government there are only two reasons for using Minister's Orders – protecting provincial interest, or overcoming potential barriers and delays to critical projects. These proposed developments meet neither of these criteria, nor is there any evidence of this presented in any of these planning documents, or even any justification for the use of an MZO.

As well, the Minister has stated publicly that he expects before a City Council requests an MZO they;

- Consult in their community and ensuring public awareness,
- engage with the Conservation Authority, and
- engage with indigenous communities,

Little of which appears to have happened before tonight for this MZO request.

The Regional Official Plan Review is still underway. The Land Needs Analysis and population allocations still haven't even been started yet - let alone any decisions finalized. There is plenty of opportunity to have

these developments considered– particularly if they are as compelling as the applicant states.

If things don't work out in the Regional Official Plan, there is still the ability to do an MZO at that point.

And, if a MZO is refused by either Wilmot, or even the Minister, there is still a one-time 40 hectare Urban Boundary Expansion available under the Planning Act that could be also utilized for these developments.

### **In Conclusion,**

There are no shortage of options.

It's shameful to see developers trying to use an MZO to force this development here, and the outrage in our community is already significant. We don't want to see such important decisions shaping the future of our community for decades being undertaken in such a manner. This is not who we are or how we do things.

Please reject this unfortunate Christmas Eve MZO, and the attack on planning it invokes. It is not in the best public interest, nor the Township's best interest.

Please require the developers follow the proper planning processes, so that we can all continue to collaboratively build our world-class

communities, without the random interventions of Queen's Park, being beholden to the Minister, destroying decades of regional cooperation, and regretting the use of MZO's like so many other communities.

Thank you,

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