

PRESS RELEASES

A Manufacturing “Mega-Site” on Prime Farmland is a Mega-Mistake, says the National Farmers Union – Ontario



Between the Lakes Purchase (Treaty 3); the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit; Guelph, ON (April 2, 2024) – Converting 770 acres of prime agricultural land in Wilmot Township into a “mega-site” for an unspecified manufacturing operation is a mega- mistake. The forcible and undemocratic acquisition of this land will have profound implications for Ontario’s food security and for land use planning across the province.

The National Farmers Union – Ontario (NFU-O) stands with the half-dozen farmers and landowners being bullied into this farmland theft, as well as with members of NFU-O Local 340 (Waterloo, Wellington), [Citizens for Safe Ground Water](#), Waterloo MPP [Catherine Fife](#), MPP Mike Schreiner, and all those who are joining together to [fight for farmland](#) and for the immediate pause of land expropriation in Wilmot Township.

In the past couple of weeks, it has come to light that Wilmot Township, the Region of Waterloo, the provincial government (through the provincial agency, the Ontario Realty Corporation), have colluded with a US-based consulting company to threaten affected farmers and landowners with expropriation should they refuse to sell their land for a manufacturing mega-site. The 770 acres of prime farmland slated for industrial development are home to vegetable, grain, and dairy operations as well as two significant creeks that flow into the Nith river.

“We cannot stand idly by as our political leaders make decisions behind closed doors that will permanently destroy our finite prime farmland,” says Jenn Pfenning, an organic farmer in Wilmot Township and the President of the National Farmers Union. While Pfenning’s Farms is not directly affected by the proposed mega-site, Pfenning is keenly aware that it will wreak havoc on local food production and the community as a whole: “I encourage all Ontarians to fight back against this undemocratic assault on our food system by signing [one](#) or [both](#) petitions, writing letters to their local leaders, and joining us in our call to keep farmland for farmers.”

The NFU-O is an accredited farm organization representing thousands of sustainable farmers in Ontario. We have advocated for farmers across Ontario and Canada since 1969. Members work together to achieve agricultural policies that ensure dignity and income security for farmers, while protecting and enhancing rural environments for current and future generations. For years the NFU-O has advocated responsible development, smart densification, and the realization of complete communities in existing built-up areas, alongside the preservation of farmland and natural heritage areas.

“Just like the recent failed Greenbelt Grab, short-sighted decision-making is taking precedence over sustainable development,” says Max Hansgen, NFU-O President. “The complete lack of public consultation and transparency in Wilmot Township clearly shows that land use decision-making in the province still has not incorporated the lessons from popular opposition to Bill 23 and Bill 97. Ontarians agree that industrial development does not belong on farmland.”

The NFU-O demands that decision makers in Waterloo Region follow the [Provincial Policy Statement, 2020](#) that maintains that all prime agricultural land be reserved for farming, not development. It is unconscionable to permanently pave over this land for a short-term development payout when more suitable, non-arable land exists for industrial mega-sites.

Given that there are two creeks on the land proposed for development and that underground aquifers account for 80% of the region’s water supply, the NFU-O is frustrated that the Township has yet to solicit the expertise of the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA). We call on the Township to immediately invite the GRCA to survey and report to the public on the potential impact this development will have on water and ecological health. Speeding up development assessment processes and disregarding the precautionary principle could result in major public health concerns.

Finally, the NFU-O is deeply concerned that if this industrial development in Wilmot Township is given the greenlight it will only make it more difficult for other Ontario counties and townships to protect their own agricultural and ecologically-sensitive land. In fact, the policy revisions within the Ontario Government’s proposed [Bill 162, Get it Done Act, 2024](#) are designed to make it easier for regional authorities to expropriate farmland and fast-track farmland rezoning and development. The government has an obligation to Ontarians to direct municipalities responsibly and balance development with the protection of our natural resources, including farmland.

For the agri-food sector to remain a critical economic driver in the province we must continue to protect farmland alongside sustainable, transparent land-use decision making processes. The constant weakening of environmental, agricultural, and democratic protection for the benefit of fast-tracking development is to the detriment of all Ontarians. Farmers and the public deserve better.

When we came together to protest against the Greenbelt Grab, [we won](#). Concerned farmers and residents of Wilmot Township need us to join together once again to say no to industrial development on farmland!

— 30 —

For more information:
Max Hansgen, NFU-O President
president@nfontario.ca, (613) 464-1251

These Press Releases might also interest you:

View All News Items

22

SEP

Ford's Return of Greenbelt Lands is Vindication for NFU-O Farmers and their Supporters

September 21, 2023 Treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit (Guelph, ON) - We have been heard. The Ontario government has done...

[Read More](#)

01

SEP

Reprimands are not Enough: Rescind Greenbelt Removals, says National Farmers Union – Ontario

September 1, 2023 Treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit (Guelph, ON) — “Rushed,” “non-transparent,” “reckless,” “deceptive,” and “chaotic.” These are the words...

[Read More](#)

10

AUG

Media Release: NFU-O Calls for Reversal of Decision to Develop the Greenbelt and Reinstatement of Proper Public Consultations and Planning Processes

August 10, 2023 Treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit (Guelph, ON) — The Government of Ontario's removal of 7,400 acres from...

[Read More](#)

Ontario

national farmers union

union nationale des fermiers de l'Ontario

GET INVOLVED

[Memberships](#)

[Donation Options](#)

[Event Listings](#)

QUICK LINKS

[About the NFU-O](#)

[Projects](#)

[Issues](#)

MEDIA

[Policies and Briefs](#)

[Press Releases](#)

[Op-eds and Commentary](#)

CONNECT

[Contact Us](#)

CONTACT US

+1 705 738-3993

5420 Hwy 6
Guelph, ON
N1H 6J2
Canada

© 2024 National Farmers Union of Ontario. All rights reserved.

[Accessibility Statement](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Service](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Privacy Settings](#)