



Fight For Farmland Steering Committee
Wilmot, Ontario
August 12, 2024

Mayor Natasha Salonen
Wilmot Township Councillors
Township of Wilmot
60 Synder's Road
Baden, Ontario N3A 1A1

Re: Acquisition of 770 acres of prime farmland in Wilmot for a shovel ready industrial site.

Mayor Salonen,

We have asked for the studies that support the proposed Wilmot mega-industrial site land acquisition to be released and public meetings to be held to explain why this particular prime farmland has been selected for development. The 770 acres is well outside of the Countryside Line and is protected from non-agricultural development by Chapter 6 of the Region of Waterloo's Official Plan and this entire land assembly is in violation of Section 24 (1) of the Provincial Planning Act.

As you know, we filed Freedom of Information Requests with the Region of Waterloo to ask for the studies that were done to support this development. We also filed similar Freedom of Information Requests with Wilmot Township, the results for which are not due until the end of August. Of our 24 requests we made to the Region, 21 were denied and 3 were non responsive. The only documentation we received was the Region's 2024 Water and Wastewater Monitoring Report that shows sewage capacity in Wilmot is already close to its maximum.

We believe that very few studies have actually been done and we have filed a second Freedom of Information Request for the Index of Responsive Records and which Section of the Freedom of Information Act was used to deny access to each Responsive Record.

Furthermore, the Dillion Consulting Report, commissioned by the Region to develop a Waterloo Region Employment Lands Shovel Ready Strategy at a cost of \$365,000 states:

"Note: Shovel-ready lands are generally considered to be lands with the necessary approvals, servicing and transportation infrastructure in place as well as an owner willing to develop or sell to an end-user."

The 770 acres does not meet any of these criteria.

We live in a democracy and we expect elected officials and public employees to serve the public. No public meetings have been held, no pertinent information has been released, and landowners have been threatened with expropriation. This project is going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and residents deserve a say in the future of Wilmot and the burden that is being put on future taxpayers. Yet, the majority of our politicians have been silent on the most important issue that Wilmot has ever encountered.

We originally asked you to pause the land acquisition until the proper studies had been done but the response to our Freedom of Information Requests to the Region makes it very clear that the region has done very few studies.

Mayor Salonen, we are asking you to introduce and support a motion to declare the Township of Wilmot to be an Unwilling Host until the next Regional Official Plan Review and ensure that proper Official Plan processes will be followed. Specifically, this would include:

- returning to the approved Wilmot Official Plan of April 2019,
- returning to the approved Regional Official Plan of August 2022 including upholding the Countryside Line,
- and undertaking any future investigation of a mega-industrial site in 2026 as part of the next scheduled review of the Regional Official Plan where a fulsome evaluation process using the proper planning as well as public consultation processes can be undertaken.

We would like to remind you of some of the promises you made when running for elected office in 2022.

New Hamburg Independent - [September 23, 2022](#)

- *"I will work with council and the community to ensure all voices have representation in council decisions. As Wilmot continues to grow and thrive, we, as a community, must ensure opportunities to listen and incorporate our wealth of diversity and lived experience in shaping the future of our township."*
- *"Providing stewardship by making knowledge-based, transparent and informed council decisions and advocating for Wilmot at the regional level."*
- *"If elected I plan to start working for the residents of Wilmot by getting council back on track, and collaborating with the new councilors, staff and residents to start making the accountable, informed and representative decisions our township needs and deserves from its council."*

CBC News – [October 3, 2022](#)

- *"I think that proper planning and ensuring that community growth happens where we want it, where we need it, and in a way that fits as well as a way that makes best use of the green space we've already dedicated and designated for growth," she said, noting farmland needs to be protected."*

CTV News – October 11, 2022

- *“I believe Wilmot needs strong leadership to provide accountable, knowledge-based, transparent and responsible stewardship for current and future generations.”*
- *“I want to advocate for our community as we move forward, to ensure we maintain our small town feel while growing and ensure we do not become a bedroom community.”*
- *“Rebuilding the community's trust in council by improving communication “*

Wayback Machine - www.natashasalonon4wilmot.com - October 25, 2022

- *“Provide accountable, knowledge-based, transparent and responsible stewardship for Wilmot Township’s current and future generations”*
- *“Provide a strong representation for Wilmot at Regional Council”*
- *“Represent the voice and interests of all Wilmot residents in council decisions”*
- *“Create responsible and sustainable development and growth throughout Wilmot that enhances our community”*

New Hamburg Independent [October 26, 2022](#)

- *“Salonen said one of her priorities, once she gets situated in her new job, will be to improve communication between the township and the community ‘so that going forward any decision that we make is well communicated across the community and we can get strong input from all of our residents.’”*

New Hamburg Independent – [December 28, 2022](#)

- *In the coming year, she hopes bridges can be mended and the community can become more united. When asked how she plans to achieve that, she said, “I think it’s just going to be continuing to listen to all voices, and really seeking out voices that aren’t necessarily being heard as well, and being able to have open and honest conversation.”*

In addition, other members of the Township of Wilmot Council made the following election promises when running for office in 2022.

- *“I’m running so I can ensure that our citizens are being listened to and represented at council. I will work tirelessly to ensure that proper consultation is completed with the community before we make decisions.”*
- *“I promise to make decisions that will be beneficial for the majority of citizens. Practical and thoughtful decision-making without reacting too quickly and not just appeasing interest group.”*
- *“I’d like to see the township adopt a strategy that pursues development at a slow and controlled pace. Emphasize planning and ensure we are growing our tax base at a pace so our services and infrastructure can accommodate future growth.”*
- *“When elected, I will establish myself as a counselor who represents the people. I will work with township staff to find efficiencies and savings. Work with all levels of government to bring an end to aggregate development in our township. I will bring common sense back to the table.”*

- *"I'm running because I want to ensure that everyone is represented on council."*
 - *He also said he'd bring common sense decision making to the council chambers and "make decisions that will be beneficial for the majority of citizens. Practical and thoughtful decision-making without reacting too quickly and not just appeasing interest groups."*
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- *"Work hard to set a tone of transparency and communication amongst our new council. Listen and advocate for my residents when making decisions in council."*
 - *"Representing and advocating for all my residents to ensure their voices are being heard."*
 - *"We must communicate with others, ask and answer questions, and learn from one another."*
 - *"I would love to be the voice of Baden and represent the people in this community: now and what it will be in the future. I want to ensure that all voices are heard before making decisions in the interest of Ward 3 and Wilmot as a whole."*
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- *"We need to focus on municipal governance and listening to our constituents. With my business background and relationship-building skills, I believe I can make an impactful contribution by representing all my constituents, concentrating on infrastructure so people can concentrate on living their lives."*
 - *"Supporting healthy growth in New Hamburg. Focus on municipal government. All constituents must be heard and represented."*
 - *"She says the Township also needs to be what it is and not think like a big city. 'Our rural townships are not Kitchener-Waterloo, nor do we want to be. We need to forge a pathway to ensure that our voices are heard at the regional table and that we can impact decisions made for our communities. I believe working with the other rural communities within Waterloo Region is a strategy that will begin moving us in that direction.'"*
 - *"My whole platform was your voice, your choice, and how I would represent all of the constituents; "*
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- *"I wanted to run to contribute to the community. I want to do my part to promote the democratic process. I believe in a fair, open, respectful process, listening to the people involved."*
 - *"I believe in the democratic process and want to support healthy discussion, a respectful process and raise concerns that people have about our community," he told CBC K-W in a candidate survey in the lead-up to Monday's municipal election.*
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- *"Council ought to focus on issues that are central to the majority of the electorate's concerns and be heard and represented effectively."*

The lack of even a single public meeting, the absence of any studies and information, the secrecy, and the threats of expropriation, are contrary to all previous planning. This mega-industrial site land assembly and the massive unplanned development of New Hamburg/Baden is the complete opposite of our longstanding values of sustainability, farmland protection, environmental and water protection.

It is extremely concerning to see so many democratic principles and long-standing community values being destroyed simply for the perceived economic gain from industrial development.

We need you to lead Wilmot out of this mess created by the Region and to heal the fractures in our community. Our farmers and landowners have made it very clear they are unwilling and will NOT sell their lands. Thousands of Wilmot residents have said we are unwilling and do not want our communities destroyed by a poorly planned mega-industrial development. Tens of thousands of residents throughout Waterloo Region have raised concerns with our groundwater which they are dependent on. They are also concerned about local food, protection of our environment, and the democratic process. They are unwilling.

Premier Doug Ford has publicly stated that this development should not be forced on an unwilling host.

We ask you to keep your collective election promises and at the next Council Meeting on August 26, bring forward and support a motion that **Wilmot Township is an Unwilling Host** for this mega-industrial site until the proper planning process has been followed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Lowrick', with a stylized, flowing script.

Alfred Lowrick
On behalf of the Fight For Farmland Steering Committee