

## Press Release



### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Fight For Farmland Confronts Rumours About Staggering 51% Wilmot Property Tax Increase**

Wilmot ON - This past week, Wilmot Township Staff recommended an astounding and unprecedented 51% tax increase that would add hundreds or even thousands of dollars to most property tax bills at a time that many Wilmot families are already struggling to pay for rapidly increasing costs. This would be a record-setting tax increase for almost any municipality in Ontario.

The Fight for Farmland Group wants to address rumours surrounding this massive tax hike being proposed by Wilmot Township's staff, emphasizing that the increase stems from decades of improper financial planning and not the severely bungled Wilmot Land Assembly Project that was foisted on our community just nine months ago.

While the Wilmot Land Assembly Project is not the cause of the current tax hike – Staff is seeking a new fire hall, hockey arena upgrades, additional municipal staff, deferred road improvements, and more with these additional taxes, if pursued, the mega-industrial site could lead to yet further significant tax increases for Wilmot residents.

Industrial projects often require extensive infrastructure upgrades, which, if not funded by the Provincial Government, would have to be funded by local taxpayers. Additionally, historical data from other jurisdictions reveals that companies acquiring industrial lands frequently demand tax holidays and significant incentives, delaying any tax revenue benefits to the municipality for years or decades, while so many expenses need to be paid for upfront by the municipality.

The proposed Wilmot 2025 budget highlights a significant funding shortfall. For instance, \$8.4M is needed over the next ten years for new fire hall construction and replacing four vehicles, but current funding levels only cover \$4.7M. This leaves a \$315,000 per year gap that must be filled to maintain service levels. New residential developments further strain resources, requiring additional sewage treatment, road upgrades, sidewalks, streetlights, libraries, emergency services, and other important infrastructure that increasingly is no longer covered by development charges as the provincial government continues to reduce what municipalities can include in development fees. Many Ontario communities are currently reporting such severe shortfalls that many new developments can't even commence.

The Fight For Farmland is not aware of any financial analysis or costing that has been undertaken by any level of government for this massive proposed mega-industrial site. Certainly, no studies, research, nor analysis has been released to the public and all of our Freedom Of Information Requests seeking even the most basic information have been completely denied.

However, because no development of any sort has ever been anticipated on this thriving prime farmland and development of these lands has never been part of any Official Plan or Master Servicing Plans for Water, Sewage, Transportation, etc. there is very little available infrastructure

with only a single highway, a single rail line, a single major hydro line reaching this site. Also, water constraints, sewage constraints, and environmental constraints are already well known and acknowledged by both the Region of Waterloo and Province of Ontario. Servicing and provisioning of so much needed infrastructure for this site could be extremely expensive and time consuming – particularly given the considerable distances from major urban centres.

Unfortunately, many other Ontario communities have found their taxpayers subsidizing and/or left on the hook with the bill for new large industrial developments despite initial claims that others would be covering costs.

It will be many years, perhaps even decades before anything is ever built and producing new tax revenues on this prime farmland if it is destroyed and converted to industrial lands. In the meantime, current tax revenues from existing landowners and businesses on the lands will be lost while massive new expenses are incurred.

The lack of planning, lack of transparency, and complete lack of public engagement for this Wilmot Land Assembly has been so troubling that thousands of people have spoken up with concerns. It has nothing to do with the current financial state of Wilmot Township but with the former Mayor who boasted for years about no municipal tax increases. This ignored the fact that one day all those deferred and delayed expenditures would need to be accounted for.

All levels of government are admitting that this Wilmot mega-industrial site doesn't even have a customer, and recent political changes in the United States could delay the development for years. There is no evidence that the development of this mega-site will provide any and most likely will only further deepen the Township's troubles and financial woes. What will be the future costs of this massive industrial mega-site to Wilmot taxpayers? Where is the business plan for this proposed Wilmot Land Assembly?

We are an UNWILLING COMMUNITY that is demanding better planning, better financial management, and a far better future.

### **Attend Public Township Meetings to Learn More About The Proposed Tax Increase**

Wilmot Township Councillors are hosting public meetings to provide updates and answer questions about the budget and tax increases. The Fight for Farmland Group urges all concerned citizens to attend and speak up:

#### **Ward 2 Townhall Meeting**

- **Date:** Saturday, December 14, 2024
- **Time:** 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
- **Location:** St. Agatha Community Centre, 1791 Erbs Rd, St. Agatha, ON N0B 2L0
- **Agenda Highlights:**
  - Updates on the 2025 Wilmot Township Draft Budget

- Discussion of the Petersburg Distribution Water System
- Open Q&A Session

For more information about this Ward 2 Townhall meeting, email [Kris.Wilkinson@Wilmot.ca](mailto:Kris.Wilkinson@Wilmot.ca) and copy [Carly.Pettinger@Wilmot.ca](mailto:Carly.Pettinger@Wilmot.ca).

### **Ward 3 Townhall Meeting**

- **Date:** Thursday, January 2, 2025
- **Time:** 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
- **Location:** Meeting Room A, Wilmot Recreation Centre, 1291 Nafziger Road, Baden
- **Agenda:** Updates on the 2025 draft budget and key Ward 3 issues, followed by an open Q&A session.

For more information about this Ward 3 Townhall meeting, email [Harvir.Sidhu@Wilmot.ca](mailto:Harvir.Sidhu@Wilmot.ca) and copy [Carly.Pettinger@Wilmot.ca](mailto:Carly.Pettinger@Wilmot.ca).

Thank you for standing with us in this fight for farmland and fairness as we ensure clarity about the root causes of Wilmot's financial woes. Together, we can demand accountability, a better future, and ensure that our voices are heard.

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