



*The National Farmers Union – Ontario (NFU-O) is an accredited farm organization representing thousands of sustainable family farmers in Ontario, and has advocated for farm families across Ontario and Canada since 1969. Members work together to achieve agricultural policies that ensure dignity and income security for farm families while protecting and enhancing rural environments for future generations. The NFU-O collaborates locally, nationally, and internationally to research, educate and share effective solutions that lead to a better world for farm families and their local communities.*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**RE: ZCA-11-19 Zone Change Application at 1894-1922 Witmer Road Wilmot**

This is a letter from the NFU Local 340 in support of the position held by the Citizens for Safe Ground Water regarding this issue; that is, to deny the proposed zone change of this property.

The official plan for Waterloo Region notes that it is one of the fastest growing urban areas in the Province with population expected to be at 729,000 by 2031, from an estimated 601,000 at 2018 year-end. With this aggressive population growth, it is not prudent to compromise safe groundwater, something which can take decades to replenish and recharge.

Here at the NFU Local 340 (Waterloo-Wellington), we care deeply about natural resources, and particularly the regeneration of renewable resources such as groundwater. In 1989, Elmira had a water contamination crisis, and almost 30 years later it still cannot use its own groundwater, and receives water, in part, from Waterloo Region's K-50 and K-51 well heads. These two well heads have significant recharge area on the property proposed for re-zoning, and supply 7% of Waterloo Region's Integrated Urban System drinking water. Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, St. Jacobs, St Agatha, Baden, New Hamburg, Mannheim, Shingletown and Elmira all use this water system. A gravel pit does not mean contaminated water, but it introduces unnecessary risk to a system under growing demand.

In the Great Lakes Region, we take fresh water for granted. However, drawing drinking water from the lakes is not the viable option it used to be, with toxic algae blooms poisoning *filtered* water supplies from the late 1990s. It is suggested that climate change will intensify the toxic algae blooms, and the Waterloo Region declared a 'Climate Emergency' on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. As changing climate is acknowledged, with unknown ramifications in coming decades, rezoning 1894-1922 Witmer for aggregate extraction is a very unnecessary risk to a system under rapidly increasing demand. There are no good alternatives should it be compromised. Loss of 7% of supply would be felt more sharply as population projections show a 20% increase by 2031. Beyond

2031 we will undoubtedly like to grow too. Groundwater may be the last reliable source of safe drinking water, and with a growing population it is definitely worth safeguarding.

If extraction was approved, and the gravel pit ran its useful life, without incident, what then? Can we expect that it would be successfully rehabilitated? Based on the current 20% success rate for extraction sites being rehabilitated, we cannot expect it to happen. There is money in aggregate. There are resources available. The sites should be rehabilitated, and put back to productive use. We propose that there be no more extraction sites permitted until the percentage of successfully rehabilitated sites reaches 80%. We want to see responsible, end-to-end management of our region's land resources.

Farmland is also giving way to developments at an alarming rate. In 30 years We believe we will look back and wish we would have been much more selective in what we allowed. The current rate of prime agricultural land loss is unacceptable. Un-rehabilitated aggregate extraction sites are an equivalent loss of farmland and groundwater recharge area.

Lastly, corporate or third party ownership of the extraction sites leaves physical stakeholders (adjacent landowners, and drinkers of groundwater in the region) hanging. Absentee landlords should not be permitted in this capacity; their concern is unevenly balanced as they do not live in the region. Ownership of 'Extractive Industrial' land should be limited to *individuals* who live in the Province for transparency and accountability. Our groundwater is too valuable to leave in unknown hands.

We advise that the zone change be denied, due to the unlikelihood of proper rehabilitation, lack of long term accountability and stewardship, and the growing demand on our groundwater. This property plays a significant role in recharging our aquifers and is also prime farmland which is more beneficial to our community. The aggregate resources will be there in fifty years if they are not extracted now. Our drinking water supply will be there in fifty years too, if we safeguard it now.

Sincerely,

Mike Roth

President

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