

Bill 66 is a Threat to Waterloo Region's Agriculture, Drinking Water & Growth Strategy

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Hold the Line, Smart Growth Waterloo Region, and the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture are calling on the councils of the Region of Waterloo and area municipalities to pass resolutions to reaffirm their commitment to smart growth and meaningful public consultations, and to reject the use of Bill 66.

The Province of Ontario's proposed [Bill 66](#) threatens Waterloo Region's water quality and supply, agricultural and rural communities, natural ecosystems, and the continued smart growth of its urban cores. The bill would permit municipalities to allow business developments that don't follow laws that protect our water, agriculture, and community development plans.

While the government's bill claims to be an attempt to support business, it undermines one of Waterloo Region's main industries. "The agricultural sector contributes over a half billion dollars to our local economy every year," said Mark Reusser of the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture. "If developers can bypass agricultural protections, as Bill 66 would allow, it threatens our economy and our food supply."

"The truth is that smart growth is key to our region's prosperity," added Kevin Thomason of Smart Growth Waterloo Region. "Since the Region of Waterloo adopted its smart growth approach in 2003, our unemployment rate has decreased from 5.9% to 5.1%, beating the national rate. More efficient use of infrastructure benefits everyone."

All three organizations are especially alarmed that Bill 66 removes the requirement for public notice and public meetings with opportunity for community input, as well as the opportunity to appeal the decision.

"Our citizens expect communications and public meetings as well as the having the ability to appeal bad decisions," said Sam Nabi of Hold the Line. "But if Bill 66 becomes law, the only notice residents would receive of an impending development is when the first bulldozer arrives - with no opportunity for recourse or appeal. Our region keeps growing and we welcome that growth. But how and where this growth takes place must be a decision that we make intentionally and democratically together."

The groups are urging citizens to speak up. Emails can be sent to both local and provincial governments at act.holdthelinewr.org. They also urge people across Ontario to watch for upcoming opportunities to work together against Bill 66 in our communities.

"We're confident that our eight municipalities will continue to demonstrate leadership and have a formal vote to protect our farms, drinking water, natural ecosystems, and smart urban development," added Nabi.

Hold the Line is a local non-profit made up of artists, community builders, sustainability advocates, and Waterloo Region enthusiasts. They support the farms, towns, and natural spaces that make up the Region's countryside, and the vibrant and dense urban cores that complement them.

Smart Growth Waterloo Region is a grassroots group started in 2013 by community members to raise awareness of and support for local and provincial smart growth policies. It represents community members of Waterloo who want to enjoy both thriving liveable cities and a sustainable countryside.

The **Waterloo Federation of Agriculture** is one of 52 county and regional federations supported by OFA across the province. Waterloo Federation of Agriculture represents the voice of agriculture in the local community and advocates on behalf of farm families in the Region of Waterloo on local agricultural issues. The goal of WFA is to promote the farm community in support of the innovation, hard work and compassion that is emblematic of the Region.

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