

Local groups celebrate removal of Bill 66's dangerous Planning Act exemptions

January 23, 2019

Hold the Line, Smart Growth Waterloo Region, and the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture are pleased that the Ontario government will not move forward with proposed Planning Act exemptions under Schedule 10 of Bill 66.

Yesterday, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark announced that the government will not proceed with Schedule 10 when the legislature returns in February.

Dozens of Waterloo Region-based labour, health, environmental, and agricultural groups came together when the Bill was introduced in December. Hundreds of citizens have since raised their voices to protect drinking water, farm land, continued smart growth, and meaningful public participation.

As a result, all eight municipal councils in Waterloo Region rejected Schedule 10 and registered their opposition with the Province.

"We are thrilled that the Government of Ontario has listened to the clear and unified message of our area municipalities, that growth in Waterloo Region should happen in a planned and democratic way," said Sam Nabi of Hold the Line.

The Bill 66 planning exemptions would have threatened Waterloo Region's water quality and supply, agricultural and rural communities, natural ecosystems, and the continued smart growth of our urban cores. The bill would have permitted municipalities to allow business developments that don't follow laws that protect our water, agriculture, and community development plans.

"Smart growth and good planning has been key to our region's success and prosperity," said Kevin Thomason of Smart Growth Waterloo Region. "Citizens and community groups across Waterloo Region overwhelming opposed the provincial government's approach of exempting big business from the essential regulations and protections for our water, farmland, and natural areas."

Mark Reusser, Vice-President of the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture, said: "The Waterloo Federation of Agriculture is pleased that the government has recognized our concern that section 10 of Bill 66 was not a good planning tool for agriculture. We look forward to working with the government to improve the Growth Plan, reduce red tape and protect the farmland that feeds Ontario."

Local groups continue to watch closely as the Province reviews the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and regional government across the province. Waterloo Region has co-operated well across different levels of government to create more compact and lively communities, while protecting farmland. This progress should not be undermined.

Some other local groups involved in opposing Bill 66 include: Divest Waterloo, TriTAG, Grand River Environmental Network, The Blue Dot Movement, KW Peace, APT Environment, Waterloo Region Health Coalition, Nith Valley Eco-Boosters, The Council of Canadians, and Reep Green Solutions.

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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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