

Good evening:

Before I speak to the staff report regarding growth plans for Woolwich, I will make a few comments about the untenable position and unreasonable 45 day deadline forced upon our Mayor, Council and staff that is the result of flip-flops in decision making by our provincial government and disregard for democratic process and planning norms.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to the staff for the energy and time they have committed to meet the expectation for expansion placed upon them just 6 months ago. I understand why they wish to build upon the work invested so far to comply with provincial directives and why in their report they propose asking for expansion to the countryside line contingent upon also being given sole planning powers to stage development as they determine best for Woolwich.

I wish to thank Mayor Shantz for seeking staff advice when she received the letter from Minister Calandra inviting her to consider growth beyond settlement borders. Mayor Shantz has the authority bestowed upon her by the minister but she has chosen to follow a democratic process. Tonight council will receive the staff report with delegations from the public, they will consider the issues and follow normal municipal processes for decision making.

This adherence to democratic principles I celebrate.

Turning to the issue - what growth plan will Woolwich choose?

In Sept. 2022 Woolwich council passed ROP6 unanimously, deciding to endorse the Regional plan, to develop residential and employment lands within settlement boundaries, to preserve our countryside line and protect our fertile farmland, water recharge areas and wetlands. ROP6 was the result of years of extensive investigations, assessments and consultations. It was significant that indigenous leaders sent letters of support for ROP6.

The 2,380-hectare settlement boundary expansion in Waterloo Region was announced in April 2023, following the removal of parcels of land from the Greenbelt. We have learned through reports by the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner that the Greenbelt decisions were led by political staffers, seriously flawed, unsupported by any planning rationale, influenced by conflicts of interest and without indigenous or public consultation. All due process, democratic and planning norms were abandoned. At this moment RCMP are investigating and may lay charges. Is there any doubt that these same questionable practices were applied to the forced expansions of a number of municipalities and regions? If there was a question about integrity of the process, Minister Calandra after his own review announced that he was reversing the forced urban expansions because he was not convinced that the expansions were justified.

Within days of reversing the forced expansions, Minister Calandra invited mayors to act unilaterally to do the very thing he reversed. Essentially you, Mayor and Councillors, are being asked to act in support of decisions for which the provincial government is now under investigation. And you are put into the pressure cooker of a 45 day timeline

because as the government repeatedly reminds us "The solution to our housing crisis demands rapid response." I would argue the chaos caused for planners, developers and the construction industry by the legislative changes, planning interference and lack of attention to planning experts and the government's own advisory committees has caused challenges and delays to sincere efforts by municipalities to move quickly to approve development.

Therefore, I ask this council and mayor to reject the staff recommendation and send a letter to the Minister as the City of Waterloo has done. Confirm support for ROP6, decline expansion to the countryside line. How can we trust this government to keep their promises? Asking for sole planning authority to give you confidence that you will be able to stage development to the countryside line appropriately, does not guarantee that the government will not reverse course. Developers will jump on the opportunity to build where they own land, not where planners find the public will be best served. Are you prepared to seek the experts and to pay the legal expenses to fight for the common good should developers take Woolwich to the OMB?

You will have an opportunity in 3 ½ years during the five year review to seek a carve out beyond your settlement boundaries if necessary. And at anytime there is the option of an MZO for development projects that are urgent. So you do have alternatives. Do not allow this deadline to force a decision which opens up a feeding frenzy for developers without any guarantee that the government will keep its promise to you.

I am research lead for 50by30 Waterloo Region, therefore I was looking for evidence of climate responsible planning, when I read the report from Thomasfield Homes. There was no mention of how this company will help Woolwich reduce our carbon emissions. We need planning for increased energy efficiency, net-zero housing, communities with increased density close to services and amenities. Thomasfield Homes does present an argument for low rise single family dwellings, in other words business as usual. Their plan will escalate our emissions and make our climate goals unattainable. We know market forces and private interests will not solve housing affordability and they will not solve climate breakdown either. Until this council has put in place requirements for Green Development Standards, the wise course of action will be to hold the line, support ROP6 and prevent developers, who are motivated to develop their land with the largest profit margin the market will bear, from beating down the door of your planning department.

Thank you for your kind attention and consideration,
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