

Comments submitted by Donna Cridland

re: Proposed Boundary Expansions – Township of Wainfleet - Monday February 7, 2022

To the Official Plan Team:

Maintain Zero Growth Target for Township Wainfleet

Some Key Points:

1. Niagara Region's current Growth Plan for Wainfleet is Zero.
2. Zero Growth recognizes Wainfleet has no Municipal Services (Water or Septic).
3. Zero Growth attempts to recognize preservation of AG lands, Ag economies and Farm Incomes.
4. Based on the Draft Plan of Zero Growth – why are we here? What has changed for the Region?
5. This request of 185 acres – is the equivalent of one entire Hamlets within the township!
6. The report does NOT disclose the type of Soils it has identified. The report should clearly identify the type of Farmland/ Soils in a report that is expanding its boundaries in an Agriculture township.
7. Good soils, once removed, cannot be replaced.
8. All existing agriculture lands, should accurately referred to as “developed” to help with the bias that exists to take the “cheapest” lands for Residential and Commercial development.
9. Much of language throughout the report is alarmingly disrespectful to Agriculture economy –as pointed out later.
10. The Region's zero growth targets – needs to be upheld against the typical old pressures (taxes) and actors (people willing/motivated to sell)
11. To respect the urgency of this Official Plan process, and to acknowledge that the entire process has happened pre Covid and during Covid~! Solutions are offered below.
12. The Plan must consider POST Covid opportunities and alternatives!
 - a. Niagara is at the tipping point for making shorter supply chains, increasing food security, and growing more local food production – to create a truly circular economy.
13. As is, this is a Plan that serves to increase Conflict with Agriculture economies and Farm Incomes in Wainfleet.
14. Below are questions, context, hamlet snap shots, and solutions

Has Niagara Region asked these questions?

1. Does Niagara Region support the preservation of its Agriculture and Agriculture economies or does it NOT support it – once land is gone, it is gone forever?
2. What has defined the NEED for any expansion – against a zero growth target?
3. What has been used to make this case so compelling, that Niagara Region is over riding its own Zero target for Township of Wainfleet?
 - a. What Data did you use – before adding the 75 ha / 185 acres – again, contrary to the Zero target?
4. Has the current inventory of approximately 275 acres, of existing Agricultural lands, still being farmed *within* the Hamlets, being analyzed / factored in for future Residential and Commercial development?
5. What alternatives have been considered by Niagara Region – prior to expanding with over 185 acres of Agriculture lands, in addition to the existing Agriculture lands (275 acres) that exist **within** the Hamlets for both Residential and Commercial development?

More Context

1. Going through all the Hamlets, there is significant “un-used” lands already – in EVERY Hamlet (approx. 275 acres)
 - a. Have the lands of the 2 schools that are closing been added into inventory
 - b. Has the lands of local churches in decline been added into inventory
2. Official Plans that create or increase AG economy conflict – should be a no go in an AG community like Wainfleet Township. These conflicts are highlighted then casually dismissed in the report! These are very significant economies in a Small township
3. The original Niagara Region Zero growth properly reflects an AG future with existing inventory (275 acres).

Agriculture Conflict in Rural Communities

The majority of all expansion requests significantly increase Agriculture conflict... so it looks like an “Agriculture CONFLICT GROWTH Plan”

Here are a few statements in the Draft Report – that highlight disrespect of Ag economies and real conflict.

1. “no significant agriculture impacts – just ONE livestock operation”
2. Ag is generally (only) feed / cash cropping (ALL FARMING IS FOR CASH).
3. A poultry operation (a very significant one, that has just recently invested in their infrastructure) IS WITHIN THE CONFLICT ZONE;
4. Another parcel has another poultry barn within the area... but report “HOPES” the land use doesn’t create conflict... and again
5. “NO IMMEDIATE CONCERNS related to agriculture operations... and it goes on to say “as conflict already exists” as a reason to pile on more conflict.

The Conflict connected to the proposed expansions:

1. Bell Road – new conflict – and ends the potential expansion of Livestock operations in proximity
2. Side Road 20 – new conflict – and ends the growth potential of Poultry operations to the south
3. Chambers NE – new conflict – and ends the growth potential of Poultry operations to the east
4. Ostryhon – (intensifying conflict) – and further compromises future Agricultural uses
5. Wellandport – livestock (intensifying conflict) – should be trying to reduce not increase conflicts

Leaves ONE parcel – Chambers SW – no conflict

This is NOT the way to show the Regions support for Niagara’s AG economy – and ensuring it can grow and thrive!

The Tax argument

Over 275 acres (as seen from google satellite) exist throughout all the Hamlets. This has been available for both Commercial and Residential development for the last 30 years. There is NO mention of the current inventory.

Other Residential development continues to occur at a slow steady pace, adding to tax base. In addition, the Township recently approved 41 high end condos – to counter any excuses around taxes.

SNAP SHOT – The Reality of the Proposed Expansion areas

The Draft report is for 75 ha or 185 acres --- The equivalent of ONE entire township hamlet.

1. Village – the expansion is for an additional 25%
2. Chambers corners – the expansion is for an additional 33%

What if all the boundary expansion requests in Niagara Region were “even entertained” on this SCALE!

SOLUTIONS

Real solutions to protect the Agricultural lands proposed for Wainfleet.

1. Enact a policy to freeze all existing hamlet boundaries to protect AG – and maximize the use of all existing Agriculture lands currently with the existing Hamlets.
2. Explore reducing LOTS sizes within the existing Hamlets.
 - We all need to do our share on density.
 - OUR Example based on residential ONLY
 - The expansion is 143 acres – or 143 more 1 acre lots (under current schemes)
 - USE a current inventory of at least 275 acres (Residential ONLY) – or 275 1 acre lots
 - Total net inventory would be 275 lots + the additional 143 = 418 LOT inventory!!
 - Now use .7 as lot size
 - Uses current inventory of 275, divide by .7 of an acre (with the usual studies) and we are almost back up to 400 lots!
 - New technologies will be coming in the future to support slightly smaller footprints. This will contribute to potential more affordable housing.

Again, recognizing the urgency and momentum this Plan has to be completed – it must factor in the magnitude of Covid lessons.

- a. Green space value increased dramatically
- b. Canada scrambled with the shortage / lack of Mask production
- c. Canada scrambled with production of a vaccine within its borders
- d. We are getting a glimpse of how fragile our supply chains are and how this could potentially change the value of more local food production and processing for Niagara and Canada.

Summary

The Niagara Region needs to take a strong position on protecting Agricultural lands and reducing its conflicts where possible. This strengthened position will help with all its longer term intensification goals.

A Zero Growth plan for Wainfleet will support Niagara Region better navigate a post Covid economic state. One that is more focused on local supply chains, contributes to more food security and creates opportunity for more local food processing. The Region can signal that it values and respects our AG economy – throughout Niagara – including the poultry, livestock and grain and oilseed farms!