



December 16, 2022

**Community Leaders**

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Wilmot Township

Sue Foxton, Mayor  
North Dumfries Township

Dorothy McCabe, Mayor  
City of Waterloo

Jan Liggett, Mayor  
City of Cambridge

Joe Nowak, Mayor  
Wellesley Township

Karen Redman, Chair  
Region of Waterloo

Sandy Shantz, Mayor  
Woolwich Township

Berry Vrbanovic, Mayor  
City of Kitchener

**Ambassadors**

David Agro

Ljubodrag Andric

Michael Barnstijn

Kehkashan Basu

David Buckland

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Geneviève Caron

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Gerry Remers

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To Whom it May Concern

The **rare Charitable Research Reserve** is a land trust that operates in the Region of Waterloo and Wellington County. In our roles as stewards of conservation land and advocates for wise and responsible land use, we regularly interact with municipal authorities in the implementation of natural heritage aspects of Official Plans. We respectfully submit this letter in general support of the Wellington County Official Plan update, with the following advice regarding conservation of intact habitats, which in turn provide the ecological services that support human society. While we applaud the articulation of human population growth forecasts and the realization that land is required for agriculture, water, and natural heritage in addition to residents and jobs, we have concerns with the long-term approach to conservation.

Southern Ontario is one of Canada's most biodiverse regions, and also one of its most densely populated. It is critically important to manage growth in a sustainable manner, but also to account for lands that support ecological services to ensure that their capacity is not being exceeded. Economic growth will come with no benefit if the natural capital that underpins it is damaged or lost in the process. Loss of local capacity for food production, water management, waste disposal, and so forth must be considered in growth plans. The roles of a land trust are to protect and steward the natural lands that support these activities and provide habitat for wild species that exist outside of human value constructs. Local governments can support these activities by recognizing the value of natural habitat, and supporting the acquisition and stewardship of natural lands by land trusts, which provides community benefit at little or no cost to the municipality.

We support the efforts to protect the countryside and agricultural lands from development in the Official Plan. Together with improvements in densification, transit, and climate adaptation strategies, we hope that the Official Plans can allow for the growth that is already accepted as inevitable. A plan looking ahead several decades must consider the probable state of the world in the middle of this century. There is a responsibility to consider factors such as climate change and habitat loss here and around the world, and not only where people will live and work, but how and from where food and water will be obtained. We encourage the County to ensure that their approach to long-term planning includes both population growth and supporting ecological services that can be accommodated by the land. To do otherwise is to choose a future of shortage and want for residents.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Stephanie Sobek-Swant  
Executive Director

Dr. Tom Woodcock  
Planning Ecologist