

For Immediate Release

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City and Township Mayors call for new vision for local government

Working together for more housing, stronger communities in Waterloo Region

Waterloo Region – To coincide with today’s meeting of the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy’s Study on Regional Governance, as overseen by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Mayors of six cities and townships representing almost 80 per cent of the population of Waterloo Region, called for reforms to the current structure of local and regional government.

At a media conference held today, which included individual presentations to the provincial standing committee by the Mayors of Cambridge, Kitchener, North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich, Mayors spoke of their unprecedented, shared work and unified voice in a common vision on the governance structure best suited for our collective communities in support of building more housing today, for stronger communities tomorrow.

Today’s vision recognizes that times have changed since regional governments in Ontario were established and our region must evolve if our local communities are to become an even greater success in the future. Work to develop this shared vision commenced following the announcement several months ago by the Province to review local and regional service delivery, and City and Township Mayors have been working collaboratively to develop recommendations to support and inform the Province’s consultation process, as it relates to the implementation of Bill 23 and further service delivery adjustments to be considered.

City and Township Mayors agree that there are opportunities to improve the way services related to the development, approval and building of housing are delivered. In presentations being made throughout the day to the provincial committee, Mayors called for the following:

1. Implement the transfer of the regional planning function to local municipalities as prescribed by Bill 23 by the end of the second quarter of 2024.
 - The goal of these transfers is to remove additional red tape from the process and contribute to the province’s and municipalities’ shared goal of “more homes, faster,” while shaping orderly growth in ways that meet the needs of our communities.
2. Improve service delivery for housing-related infrastructure and other services.
 - The goal of these recommendations in areas such as roads, transportation, traffic control, bylaw enforcement and other areas is to deliver better service with greater efficiency, enhance local decision-making, and reduce duplication.

City and Township Mayors are hoping to achieve the support of the provincial government towards this shared vision in a timely manner and look forward to continuing working together, along with their Councils, as well as other municipal and regional partners, to improve the quality and efficiency of our services while also increasing our capacity to build homes faster and continue to lead the province and the country in terms of economic growth.

Quotes

“For approximately the past year, the Mayors and CAOs of the region have been regularly working together on Regional Reform. The province had asked that we, as the Mayors, provide our input into a preferred option, so we set to work. We may all have come to the table from different directions and with different opinions but worked together from a position of a deep respect for each other and an understanding of the needs of each municipality within the region. We worked with a complete understanding of what each step could potentially do to our respective communities. Early on, we as the Mayors of Waterloo Region, recognized the importance of municipal autonomy, and that each municipality had unique attributes. In the end, we came to the same conclusions and the result was a collaborative position of one coordinated voice. Together we believe that a modified two-tier Municipal Government can help deliver on the provincial agenda to help build more housing today for a stronger tomorrow. My position is that of supporting a two-tier structure with much needed modifications to support More Homes Built Faster, with the additional underlying need of reinforcing the principle of streamlining and removing duplication in the land use review and decision-making model. Our job is complete; we now await the Standing Committee’s decision and hope that they come to the same conclusions we did; the current system is antiquated and has served its purpose.” **Cambridge Mayor, Jan Liggett**

“Today I was pleased to join other Mayors from throughout Waterloo Region in speaking to an unprecedented, shared vision on the governance structure best suited for both the individual and collective future of our communities. While the model in place over the last 50 years has served us well, as we grow to over a million people, to get the job done, we must continue to evolve by implementing the transition of all planning components to the local level as legislated in Bill 23 and pursue the transfer of other services to local government that relate to the broader housing goal of building complete communities such as roads, transportation, economic development, culture and entertainment, and bylaw enforcement. We are ready to assume these services and can deliver them faster and better for our residents by eliminating duplication.” **Kitchener Mayor, Berry Vrbanovic**

“North Dumfries was pleased to participate in the discussion before the Standing Committee where we could identify the shared vision amongst the Waterloo Region Mayors on how a two-tier government could be improved to serve our respective residents and businesses. The Township is a partner in the process and encourages the Province to work with the Waterloo region area municipalities to support change with the objective of eliminating duplication and streamlining processes.” **North Dumfries Mayor, Sue Foxton**

“Strong governance is key to effectively delivering services to residents of our region. The Waterloo region mayors have made a compelling case to the Province to realign service delivery to eliminate duplication while maintaining a two-tier system that recognizes rural autonomy. I am optimistic that the Province has heard the collective view of the Waterloo region mayors.” **Wellesley Mayor, Joe Nowak**

"Wilmot is aligned with the mayors of Wellesley, Woolwich, North Dumfries, Kitchener, and Cambridge that in order to meet provincial goals and better serve our residents, we must optimize the two-tier local government system, including the full download of planning to the local tier. Locally we are in the best

position to plan the future of our communities and Wilmot does not want to become a bedroom community or standardize process across the region. What works in New Hamburg may not suit New Dundee, let alone the City of Kitchener. More local autonomy along with our Wilmot staff expertise will ensure we continue to meet the needs of our wonderful community and serve current and future residents." **Wilmot Mayor, Natasha Salonen**

"Woolwich joins our other local mayors in our request to address duplication between the regional and area governments, especially as it relates to need for more housing. We have the staff, the resources and the will to effectively manage our growth and development, and we look forward to partnering with the Province on addressing the housing crisis. Since 1990 Woolwich has successfully staged growth in our urban areas, and we currently have a strong supply of land approved and, in the pipeline, but we need the Province to proceed with proclaiming Bill 23 if we are to be successful." **Woolwich Mayor, Sandy Shantz**

For more information in your City or Township, visit:

www.cambridge.ca

www.kitchener.ca

www.woolwich.ca

www.wilmot.ca

www.wellesley.ca

www.northdumfries.ca

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