

INTRODUCTION:

Good evening, Mayor and Council. My name is Chloe Bichette and I've been a property owner and taxpayer in the township for almost 30 years. Earlier this year, I opened a small real estate office in town. So, like others who are here tonight, I am well-invested in the future of this township.

I would like to personally thank those of you on council who took the time to sit with me individually to discuss the issue of our time: the prospect of industrializing rural and farm land in our township. We had respectful conversations. For those with whom I did not have the pleasure of meeting — I am grateful for the chance to address you tonight.

I have been living on Beach Road Left since 2019. Like most people who live or have camps here, we put up with a lot — bad cell phone service, expensive internet and hydro delivery charges, dusty cars and trucks, and tires that are chewed up by gravel roads, to name a few. There's a reason for that...

Simply: this place is special.

AGRICULTURAL HISTORY:

This township has a proud agricultural history, one that's boasted about in the Massey Museum and amongst self-reliant residents as they proudly talk about the good old days, as well as their intentions to stay put on the lands they love til death do they part. There are families who have passed their properties down through time and generations.

In the early to mid 2000's we began welcoming groups of Mennonite farmers who came to rejuvenate the lands that weren't being worked anymore. It was something of a re-birth of mass agriculture in the township, and it has led to many of the attractions that residents and visitors enjoy. In particular, our road-side veggie stands and the abundant local meat, maple syrup and honey supplies.

We love our wildlife too — feeding birds in the winter, spotting a herd of deer or a moose, bear or fox kits — it's literally part of everyday life.... a co-existence that perhaps we take for granted, but now, faced with the prospect of its extinction, we are called to defend....

So, I guess we're just a little puzzled as to why council is even entertaining changing any of that, or potentially ALL of that, when a couple of guys show up from the city promising the moon and stars in terms of money in return for industrializing our rural land. These same guys drove their trucks right onto seeded fields that are currently being farmed and, when asked here in this chamber, had no clue that the area they want to industrialize is home to the township's biggest aquifer. All they see is easy terrain to plop solar panels on and checks to be cashed if awarded the grant money. We see so much more.

INTEREST FROM OUTSIDE PARTIES IN OUR RURAL LANDS:

There are no fewer than 4 companies who want to alter or take away all that we hold dear along Birch Lake Rd from Antonen to Proctor - a 4 mile stretch of some of the most beautiful farmland and wildlife habitat on the planet. These properties are home to many species at risk, including the Blanding's Turtle, Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolinks, Bald Eagles, Barn Swallows, and many, many others. I can send you the full list if you like.

The cold spring that has gotten so much attention is a class A fish habitat for brook trout.

Much of this area is also considered special provincial wetland, with adjacent protected deer yards. And some of the property in the proposed industrial area is Anishnabe ritual land — which we promise to honour at the beginning of every council meeting, just like we did tonight.

The entire township falls under the National Heritage area of Ontario, where the springs and underground aquifers deserve to be protected, not built on top of and contaminated with concrete, gravel and potentially pesticides. The water that flows on this land and below it serves local farms for miles. It is drunk by livestock, and connects with all of our local lakes and rivers. In other words, if you contaminate one area, you eventually contaminate them all.

THE SPIRIT OF OUR OFFICIAL PLAN:

Our Official Plan extols the virtues of protecting our rural and farm land. The spirit of the Official Plan aligns with why all of these people are here tonight.

I hope you don't mind while I take a few minutes to read to you verbatim from that Official Plan:

Quote:

Future growth in the municipality will occur through significant opportunities for settlement in the three designated urban areas (Massey, Webbwood, Walford), through the attraction of waterfront residential development and through *limited development in the rural area.*

End quote —

Here is another, quote:

Council intends to provide for the preservation of the rural atmosphere and rural living environment of the Planning Area.

End quote.

And quote:

Part of the heritage of the area is a *deep respect for the environment and the amenities of natural habitat areas.* The Plan sets out policies to ensure that there are *no adverse impacts to the conservation of the environment and the ecological functions associated with endangered and threatened species, fish and wildlife habitats and wetlands.*

End quote.

And one last one:

It shall be a policy of Council to ensure that all development shall take place in accordance with the land use designations and policy statements of this Plan. *The zoning by-law and any amendments thereto shall be enacted only in conformity with the policies of this plan.*

So, do we mean what we say, or are these just platitudes? If we mean it, what are we doing here, giving support to multi-nationals that want to decimate it?

OUR ZONING BY-LAW:

Let's take a look at the Zoning By-Law, where, you may say in defence, solar installations are allowed in the township and, in fact, already exist. Yes, that's true, and proves that residents here are not against green energy, but the by-law states only up to 10 kW in size. Those who have solar panels on their property are using between 3-5 acres to do so. The proposed industrial solar installation that came before council last month is expected to be 80,000 - 120,000 kW- And that's over 370 football fields to put things into perspective.

And what about battery storage? We have no by-law on the books for that. Yet one local farmer was offered between \$15-20,000 an acre for 45 of his acres to store lithium batteries. How environmentally friendly can that storage be if someone is willing to pay up to nearly a million dollars for the privilege? Let me tell you...lithium batteries were recently banned from cargo holds of commercial airliners because of something called thermal runoff, which can lead to explosions and fires. And that's just your laptop battery. Imagine 45 acres of storage all exposed to extreme weather conditions.

As for wind turbines. According to our by-laws, buildings cannot be over 4 stories. Yet, most wind turbines are in excess of 500 ft.

To wrap this up, the industrialization of our rural lands is simply NOT compatible with our Official Plan, Zoning By-Law, or, most importantly, our way of life.

PRIVATE LAND:

One of the arguments that's being made is that people have the right to do "whatever they want" on private land. This isn't, and never has been, true. Again back to the by-laws and official plan....

Let's ask ourselves this: Are we really going to have more restrictions on sea can storage containers in our Zoning By-Law than we do industrial energy projects being constructed by third parties who have no skin in the game and who do not have to live with the ramifications of how they treat the land here?

A REAL ESTATE BROKER'S TAKE - MY PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT:

As a Realtor, part of my job is to advise owners of the values of their properties. I can tell you this with utmost confidence: Entertaining any of these industrial projects on rural land will devalue all of the property in our township.

These ventures are the new gold rush....there are big money grants at stake. They offer no value to the taxpayers of our township. In fact, just the maintenance of the roads during the construction period of these proposed industrial projects will cost the taxpayer dearly. It will be noisy, messy, will tear up our infrastructure, will not create long-term employment for anyone here, and it will rob the equity that property owners have in their land and homes. In short, it's an economic and environmental disaster.

This is NOT economic development. Economic development would support and build upon what we already have in place: a strong farming community. Instead, the industrialization of rural land will take it out of commission forever, with no possible opportunity for expansion for the future generations. The farmers I've spoken to say that expansion is key to their profession.

It also smacks in the face those who visit for the natural beauty and peace that they feel when they move to or visit this area.

Is it sound policy to destroy the very reasons that our area is attractive to ourselves and outsiders? To what end?

THE OPPOSITION AND ITS PEOPLE:

We've talked a lot about the farmers, because truthfully, as mentioned, farming will be shut out on all of the properties that are being enticed to climb aboard this gravy train. The farm land will be decimated for generations for sure, and even more likely, forever.

However, as you can see, the opposition to the industrialization of our rural lands cuts across all sectors of residents in our township — everyone is affected by this: farmers, non-farmers, general year-round residents and seasonal cottagers alike.

See the petition that has been circulated for weeks - now with over 1,200 online signatures and hundreds more on paper.

FUTURE DEMAND FOR POWER:

The argument that the world is going to need 75% more power between 2030 and 2050 is largely being predicted by huge data centres that are under construction now and an electric car mandate that, by the way, has been paused by the prime minister as of last week, and looks to be headed to the dustbin of history, if the auto makers get their wish. Many companies are already pivoting to different technologies with smaller footprints for their power needs. Take the data centres, for example: SMR's, or small modular reactors, are especially attractive to the big companies for their future power supply. The biggest companies, such as Intel, Amazon and Google are all looking into these, so do we really have a power deficit on the horizon? Very doubtful.

The electric car mandate has been completely scrapped in the U.S. and as mentioned, with this past week's news, it's just a matter of time before Canada does the same.

More recently, Quebec had to eat the loss of over \$270 million after the cancellation of the Northvolt battery plant, the second big battery plant project that has been cancelled. States in the U.S. (one example is California) and other Western nations, such as Germany, Denmark and the U.K. have already gone down this road have learned that these subsidized industrial green energy projects are unreliable (did you know that solar panels are only effective at converting less than 25% of sunlight into electricity?) They also inevitably drive up energy costs for the consumer, way up. Germany, Denmark and the U.K. compete for the highest energy prices in the world. Is that what we want?

WHACK-A-MOLE:

The big money grants are expected to be handed out year-over-year for the next several years, meaning that we, the residents, and potential new residents, I might add, will be on tender-hooks for the foreseeable future. In other words, we will be left playing whack-a-mole every time a new multi-nation corporation sees an interest in our area. The real estate market will be destabilized, because those wanting to relocate here will inevitably wonder, "Is the neighbourhood I'm interested in next?"

Now is the time for council to get ahead of this and re-think, re-group and *rescind* your “support” of not only this first round of projects, but all that come after. It’s time to send a clear message and close the door on this now.

So that leads us to....

OUR ASK:

Please, table a motion and vote now to rescind your support of this, and any other, big “green energy” projects in our township.

Thank you.