

NO•FARMS•NO•FOOD

Lawn signs to protect valley farmland sprout and spread

Greenwich August 5, 2010

Hundreds of valley people are staking their claim to a green future. They are doing it with bright green lawn signs with the message: SOS Save Our Farms.

The lawn signs were produced by No Farms No Food (NF2). They are a part of a growing community campaign to convince Kings County Council to apply the county bylaws that protect farmland. This is something council has time and time again refused to do.

A recent council decision will allow development of 167 acres of prime farmland in Port Williams. Council also appears ready to give the green light to landowners who want to develop 380 acres of farmland in Greenwich.

“Council discussions surrounding the protection of agricultural land do not fill us with confidence” says Pauline Raven, one of the founding members of the NF2 community action group. “We anticipated a pro-development decision on Port Williams and knew we would have to expand our public awareness activities.”

Supporters stake out their territory

NF2 supporters have staked out their territory in Port Williams, Greenwich and Wolfville with 420 lawn signs. “This is just the first wave of what we expect to be a county-wide campaign,” says Raven. Many successful Kings County farmers are also joining the NF2 drive to preserve the agricultural land base of the county.

The NF2 on-line petition shows over 2,000 names with 45% of signatures from Kings County residents and 51% from other Nova Scotians. It can be viewed, along with many comments calling on government to provide stronger protection for agricultural land, at www.nofarmsnofood.ca

“This council just can’t seem to review relevant facts, leave personal agendas behind, and make sound decisions for the public good,” notes Raven. “We aren’t the only ones to notice this.” An in-depth external review of council released by consultant Pojidaeff in early 2010 found the council deeply flawed in almost all its functions and branded it “dysfunctional.”

Farmers on side

Tom Cosman, of Cosman and Whidden Honey, owns and operates a bee-keeping operation in Greenwich. He wants the Government of Nova Scotia to step in and stop municipalities from undermining bylaws designed to protect farmland. “If they are not stopped,” says Cosman, “land speculators and developers will continue to hijack laws designed to protect our valley farmland that provides an incredible variety of foods every year.”

Andrew Bishop, owns and operates Noggins Corner Farm along with children and his brother Stirling. They continue to farm land that cuts across the 380-acres other Greenwich farmers claim is no longer viable for agriculture. Bishop points out: “These lands have produced food for this province, an income for my family, and employment for hundreds of years, there is clearly no valid reason for that to stop.”

Plenty of land for development

NF2 members see no reason for the need to sacrifice productive farm land for residential development. A recent report by Kings County Planning staff shows over 16,000 residential lots approved for development in the county. Each town in the municipality also has room for more housing. In particular, the Town of Wolfville, is campaigning to increase the urban density of the town. At Town Council is grave concern that the new lots in nearby areas of the county will thwart this plan.

At the Municipality of Kings' July 27, Planning Advisory Committee meeting, planners brought forward the need to consider expropriation of a tract of Bishop's farm land to allow a connector road between Skyway Drive in Wolfville and the access road leading to Highway 101 at Exit 11. If this road is permitted, it is expected to lead to more development because it will open access to a land-locked piece of agricultural land where owners want to develop a Holiday Inn Express. The owners have placed their application on hold until decision-makers rule on rezoning and the connector road.

The Government of Nova Scotia can reject municipal amendments that contradict the Province's Statement of Interest in Agriculture. NF2 has been told that the decision will be made jointly by John MacDonnell (Minister of Agriculture) and Ramona Jennex (Minister of Services Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations).

No Farms No Food built from community base

No Farms No Food was started in 2005 by a small group of mostly middle-aged women. The group has grown to include hundreds of active supporters from Kings County and hundreds of others across the province.

The group functions as a loose coalition: writing letters to politicians, mounting local demonstrations and presenting research documents and opinions to county council at every opportunity.

For more information about this media release contact: Pauline Raven, 902-582-3145 or 902-670-2949; Tom Cosman 902-542-9443, Andrew Bishop 902-542-9281 or 902-679-9522.

If you would like photographs of signs in Port Williams, Greenwich or Wolfville, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

For more information about No Farms No Food visit: www.nofarmsnofood.ca

To view the No Farms No Food Petition, Protection of Nova Scotia's Agricultural Land visit: <http://www.PetitionOnline.com/p4n3s2a1/petition.html>

Email No Farms No Food at: nofarmsnofood@gmail.com

Background Information

Petition Results at August 3, 2010.

	Kings Co	Other NS Counties	Other Canadians	International Friends	Totals
Number	899	1017	72	13	2001
Percent	44.93	50.82	3.60	0.65	100

1916 Nova Scotians have signed (95.75% of signatures to date)

Residential Building Lots in the County of Kings (Source Ben Sivak, Acting Manager of Planning, Kings County).

- There is a potential for 4,956 new dwelling units within 12 existing growth centre centres.
- There is potential for 10,478 new dwelling units within the county's Country Residential (R6) zones.
- There is potential for 892 new dwelling units on lots within the agricultural district, created before 1994.
- Total potential for new dwelling units = 16,326

In early 2010, consultant Dimitri Pojidaeff conducted a review of this council. Pojidaeff found the "severity of issues" within Kings County "atypical" of municipal governments he had worked with elsewhere. The report labelled Kings County Council dysfunctional; pointed to the negative impact of councillors' individual agendas on the ability of council to work effectively; and noted that representation was being provided to a few residents versus the population in general.