



# StandOurGround.ca NEWSLETTER

Issue 004 - September 2025

## Save Russell Township from Mega Sprawl!

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## Councillor Lisa Deacon's response to the Open Letter on the release of the memorandum from Egis Canada Ltd.

*StandOurGround.ca published a Open Letter to Members of Council on the release of the memorandum from Egis Canada Ltd. on the Groundwater Recharge impacts and Water Budget for the proposed expansion of the Industrial Park Area composed by Rhonda Bradley and Brett Eskritt in our May 2025 Newsletter. Below is Councillor Lisa Deacon's response to their Open Letter.*

Good afternoon Ms. Bradley and Mr. Eskritt,

I was sitting with residents recently who rightly questioned why I, as a member of Russell Township Council, had not yet replied to your open letter published in the Stand Our Ground newsletter earlier this Spring, which specifically requested a response from each member of Council. I will take the opportunity to do so now.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to detail your concerns about future development in the 417 Industrial Park as they relate to the ground-water recharge area.

Out of respect for your time I will not provide a response to each numbered concern in your letter, though I considered each point as I prepared to deliberate and ultimately vote in favour of the (then) draft Russell Township Official Plan.

In your letter one of your requests of Council was to, *"establish high-level protections and policy direction for significant environmental features such as Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas (SGRAs) and private drinking water sources."* You had concerns that *"Deferring this responsibility to the zoning by-law stage undermines enforceability and leaves rural residents—particularly those relying on private wells—without robust or equitable protection."*

This was key in my considerations. I'll provide you with my rationale to the above in two parts:

**First**, do high-level protections for SGRAs appear in the Russell Township and United Counties Plans?

.../2

## Councillor Lisa Deacon's response to the Open Letter (continued)

On pages 47-51 of the Official Plan adopted by Council (pending approval by UCPR), high-level protections and policy direction for development of the 417 Industrial Park are in place. Among other sections that demonstrate this, *"the following uses shall be prohibited on the lands within the limits of the Groundwater Recharge Area as identified in Appendix II Ground Water Recharge Area of the County Official Plan:"* The section goes on to list 16 prohibited uses on those lands including, among others, uses involving pharmaceuticals, solvents, oil, coal, salt and various other chemicals.

As you likely know there are several areas in our Township that constitute an SGRA - the northeast corner of the Township being another sizeable area. In addition to addressing SGRAs in the Russell Township Official Plan, which speaks directly to the 417 Industrial Park area, later in the Township Official plan on pages 78 and 82 you will find reference to SGRAs again, pointing to the United Counties of Prescott-Russell Official Plan. On page 128 of the United Counties Official Plan addresses SGRAs with high-level direction, including *"Within the limits of the Groundwater Recharge Area when identified and as shown on Appendix II, permitted uses shall be restricted to those uses which will not result in negative impacts on the groundwater resource and uses existing as of the date of passing of this Official Plan. New or expanded development shall be subject to consultation with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks or its delegate."*

I am satisfied with the high-level direction and policy guidance set out in the Russell Township Official Plan, and its relation to the UCPR Official Plan.

The **second** aspect is with regards to specific protections not appearing in the Russell Township Official Plan, that, *"Deferring this responsibility to the zoning by-law stage undermines enforceability and leaves rural residents—particularly those relying on private wells—without robust or equitable protection."*

I disagree on this point when it comes to the Township's responsibilities around land use planning. As I have already indicated above, I voted in favour with the understanding that the big-picture vision and principles are in place in both the Counties and Russell Township official plans. The zoning by-law is the enforceable tool that will dictate in finer detail exactly how specific lands can be used and developed, guided by the official plans' policy direction.

As a fellow private well owner I hold a particular stake in understanding how private drinking water safety is shared across public health, environmental protection, property owner responsibility, and land use planning. My message here so far has narrowed in on Township's responsibilities regarding land use planning. I would like to take a step out of Russell Township's area of responsibility to acknowledge and express my agreement with you that broadly, across Ontario (and Canada), rural residents who are on private wells do not have the same drinking water protections as those on municipal systems. Gaps and recommendations for the Province of Ontario's consideration are well documented in a [2025 report to the Province of Ontario by the Ontario Auditor General](#). I found particularly concerning one finding that public health units in some cases are not equipped to communicate identified risks to private well owners.

I wonder what advocacy and discussions are underway locally and provincially to encourage the implementation of the OAG's recommendations. I would gladly join discussions and add my voice to that movement. Closer to home I have also asked the Mayor, who sits on South Nation Conservation's Board for more information about [City of Ottawa's Rural Clean Water Program](#) to understand if and how such a program could be implemented in our region.

As I close this response I would like to thank you again for your continued engagement. While I understand that you are unsatisfied with the outcome of Council's spring vote on the Russell Township Official Plan, I hope that you will continue to engage on Township issues that are important to you.

Councillor Lisa Deacon

## Rhonda Bradley and Brett Eskritt's response to Councillor Lisa Deacon's letter

Good afternoon Councillor,

Thank you for taking the time to provide a response. While we acknowledge your confidence in the Official Plans and their policy direction, we must insist that this confidence is ill-placed in practice. We are copying Councillors Armstrong on this email in his capacity as Chair of the Environmental and Sustainability Advisory Committee as we believe our reply here is relevant to this committee's oversight as well.

The protections you cite rely, in large measure, on technical work commissioned by the Township. Unfortunately, the hydrogeological memorandum prepared by Egis (April 2025) and relied upon in your deliberations falls short of accepted professional standards.

Among the concerns:

- Egis itself warned the Township that the RFP process incentivized under-scoped work, yet proceeded to deliver a narrowly scoped report.
- The memo omitted fundamental analyses (such as cumulative recharge assessment and site-specific infiltration testing) and applied outdated guidelines (1995!) and in ways these guidelines were never intended to be used.
- No adequate disclosure or qualification of these limitations was provided, despite their direct relevance to land use planning and the protection of private wells.
- The Township has also withheld Egis's original August 2024 submission under third-party provisions, raising further concerns about transparency and public trust.

### **These are not minor technical disagreements.**

They go to the heart of whether Council truly had the robust and reliable information needed to make decisions about development in a vulnerable groundwater recharge area. A policy is only as strong as the evidence underpinning it.

For these reasons, we believe the protections referenced in the Official Plans are, at best, aspirational unless supported by sound technical studies. Overconfidence in their sufficiency risks leaving private well owners and the Vars-Winchester esker without meaningful protection.

As a private well owner yourself, you understand how much is at stake. As a member of Council, you are not a bystander to staff or consultants: you are the decision-maker. It is within your power and your duty to demand the rigour and independence that this community's drinking water and environment require. **Your comment about "wondering" what advocacy and discussions are taking place belies the fact that you could - and should - be leading this advocacy and these discussions.** Choosing not to act is itself a decision, and residents increasingly recognize this as a pattern that risks eroding public trust.

We encourage Council to take these concerns seriously and to require additional independent, properly scoped hydrogeological work before relying on the Egis memo to guide development in the 417 Industrial Park.

Thank you again for your engagement. We remain hopeful that together we can strengthen, rather than simply assume, the protections all residents in our community deserve.

Sincerely,

Brett & Rhonda

## In the News

### Russell Township's \$104M community centre faces backlash from hockey groups



Russell Township's \$104M community centre

StandOurGround.ca would like to bring to our subscribers attention an article published July 8, 2025 by reporter Katelyn Wilson on the CTV News website entitled "[Russell Township's \\$104M community centre faces backlash from hockey groups](#)".

According to the article the \$104-million community centre with three ice rinks, is drawing criticism from two of its biggest intended user groups which are the minor hockey association and Junior B hockey team.

Christian Gauthier, vice-president competitive of District Three Minor Hockey Association is quoted in the article: *"We need space for youth, for junior and we don't have it."*

In the article Mike Tarnowski, Mayor of the Township of Russell disagrees, saying the changerooms are now about the same size or slightly bigger than Russell's largest existing room and the overall design will meet the needs of all user groups.

Seating capacity has also been cut to just under 500 plus standing room and the dedicated junior room was eliminated entirely.

There were hopes of encouraging a Junior A hockey team into the region. Darrell Campbell, GM and owner of the Embrun Panthers Junior B team is cited in the article saying it will be hard to accommodate the Panthers with no coach's room, dedicated storage, warm-up area or training facility.

Max Lauzon, Embrun Minor Hockey Association president and head coach is also quoted in the article: *"As a community, we are paying as well for this new complex with our taxes and we want to feel like the township is listening to us."*

Mayor Tarnowski insists there will be ample space in the new facility.

We hope that you will click the [link](#) and read the full article on the CTV News Website.

**StandOurGround.ca** welcomes your feedback, counterarguments, photographs, and written submissions for our Newsletter. Kindly inform us if you would like your Letter to the Editor to remain anonymous.



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