

Watson's Walton Dilemma

Posted on [March 18, 2013](#) by [Ken Gray](#)

Jim Watson has a pain and it has a name ... it's called Walton International.

This project has difficult decisions written all over it and there's nothing His Worship likes less than difficult decisions. Or controversy. Oooo ... that's a bad one.

But controversy he's got.

You see by making decisions on the Walton proposal, one of the largest developments in Ottawa history in the southwest part of the city and now being broadened and promoted (it takes years to assemble land – companies don't assemble 3,200 acres and not to move forward with it), Watson pleases some and angers others. Politicians don't like that.

If the Walton International proposal goes forward, in whole or in some parts, it busts through the urban boundary that was meant to contain the city within its compacted area. That means more pipes, [buses](#), roads, more services and more municipal costs ... things cities don't like.

But it also means jobs, construction, [taxes](#) and a better economy. On the other hand, Ottawans who are having their neighbourhoods destroyed by 42-storey [condos](#) in the name of extremification will wonder why they are taking a hit when the [mayor](#) would be contributing to urban sprawl by approving Walton.

Then there are two brands of farmers. The ones whose farms being purchased would be made extraordinarily wealthy, but others whose tracts were not sold, would decry the decline of the rural way of life. Bravely, Rideau-Goulbourn Councillor Scott Moffatt is against the project. There are a lot of influential economic interests in this city that want to move this forward.

There are rural advocates who want good farmland to remain good farmland. That's spurred by the local food movement, as well.

The housing market is a problem, too. This is not the past decade when a cardboard box on a street corner went for \$100,000. The [condo](#) boom has or is about to go bust. Critics would be against building units that could go empty or would be sold at bargain-basement prices. And smart homeowners would hate to see more homes built when their home prices are, at best, flat.

So Watson has difficult choices. Many of his developer friends would like to see this approved. Others without land out there ... perhaps not. Rail advocates might be pleased to see an extended line at low cost. Others think long lines contribute to sprawl. There are strong economic arguments to go forward, yet strong green arguments to stop it.

In total, few will be happy with whatever decision Watson makes.

But then Watson has not been making many friends lately.

Suburbanites would hate to see their nearby rural areas disappear with the Walton development or their house prices be suppressed by a huge number of units to sell. Rural people might be unhappy at rural areas disappearing. Downtowners are fed up with western light rail down [Byron](#), Lansdowne and extremification.

So think about this for a second ... just who is left to vote for Watson in 2014.

Rural, suburban and downtown residents could have very legitimate beefs with the city government by the time the next [election](#) comes around.

One Response to *Watson's Walton Dilemma*

1. *James O'Grady* says:

[March 18, 2013 at 8:19 AM](#)

” Ottawans who are having their neighbourhoods destroyed by 42-storey condos in the name of intensification will wonder why they are taking a hit when the mayor would be contributing to urban sprawl by approving Walton. ”

This has been my argument for years. They argue intensification inside the greenbelt but do not restrict the expansion of the urban boundary (or are unable to prevent its expansion) to make the sacrifice worthwhile. As I have maintained, the City's intensification policy is nothing more than a sales pitch for developers... A twist on their old pitch to accommodate new provincial policy, nothing more.

Intensification must be part of a larger sustainability plan. Otherwise, on its own, it's just a sales pitch to build more—bigger, taller buildings.

2.