



TOWN OF
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

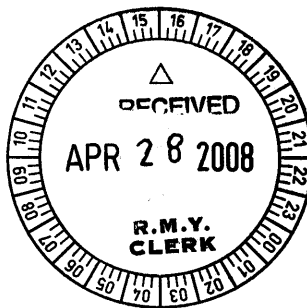
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April 25th, 2008

The Regional Municipality of York
Mr. Denis Kelly, Regional Clerk
17250 Yonge Street, Box 147
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Mr. Kelly:



**REGION OF YORK
CLERK'S OFFICE**

FILE No. - 907

**RE: DISCUSSION PAPER: GROWING THE GREENBELT – CONSULTATION 2008
(C10-DS & E05)**

Please be advised that the above-noted matter was placed before Council at its meeting held on April 15th, 2008.

It was the decision of the Council, at that time, to pass the following resolution:

- 1) THAT Council adopts the Staff Report entitled "Discussion Paper: Growing the Greenbelt – Consultation 2008";
- 2) AND THAT the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing include Lower Tier Municipalities in the listing of eligible stakeholders when a request to expand the existing boundaries of the Greenbelt is being considered;
- 3) AND THAT this Report be forwarded to the Council of the Regional Municipality of York for endorsement as it relates to the inclusion of Lower Tier Municipalities as a future commenting stakeholder;
- 4) AND THAT this Report be forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Town's MPP for their review and consideration as part of the Greenbelt 2008 Consultation process.

Yours truly,

Mrs. Michele Kennedy, B.A., C.M.O.
Town Clerk

MK/sw

Filename: GrowGreebelt-04-15-08.cic
For the Meeting of: April 15, 2008
Attachments: Yes

DISCUSSION PAPER: GROWING THE GREENBELT – CONSULTATION 2008

Report Prepared By: Deputy-Director & Manager of Planning

RECOMMENDATION

The Director of Development Services concurs with the recommendation.

The Deputy-Director & Manager of Planning recommends:

- 1) **THAT Council adopts the Staff Report entitled "Discussion Paper: Growing the Greenbelt – Consultation 2008";**
- 2) **AND THAT the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing include Lower Tier Municipalities in the listing of eligible stakeholders when a request to expand the existing boundaries of the Greenbelt is being considered;**
- 3) **AND THAT this Report be forwarded to the Council of the Regional Municipality of York for endorsement as it relates to the inclusion of Lower Tier Municipalities as a future commenting stakeholder;**
- 4) **AND THAT this Report be forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Town's MPP for their review and consideration as part of the Greenbelt 2008 Consultation process.**

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Report is to:

1. Advise Council of a consultation process embarked upon by the Province related to criteria to be used to assess future adjustments to the Greenbelt boundary; and,
2. Seek Council's adoption of a Town position on the draft criteria and to forward those comments on to the Province for review and consideration.

2. BACKGROUND

The Greenbelt Plan and the Greenbelt boundary were established under the *Greenbelt Act, 2005*. The Greenbelt is the cornerstone of the Province's Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan, Ontario's over-arching strategy for managing growth for the

area. The Greenbelt Plan directs the majority of future growth to existing urban areas, away from environmentally sensitive and prime agricultural areas. Approximately 1.8 million acres of land are protected from development within the Greenbelt.

The Act requires a comprehensive policy review of the Greenbelt Plan every 10 years. The review must be coordinated with the reviews of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. The first 10 year review of the Greenbelt Plan is to occur in 2015.

The Act only allows the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing to propose Amendments to the Greenbelt Plan. The Provincial Cabinet is the approval authority for any Amendments to the Plan.

On February 15th, the Minister circulated a document entitled "Growing the Greenbelt – Consultation 2008". Within this document are draft criteria that would assist the Minister evaluate any Amendments to the Greenbelt boundary. The Minister has invited interested parties to comment on the draft criteria.

The draft criteria as circulated by the Province is included as Attachment No. 1 to this Report.

3. OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

Staff have reviewed the circulated criteria for "growing the Greenbelt" and fundamentally there are no concerns with the factors to be considered / assessed in any justification to alter the boundaries.

To maintain the integrity of the Greenbelt and its boundaries over time, it is imperative for the Minister to assess Local, Regional and Provincial requirements and objectives. These factors include:

- a. protection of blocks of prime agricultural lands;
- b. protection of environmentally sensitive lands, and where possible, to establish corridors linking the environmental systems;
- c. ability for communities to continue to evolve in response to accepted growth forecasts (residential & non-residential) and in the context of corresponding designated land budgets (greenfield and redevelopment / intensification);
- d. maximization of committed infrastructure (existing or approved) to ensure efficiency and utilization of scarce public dollars;
- e. promotes logical extension of boundaries and is not disjointed or promotes fragmentation; and,

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- f. facilitates or promotes transit friendly principles and objectives, and, represents a natural extension to established corridors.

The draft criteria, as circulated, embody these principles.

Staff, in the review of the draft criteria, do however have one specific concern with the Province's framework to entertain future Amendments to the Greenbelt boundary. In the preamble to Item 1 'Municipal Request', it states "Requests for growing the Greenbelt from regional, county and single-tier municipal governments will be considered."

It is important to note that local Municipalities, such as Whitchurch-Stouffville, would not be able to petition the Minister to Amend the Greenbelt boundary. Staff believe that this restriction is prejudicial to local Municipalities and does not properly account for the value of service that local Councils bring to the decision making process. By directly eliminating a local Municipality from participating in the process, the voices of their ratepayers (businesses and residents) will have to be heard through the Regional or County government. The objectives expressed by the local Council may place an emphasis on community building and this may not have the same level of importance at the Regional / County level. Additionally, the public may be more easily engaged at the local level of government and a broader education and consensus of a future "plan" may evolve.

It is Staff's opinion that if the criteria used to evaluate Amendments to the Greenbelt boundary are sound and encompassing, then all levels of Municipal government should be able to directly petition the Minister and directly participate in the process.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications on the 2008 Capital or Operating Budgets arising from the consideration of this Report.

5. ALIGNMENT WITH THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The consideration of this Report is aligned with the Town's Corporate Strategic Plan in the following manner:

Balanced Growth & Community Sustainability

- Preserve and enhance community character;
- Balanced land use planning – environment, economic & social considerations

6. CONCLUSION

As the Province, and specifically the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area, continues to grow, it will be necessary to refine and adjust the boundaries of the Greenbelt Plan.

The criteria to evaluate boundary Amendments should be transparent, fair and encompassing in terms of maintaining the original objectives of the Greenbelt Plan. The draft criteria as circulated by the Province meet these tests, save and accept in one specific area. Town Staff believe that local Municipalities should also be able to petition the Minister to seek an Amendment to the Greenbelt boundary and that this should not be limited exclusively to regional, county or single-tier Municipalities.

For further information, please contact Andrew McNeely, Deputy-Director & Manager of Planning, 905-640-1910 x270 or via email at andrew.mcneely@townofws.com

Attachment No. 1

Draft Criteria Growing the Greenbelt

1. Municipal Request

Requests for growing the Greenbelt from regional, county and single-tier municipal governments will be considered.

A municipality requesting to expand the Greenbelt should address the following questions:

- Is the request supported by regional, county or single-tier municipal council?
- Does the request identify the geographic area within the municipality to be considered for addition to the Greenbelt?
- What specific measures has council taken to engage the public and key stakeholder organizations about growing the Greenbelt in its municipality?
- What specific measures has council taken to engage Aboriginal communities about growing the Greenbelt in its municipality?
- Is there consensus among a region or county and its lower-tiers affected by the proposal? Is the request supported by council resolutions?
- Has the municipality provided a supporting rationale as to how the criteria have been met?

2. Embraces Greenbelt Purpose

The Greenbelt establishes its main purpose through the vision and goals outlined previously. Proposed expansions to the Greenbelt must recognize its key role in guiding land use planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and seek to maintain this purpose.

- Does the proposed expansion protect environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands while meeting the needs of growing communities?
- Is it consistent with the vision and goals of the Greenbelt Plan?

3. Additions to the Greenbelt

Greenbelt additions should be logical extensions to its existing area. New lands to be added should be easily connected and not create isolated patches. Further, the Greenbelt Act, 2005 provides that the Greenbelt's area cannot be reduced through an amendment.

- Is the proposed expansion next to the existing Greenbelt?
- Does the proposed expansion consist only of additions to the Greenbelt and not include deletions?

4. Connections to Greenbelt Systems

The Protected Countryside was built using a provincial-scale 'systems approach'. Requests to grow the Greenbelt should connect to and build upon this framework that established the original Greenbelt.

- Is the proposed expansion based on a provincial-scale systems approach that formed the original Greenbelt (as opposed to local or regional scales)?
- Does the proposed expansion build upon the Greenbelt's natural heritage system?
- Does the proposed expansion build upon the Greenbelt's agricultural system?
- Does the proposed expansion build upon the Greenbelt's water resource system?

5. Complement Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan

The Growth Plan sets a framework for managing growth and revitalizing existing urban communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. It also steers growth away from environmentally sensitive and prime agricultural areas. The Greenbelt Plan identifies where major urban growth cannot take place. To implement the Growth Plan's policies, municipalities are required to update their official plans by 2009.

- Does the proposed expansion complement the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan?
- Will affected municipalities be able to bring their official plans into conformity with the Growth Plan if the proposed Greenbelt expansion occurs?

6. Timing and Relationship to Other Provincial Initiatives

There are a number of provincial initiatives affecting the Greater Golden Horseshoe including broader transportation/transit planning, protection of water resources and planning for future growth.

- Does the request for growing the Greenbelt complement and support these ongoing provincial initiatives? (E.g. Does it allow for the completion of Source Protection Plans under the Clean Water Act, 2006?)