

Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt

Greenbelt Task Force

Advice and Recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

August 2004

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Recommendations	4
Vision and Goals	9
Introduction	10
Consultation	11
Framing public discussion	11
Encouraging public discussion	11
What we heard	11
The Layers of a Greenbelt	13
Advice and Recommendations	14
Defining the Greenbelt	14
Environmental Protection	15
Agricultural Protection	17
Transportation and Infrastructure	20
Natural Resources	21
Culture, Recreation and Tourism	22
Administration and Implementation	23
Next Steps	26
Greenbelt Legislation	27
Related Initiatives	28

Executive Summary

Our green spaces make all the difference to our quality of life.

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Green spaces help clean our air and filter our water. They provide a wonderful natural beauty that complements our urban environment. Every year, our citizens look forward to produce from our green spaces because it's the best food in the world. And the natural resources derived from our green spaces help drive an economy that is unrivalled in Canada.

But urban development pressures in the Golden Horseshoe threaten our green spaces.

Already the most populous region in Canada, tens of thousands of people relocate to this region annually. Growth trends predict the population will rise to 11 million by 2031. That's another four million people living in the Golden Horseshoe in less than 30 years' time.

How will we preserve our green spaces, and our quality of life, while finding places for people to live, and providing the services they need?

As the Greenbelt Task Force, we were appointed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to examine these issues, and make recommendations that will guide the government's approach to greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe. We see this work as a critical step toward permanent protection for greenspace in the region.

We began by developing a vision and goals statement for greenbelt protection that guided our later deliberations. We spent

many hours meeting with experts, reading policy papers and considering studies. We developed a consultation paper that served as the focal point of six public and seven stakeholder consultation sessions in May and June.

Our recommendations, the culmination of our collective and concentrated efforts over the past six months, are outlined in this document.

The greenbelt should create a magnificent legacy for Ontarians by preserving and enhancing our natural heritage, agriculture, natural resources, and our rich cultural heritage.

It should knit together the Golden Horseshoe's environmentally sensitive natural systems, including areas that now enjoy legislated protection, such as those in the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine. Despite their location next to a burgeoning metropolis, we have an amazing and robust array of important and significant natural features and systems that merit protection.

The greenbelt should preserve agricultural lands for future generations. The Golden Horseshoe is home to some of North America's most valuable prime agricultural land, as well as the unique specialty crop areas of the tender fruit and grape lands, and the Holland Marsh. Food has been grown and raised on this land for as long as people have lived here.

But globalization has diminished how we value our own food supply, as one Ontario farmer told us, by introducing "apples from Maine and strawberries from Mexico."

Agriculture must be viable in the Golden Horseshoe. We must find ways to aid our farmers in maintaining prosperous operations, to ensure they can continue caring for the agricultural lands that are so vital to this region. Part of the answer to viability lies in protecting these lands from urban encroachment.

Beyond preserving our agricultural and natural heritage, there are other important roles that the greenbelt can sustain. The greenbelt is rich in natural resources important to our growing economy. And it can provide critical opportunities for urban dwellers to experience Ontario's cultural heritage.

The Greenbelt Task Force acknowledges that some new infrastructure is likely to locate within the greenbelt, but it should be avoided where possible and impacts minimized if it is found to be necessary.

Throughout our consultation period, we talked to Ontarians – municipal leaders, farmers, various business and industry representatives, officials from non-profit and charitable organizations, and scores of landowners and private citizens concerned about preserving greenspace and the future of the region.

In total, we heard from more than 1,200 people and received more than 1,000 submissions. More than 60 stakeholder groups were represented at our consultations.

The knowledge and the passion of the speakers we heard, and submissions we received, broadened our insight and helped us understand and focus on the importance of our task. But more than anything, it cemented our resolve to create a visionary, yet workable foundation for this critical initiative.

With this report, we are offering the government our best advice on how to proceed in defining those green spaces that must be protected.

Once the work of defining a permanent greenbelt is done, the government must develop a policy and fiscal framework that ensures the permanence of the greenbelt. Members of the Greenbelt Task Force agreed unanimously that a growth plan that focuses and redirects urban development away from these protected areas must be implemented simultaneously if the greenbelt is to work. The discussion paper "Places to Grow – Better Choices. Brighter Future," released by the government in July, represents that complementary plan.

We strongly believe that our recommendations provide the government with the foundation for a definitive greenbelt plan that creates a permanent and sustainable legacy for future generations.

We heard from more than 1,200 people and received more than 1,000 submissions. More than 60 stakeholder groups were represented at our consultations.

Recommendations

Defining the Greenbelt

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That the Province undertake a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach to defining the greenbelt, and provide a policy and fiscal framework that ensures its permanence. No single ministry can adequately address all the relevant considerations.
2. That the Province observe the following principles in deciding what lands ought to be included. Lands that are already permanently protected by easements and those owned by charitable trusts are appropriate for inclusion. Similarly, lands that the Province has previously expressed an intention to protect, such as additions to the Niagara Escarpment Plan, should form part of the greenbelt. Lands that are publicly owned are also important to consider for greenbelt protection. The Province should consider provincially owned lands for their suitability for inclusion in the greenbelt's natural heritage system.
3. That the greenbelt and the growth management initiatives proceed simultaneously.

Environmental Protection

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That a systems approach to environmental protection be utilized. These systems will be defined in consultation with key stakeholders, and will encompass:
 - Natural heritage,
 - Water resources,
 - Landform conservation, and
 - A network of open space.
2. That the greenbelt system **should** include:
 - Provincially significant and/or major natural heritage and hydrological features and functions such as the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and the Rouge Valley; and
 - Connections between these major features and functions, including public parks and stream and river valley linkages to major water bodies, such as the Great Lakes and Lake Simcoe.
3. That the greenbelt system **could** include regionally significant features and functions such as portions of the Iroquois shoreline.

4. That priority areas should be identified, in consultation with key stakeholders, for the system of natural heritage and hydrological features and functions within the greenbelt as:

- Sensitive areas, with very limited permitted uses such as conservation and existing agriculture; and
- Less sensitive areas, where a variety of compatible uses consistent with greenbelt objectives would be permitted.

3. That on key agricultural lands, residential severances and boundary expansions should be prohibited, although allowances other than severances could be considered for residential occupation to accommodate intergenerational and farm-labour purposes.

4. That the tender fruit and grape lands, and the Holland Marsh in its entirety, including the portion outside the Greenbelt Study Area, should be included in the greenbelt.

5. That on specialty crop lands, severances and urban boundary expansions should be prohibited, although allowances other than severances could be considered, when absolutely necessary, for residential occupation to accommodate intergenerational and farm-labour purposes.

Agricultural Protection

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That key agricultural lands be identified for protection using:

- Science, including considering the criteria and methodology of the Agricultural Land Evaluational Area Review (LEAR) system studies;
- Socio-economic factors such as fragmentation, urban/suburban encroachments, loss of agricultural support mechanisms and rural economic development; and
- Regional and local official plan designations and criteria.

2. That key agricultural lands be permanently protected:

- Where a farm or cluster of farms have operations sufficiently large to support local agriculture and related activities; and
- Where smaller pockets of agricultural lands with potential for “urban agriculture” and niche market produce are identified.

Agricultural Viability

The Greenbelt Task Force made an early recommendation to the government, asking that a task force be struck to examine the far-reaching issues concerning agricultural viability.

The government acted on this recommendation, appointing the Agricultural Advisory Team in June 2004.

The task force hopes this team will address the concern that: Protection of the land alone does not ensure agricultural viability, and the Province should pursue complementary initiatives including economic development, research and monitoring, promotion of agricultural easements and land trusts for farmers who participate in conservation activities and use best practices and management.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That as a rule, infrastructure should not be located within the greenbelt unless the following criteria have been met.
2. That proposed infrastructure within the greenbelt should be consistent with the vision and goals of the Greenbelt Task Force and the Province's growth plan.
3. That provincial, regional and municipal planning for infrastructure should be coordinated when considering locations within the greenbelt.
4. That alternatives must first be explored that maximize conservation, and secondly that optimize the capacity of existing infrastructure.
5. That where new infrastructure is determined to be necessary:
 - social, economic and environmental impacts must be minimized;
 - natural and cultural heritage features must be respected;
 - open spaces must be preserved;
 - creative approaches to design must be sought; and
 - the purpose and integrity of the greenbelt must not be undermined.
6. That development of infrastructure, including transportation facilities, should not promote or facilitate land uses that undermine the purpose and integrity of the greenbelt.

7. That the Province should review the way in which the need for infrastructure is assessed to ensure proposals reinforce greenbelt and growth management objectives.

8. That where new services are proposed for co-location with existing infrastructure, consideration should be given to easing or streamlining the requirement for an environmental assessment.

9. That the Province should review the environmental assessment process to ensure that emerging green technologies and innovative designs are encouraged, and that an appropriate balance of roads and transit is established when transportation infrastructure is proposed.

Natural Resources

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That the Province ensure that renewable natural resources such as forestry, fisheries and wildlife species are managed to maximize economic, social and environmental benefits.
2. That areas that have been identified as high-potential mineral aggregate sites should be included in the greenbelt.
3. That building and development land uses that prevent or restrict the possibility of future mineral aggregate extraction in high potential areas should be precluded.

4. That the Province should clarify what are appropriate provincial and municipal official plan policies related to new licenses for mineral aggregate extraction, while respecting that individual site licensing and expansion will continue to be subject to municipal and provincial approval processes.

5. That mineral aggregate extraction in the greenbelt should be subject to more rigorous requirements for rehabilitation, and more recycling of aggregate material should be strongly encouraged; and that monitoring take place to ensure rehabilitation proceeds as required.

6. That the Province should review the licensing process to facilitate new supply, and to ensure the integrity of hydrogeological and ecological systems, and natural features and functions, taking into account the requirement to rehabilitate.

3. That landowner interests be respected when locating venues and activities on greenbelt lands, and public access to privately owned land be allowed only with the prior agreement of landowners.

4. That culture, recreation and tourism opportunities should be capitalized on to strengthen the vitality, integrity and profile of the greenbelt through:

- Recognition and promotion of cultural sites, districts and landscapes important to community identity, history and character;
 - A network of protected public open spaces, where people can enjoy recreational and leisurely pursuits, that includes provincial parks, conservation areas, navigable waterways and municipal parks and forests;
 - Private lands that have been identified for recreation, tourism and conservation uses;
 - A system of trails on public and private lands supported by a provincial regulatory framework to address issues such as location and design, user conflict, public safety and liability; and
 - Tourism destinations that support and depend on farms, natural areas and rural communities.
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5. That a greenbelt parks and trails strategy be developed to identify potential sites for future public parks, and opportunities to make selected greenbelt lands accessible to the public.

Culture, Recreation and Tourism

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That the greenbelt be branded and marketed as a publicly valued and important resource in the Golden Horseshoe for cultural activities, recreation and tourism.

2. That culture, recreation and tourism opportunities should respect and be compatible with other greenbelt priorities.

Administration and Implementation

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That the Province develop legislation and a plan that creates a permanent greenbelt linking existing policies governing the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and other lands necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives of the greenbelt.
2. That the legislation and plan include the clear identification of greenbelt lands, and make provision, through the inclusion of authority to make regulations, if deemed necessary, for the addition of lands outside the Greenbelt Study Area for protection as part of the growth plan.
3. That the greenbelt should be recognized in the Province's forthcoming "Places to Grow" growth plan, as part of "protecting what is valuable."
4. That the greenbelt plan should:
 - Be administered by municipalities, outside of the Niagara Escarpment Commission jurisdiction, and consistently incorporated into municipal official plans across the greenbelt;
 - Take advantage of existing administrative structures and tools, both regulatory and non-regulatory, where possible;
 - Provide for an appellate tribunal with greenbelt-specific expertise to uphold the integrity of the plan;
5. That the Province should allocate sufficient resources to assist municipalities with implementation.
6. That a Greenbelt Advisory Committee be established to advise the minister on implementation, administration, marketing and monitoring issues on a biannual or annual basis, based on terms of reference established by the minister.
7. A monitoring process and performance measures be established through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Municipal Performance Measurement Program, and further that:
 - Readily ascertainable data should be gathered by municipalities, and results should be published; and
 - Performance measures should reflect the Greenbelt Task Force's six goals.
8. That the Province should work with stakeholder groups active in these areas to develop a coordinated approach, a strategic plan and government assistance to establish a greenbelt implementation tools program; and that consideration should be given to implementation tools that recognize the importance of agricultural land uses and activities.

Vision and Goals

The Greenbelt Task Force developed the following vision and goals in its initial meetings. These statements were used as a guide by the task force during its pre-consultation discussions to test proposed recommendations.

They were updated following public and stakeholder consultations. It is the desire of the task force that the government also use them as a guide, in the development of an approach to permanent greenbelt protection.

Vision

The Golden Horseshoe greenbelt will be a permanent and sustainable legacy for current and future generations. The greenbelt will enhance our urban and rural areas with a continuous and connected system of open spaces¹ that:

- Protects and enhances environmentally sensitive lands and natural heritage systems and contributes to clean air, water and soil;
- Recognizes the region's social, natural and economic needs;
- Sustains and nurtures the region's agricultural sector;
- Conserves for sustainable use the region's significant natural and cultural heritage resources; and
- Continues to provide high-quality and compatible recreational and tourism opportunities.

Goals

The greenbelt will enhance quality of life by serving an array of functions across the Golden Horseshoe region, including:

- Providing greenspace between, and links to, open space within the region's growing urban areas;
- Protecting, sustaining and restoring the ecological features and functions of the natural environment;
- Preserving viable agricultural land as a continuing commercial source of food and employment by recognizing the critical importance of the agriculture sector's prosperity to the regional economy;
- Sustaining the region's countryside and rural communities;
- Conserving and making available natural resources critical for a thriving economy; and
- Ensuring that infrastructure investment achieves the environmental, social and economic aims of the greenbelt.

¹ The Greenbelt Task Force uses the term "open space" to denote lands unobstructed by urban development. It includes agricultural lands and structures.

Introduction

Based on past and current growth trends, the future population of the Greater Golden Horseshoe is expected to grow to 11 million by 2031, from an estimated 7.5 million in 2001.

Population growth and economic growth gives us more choices about where to live and work. They also drive wealth and innovation.

Growth can also provide opportunities to revitalize underused lands, and achieve both social and environmental objectives. But if rapid growth is not accompanied by long-term planning on a regional scale, undesirable impacts of unchecked growth and development will result.

Poor planning for infrastructure leads to investments that are overly expensive and use space inefficiently. This leaves fewer transportation options available to residents,

leading to an over-reliance on the private automobile and traffic congestion. Loss of natural greenspace and agricultural land is inevitable, as are air and water pollution.

The Government of Ontario intends to establish a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt as an integral part of its broader growth plan.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, John Gerretsen, appointed 13 stakeholder representatives to the Greenbelt Task Force in February 2004. The task force was charged with providing recommendations on how to identify lands for protection from development in order to preserve, for current and future generations:

- Our natural heritage;
- Sensitive environmental areas;
- Vital agricultural communities;
- Non-renewable natural resources; and
- Opportunities for tourism, recreation, and experiencing cultural heritage.

The greenbelt is expected to identify those areas where growth should not occur. The government's growth plan also seeks to promote complementary, efficient forms of development, such as intensification, residential infill and transit-friendly forms of development in existing and appropriate new urban centres.

These, and many other aspects of the growth plan have been outlined in "Places to Grow – Better Choices. Brighter Future." This plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe outlines the government's approach to growth management in the region.

This report outlines the advice and recommendations of the Greenbelt Task Force.

The Greenbelt Task Force

Robert MacIsaac, Chair, Mayor of the City of Burlington

Michael Bunce, Associate Professor of Geography, University of Toronto at Scarborough

Jim Faught, Executive Director, Ontario Nature

Mary Lou Garr, Regional Director, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Natalie Helferty, Ecologist, Natural Heritage Consulting

Carol Hochu, President, Aggregate Producers' Association of Ontario

Fraser Nelson, General Manager, Metrus Development Inc.

Rod Northey, Partner, Birchall Northey

Russ Powell, Chief Administrative Officer, Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority

Deborah Schulte, Humber Watershed Alliance

David J. Stewart, President, Mattamy Development Corporation

Alan C. Veale, former Director, Planning and Development, Regional Municipality of Niagara

Donald J. P. Ziraldo, Co-Founder and President, Inniskillin Wines

Consultation

When the Greenbelt Task Force was appointed in February 2004, it was asked to oversee stakeholder and public consultations, and make recommendations on the scope, content and implementation of the greenbelt.

From February to May, the Greenbelt Task Force held regular weekly meetings, and met with municipal officials and other stakeholders, to review the wide range of issues around establishing a permanent greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe.

Framing public discussion

“Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt”, the task force’s discussion paper, was released in May 2004 following a comprehensive fact-finding exercise by task force members.

The exercise involved the review of a number of policy papers, studies and other documents, as well as face-to-face meetings with representatives of various organizations and experts in many fields related to greenbelt protection.

The discussion paper identified a number of layers, or broad categories of issues, that required special attention in determining an approach to permanent greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe.

Encouraging public discussion

The discussion paper was posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) Registry for public review on May 13, and on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing’s website.

The task force began its series of public and stakeholder consultations on May 20 in King City, with its final session almost a month later in Burlington on June 16.

A website, www.greenbelt.ontario.ca, was established to provide easy public access and information about public meetings. It included an e-mail address to submit comments.

The deadline for written submissions in response to the discussion paper was July 16.

What we heard

The task force heard from more than 1,200 people and received more than 1,000 submissions. More than 60 stakeholder groups were represented at public, stakeholder, and municipal meetings during the consultation period.

Submissions were received from a diverse range of stakeholders that included landowners, farmers, developers, aggregate producers, lawyers, municipal officials, representatives of non-profit organizations, ratepayers and residents.

Comments, concerns, and solutions they offered responded to information and draft approaches outlined in the task force discussion paper, as well as the *Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004*, that, at that time, was proceeding through the legislative process.

Greenbelt Task Force Public Meeting Schedule

King City – May 20

Oshawa – May 25

Hamilton – May 26

Caledon East – May 31

St. Catharines – June 10

Burlington – June 16

A number of major themes arose at the public meetings and through submissions to the task force, including:

- A strong desire to see an emphasis on environmental protection and preservation;
 - Agricultural land protection in conjunction with ensuring farm viability;
 - Conservation of natural renewable and non-renewable resources;
 - Concern about transportation and infrastructure and their potential effects on a greenbelt;
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- Defining the greenbelt;
 - Suggested tools to address various issues, including the administration and monitoring of a greenbelt plan, as well as the plan's consistent and even application across all jurisdictions in the Golden Horseshoe; and
 - The importance of coordinating and integrating the greenbelt plan with other provincial initiatives such as land-use planning reform, source-water protection and growth management.
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The Layers of a Greenbelt

The Greenbelt Task Force considered five “layers,” or broad categories of issues, that required special attention in determining an approach to permanent greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe. These layers provided a framework for stakeholder and public consultations, and are used to frame the advice and recommendations outlined in this document. No priority should be implied by their order or content. They are:

- Environmental protection;
- Agricultural protection, including the tender fruit and grape lands and the Holland Marsh;
- Transportation and infrastructure;
- Natural resources, including forestry, fish and wildlife resources; and
- Culture, tourism and recreation opportunities.

In addition, overarching themes include:

- Implementation and administration approaches, models and tools for establishing and administering a greenbelt; and
- Ontario’s growth management and other related initiatives as the context for development of a permanent Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt.

Advice and Recommendations

Defining the Greenbelt

The Greenbelt Task Force, in its discussions and deliberations, focussed on the high-level criteria and principles required when considering the definition of a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, rather than the very specific issues that arise when dealing with particular parcels of property.

The task force was careful not to wade into debate over whether or not specific pieces of property belong in the greenbelt. The timeframe for establishing permanent greenbelt protection in the *Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004* necessitated this approach.

Certain lands, however, are so well known for their agricultural significance that we have made recommendations for them – notably the tender fruit and grape lands in Niagara and Hamilton, and the Holland Marsh.

Defining the greenbelt will be a complex task. There is a myriad of factors to consider and interests to balance when drawing the lines on the map.

Fundamentally, we believe that good science and sound economics will be vital to maintaining the integrity of the greenbelt. Criteria must be developed to prioritize land uses within the designated area.

To accomplish this, we recommend that the Province undertake a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach to defining the greenbelt. No single ministry can adequately address all the relevant considerations.

Furthermore, there is a great deal of knowledge that rests at the local level with

municipalities, conservation authorities and non-governmental organizations that will prove essential when drawing the lines that will define greenbelt lands.

We believe there are other lands within the study area that should be included in the greenbelt. Lands that are already permanently protected by easements and those owned by charitable trusts, for example, are appropriate for inclusion. Similarly, lands that the Province has expressed an intention to protect, such as lands that have been proposed as additions to the Niagara Escarpment Plan, should form part of the greenbelt.

Lands that are publicly owned are also important to consider for greenbelt protection. The Province should show leadership in evaluating provincially owned lands for their suitability for inclusion in the greenbelt's natural heritage system.

Finally, the greenbelt is integral to the Province's growth management initiative. These two plans must work hand in glove, as each will affect the other.

To ensure the permanence of greenbelt protection and the economic success of the growth plan, a vision for growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe beyond the next 27 years is suggested.

The task force acknowledges that permanent greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe will be a challenging exercise in balancing interests. In light of the foregoing, the task force strongly recommends that the greenbelt and the growth management initiatives proceed simultaneously.

Fundamentally, we believe that good science and sound economics will be vital to maintaining the integrity of the greenbelt. Criteria must be developed to prioritize land uses within the designated area.

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That the Province undertake a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach to defining the greenbelt, and provide a policy and fiscal framework that ensures its permanence. No single ministry can adequately address all the relevant considerations.
2. That the Province observe the following principles in deciding what lands ought to be included. Lands that are already permanently protected by easements and those owned by charitable trusts are appropriate for inclusion. Similarly, lands that the Province has previously expressed an intention to protect, such as additions to the Niagara Escarpment Plan, should form part of the greenbelt. Lands that are publicly owned are also important to consider for greenbelt protection. The Province should consider provincially owned lands for their suitability for inclusion in the greenbelt's natural heritage system.
3. That the greenbelt and the growth management initiatives proceed simultaneously.

Environmental Protection

A systems approach to environmental protection recognizes the interrelated character of our natural environment. It takes into account, for example, that the ecological health of one section of a river cannot be disregarded without affecting the whole of the waterway that runs downstream.

Public consultations widely endorsed the Greenbelt Task Force's draft approach, which recommended using a systems

approach to environmental protection when defining the greenbelt.

The task force recognizes that the further identification and mapping of provincially and regionally significant features would aid in defining lands for inclusion in the greenbelt. Therefore, the Ministry of Natural Resources is encouraged to accelerate its work on the definition of a Greater Golden Horseshoe natural heritage system.

Agriculture, aggregate extraction, and recreation can co-exist with environmental protection, provided they do not diminish the integrity of the system. Such compatible uses can ensure the long-term protection of both the features and functions of a natural system. Farmers, for example, have long been the stewards of many natural features that continue to co-exist with agricultural operations.

A water resource system in the Golden Horseshoe would require the integration of the greenbelt and the broader water resource systems assessments being developed through source-water protection and watershed management policies and legislation, such as the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP). On June 23, 2004, the Ministry of the Environment posted draft source-water protection planning legislation for public review. This legislation is expected to provide a water-quality protection planning process for lands within the greenbelt and across Ontario.

To ensure environmental protection in the greenbelt, the government's growth plan and natural heritage system mapping and policy initiative should ensure that planning is undertaken for areas beyond the greenbelt to address the impacts of adjacent development.

Public consultations widely endorsed the Greenbelt Task Force's draft approach, which recommended using a systems approach to environmental protection when defining the greenbelt.

A water resource system in the Golden Horseshoe would require the integration of the greenbelt and the broader water resource systems assessments being developed through source-water protection and watershed management policies and legislation, such as the ORMCP.

NATURAL SYSTEMS

A natural heritage system protects and enhances the health, diversity, abundance and connectivity of natural heritage features and functions. Defining a contiguous Golden Horseshoe natural heritage system would involve:

- Identifying, protecting and enhancing core natural areas, or areas containing the greatest concentrations of significant natural heritage features, and providing connections and linkages between them, such as those reflected in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP), Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) and major river and valley systems; and
- Identifying and protecting individually significant natural heritage features and functions, such as significant wetlands, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs), significant woodlands and habitat for species at risk.

A water resources system protects and, where necessary, improves and restores clean, abundant, healthy, functioning aquatic ecosystems.

Defining an area water resources system would involve:

- Identifying and protecting significant hydrological features, such as wetlands, streams, lakes, aquifers, recharge areas and springs, and their associated hydrological functions; and

- Coordinating the assessment of the impacts of land-use change on water quality, water quantity and related hydrological functions through initiatives throughout the study area.

On June 23, 2004, the Ministry of the Environment posted draft source-water protection planning legislation for public review. This legislation is expected to provide a water-quality protection planning process for lands within the greenbelt and across Ontario.

A landform conservation system protects the diversity and character of the natural and rural landscape, including the unique and sensitive landforms of the area. Defining a Golden Horseshoe landform conservation system involves:

- Developing a landform conservation strategy for the Greenbelt Study Area that identifies areas of unique, distinctive and complex natural systems, and connects with the landform conservation strategies contained in the NEP and ORMCP; and
- Identifying, protecting and enhancing some of the more unique and sensitive landform features, such as earth science ANSIs, distinctive geological and geomorphic features, vistas, and panoramas.

A network of open space identifies existing and potential public parks and open spaces, such as Bronte Creek Provincial Park, Rouge Park and conservation authority lands that can be maintained and secured to support a natural system for future generations. A network of open space in the Golden Horseshoe would include:

- A system of public parks, open spaces and trails across the greenbelt that meet a number of objectives including environmental protection, opportunities for recreation, tourism benefits, public access, and cultural and natural heritage appreciation; and/or
- A system of natural areas, rural areas, or depleted mineral aggregate operations, where there is an opportunity to restore the area of operation to a more natural condition.

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That a systems approach to environmental protection be utilized. These systems will be defined in consultation with key stakeholders, and will encompass:
 - Natural heritage,
 - Water resources,
 - Landform conservation, and
 - A network of open space.
2. That the greenbelt system **should** include:
 - Provincially significant and/or major natural heritage and hydrological features and functions such as the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and the Rouge Valley; and
 - Connections between these major features and functions, including public parks and stream and river valley linkages to major water bodies, such as the Great Lakes and Lake Simcoe.

3. That the greenbelt system **could**

include regionally significant features and functions such as portions of the Iroquois shoreline.

4. That priority areas should be identified, in consultation with key stakeholders, for the system of natural heritage and hydrological features and functions within the greenbelt as:

- Sensitive areas, with very limited permitted uses such as conservation and existing agriculture; and
- Less sensitive areas, where a variety of compatible uses consistent with greenbelt objectives would be permitted.

Agricultural Protection

Ontario enjoys many social, economic and environmental benefits from agriculture. These benefits include exports and employment, environmental stewardship, wildlife corridor connectivity, locally produced food and specialty crops, and a strengthening of the unique characteristics of rural communities.

In the Greater Toronto Area alone, agriculture generates an estimated \$1.3 billion in annual gross sales, and supports more than 34,700 jobs.

Protecting agricultural lands within a greenbelt is an important part of ensuring a healthy, working agricultural sector in the Golden Horseshoe for future generations.

The task force endorses the current direction of the draft Provincial Policy Statement, which would provide more stringent criteria for urban boundary expansions onto prime agricultural lands.

To ensure environmental protection in the greenbelt, the government's growth plan and natural heritage system mapping and policy initiative should ensure that planning is undertaken for areas beyond the greenbelt to address the impacts of adjacent development.

Farmers in the greenbelt should not, in any way, be disadvantaged in terms of their ability to engage in normal farm practices relative to farmers in other areas of the Province.

PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREAS

Southern Ontario's prime agricultural areas are composed generally of Class 1, 2 and 3 soils, and are considered to be some of the best farmland in the world. They are a finite resource. Prime agricultural lands make up only 12 per cent of Ontario's land base, and only 5 per cent of Canada's total land base.

Outside of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) and the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) areas, the majority of non-urban lands in the Greenbelt Study Area are classified as prime agricultural lands.

The characteristics of farmland in the Golden Horseshoe – its level ground and proximity to existing urban areas – make it attractive for new development. Many farmers raised concerns about lot fragmentation and urban development on agricultural lands at public meetings, and through written submissions to the task force. Urban boundary encroachments, non-farm uses, land speculation and lot-by-lot severances have, over time, consumed prime agricultural lands for non-agricultural uses.

KEY AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Agricultural lands for inclusion in the greenbelt must be able to support the agricultural economy and related activities. These key agricultural lands would be drawn from the supply of prime agricultural lands within the Golden Horseshoe according to a set of criteria.

SPECIALTY CROP LANDS

While prime agricultural land is a finite resource that should be protected from development pressures, specialty crop areas such as the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands and the Holland Marsh are

unique, and represent a significantly smaller portion of the land base.

The Niagara region supports a diverse and strong agricultural community that includes not only tender fruit and grape production, but also greenhouse, field crop and live-stock production.

The tender fruit and grape lands located in the Niagara region and a portion of Hamilton have long been regarded as a unique national agricultural resource. They have also, however, become a major tourist draw and a focal point for local and regional economic development.

While the significance of these lands has been recognized in local and regional land-use planning, economic development activities that have brought prosperity to the region have also brought non-farm development, and other pressures associated with urbanization.

THE EFFECTS OF GREENBELT PROTECTION

The potential effects of greenbelt protection on agricultural operations were the subject of much discussion at the Greenbelt Task Force's public meetings.

Farmers in the greenbelt should not, in any way, be disadvantaged in terms of their ability to engage in normal farm practices relative to farmers in other areas of the Province.

Furthermore, by including agricultural areas in a greenbelt, the farming community would be protected from the problems of proximity to urban development. In addition, farm operations would be enhanced by:

- Certainty about the future land uses in the area, which would promote investment in farming operations, farm businesses and farm services;

- Prevention of further fragmentation of agricultural lands by severances and the adverse impact of non-farm residents on farming operations;
- Opportunities for farmers to capitalize on proximity to a major urban market;
- Strengthening rural communities and services that farming operations and farming families need; and
- Elimination of market distortions caused by land speculation.

The Province should reassure farmers that agricultural land designated for greenbelt protection would not be subject to public right of access, and should ensure that land uses adjacent to the greenbelt are compatible with greenbelt goals and objectives, through the government's growth plan.

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That key agricultural lands be identified for protection using:
 - Science, including considering the criteria and methodology of the Agricultural Land Evaluational Area Review (LEAR) system studies;
 - Socio-economic factors such as fragmentation, urban/suburban encroachments, loss of agricultural support mechanisms and rural economic development; and
 - Regional and local official plan designations and criteria.
2. That key agricultural lands be permanently protected:
 - Where a farm or cluster of farms have operations sufficiently large to support local agriculture and related activities; and

- Where smaller pockets of agricultural lands with potential for "urban agriculture" and niche market produce are identified.

3. That on key agricultural lands, residential severances and boundary expansions should be prohibited, although allowances other than severances could be considered for residential occupation to accommodate intergenerational and farm-labour purposes.
4. That the tender fruit and grape lands, and the Holland Marsh in its entirety, including the portion outside the Greenbelt Study Area, should be included in the greenbelt.
5. That on specialty crop lands, severances and urban boundary expansions should be prohibited, although allowances other than severances could be considered, when absolutely necessary, for residential occupation to accommodate intergenerational and farm-labour purposes.

The Province should ensure that land uses adjacent to the greenbelt are compatible with greenbelt goals and objectives, through the government's growth plan.

Agricultural Viability

The Greenbelt Task Force made an early recommendation to the government, asking that a task force be struck to examine the far-reaching issues concerning agricultural viability.

The government acted on this recommendation, appointing the Agricultural Advisory Team in June 2004.

The task force hopes this team will address the concern that: Protection of the land alone does not ensure agricultural viability, and the Province should pursue complementary initiatives including economic development, research and monitoring, promotion of agricultural easements and land trusts for farmers who participate in conservation activities and use best practices and management.

While the Greenbelt Study Area is the fastest growing region in Canada and a foundation for our provincial and national economies, and infrastructure will be needed to support this growth, the greenbelt should not be viewed as a land reserve for future infrastructure needs.

Transportation and Infrastructure

While the Greenbelt Study Area is the fastest growing region in Canada and a foundation for our provincial and national economies, and infrastructure will be needed to support this growth, the greenbelt should not be viewed as a land reserve for future infrastructure needs.

Major infrastructure facilities that have influenced and supported past growth are located within the Greenbelt Study Area. These facilities will continue to influence future growth, as well as the forms and locations of new, connecting infrastructure facilities.

Major water and sewer systems that serve millions of residents; the Pearson and Hamilton international airports, numerous transportation arteries, major commuter and freight rail lines; the Parkway Belt West utility corridor; electrical generation plants and major transmission corridors; and natural gas and fibre-optic cable installations are located within the Golden Horseshoe area.

The task force endorses the growth management strategy goal to develop a regional strategy for infrastructure, and recommends that a number of principles guide any consideration for locating future, permanent infrastructure within the greenbelt.

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That as a rule, infrastructure should not be located within the greenbelt unless the following criteria have been met.
2. That proposed infrastructure within the greenbelt should be consistent

with the vision and goals of the Greenbelt Task Force and the Province's growth plan.

3. That provincial, regional and municipal planning for infrastructure should be coordinated when considering locations within the greenbelt.
4. That alternatives must first be explored that maximize conservation, and secondly that optimize the capacity of existing infrastructure.
5. That where new infrastructure is determined to be necessary:
 - social, economic and environmental impacts must be minimized;
 - natural and cultural heritage features must be respected;
 - open spaces must be preserved;
 - creative approaches to design must be sought; and
 - the purpose and integrity of the greenbelt must not be undermined.
6. That development of infrastructure, including transportation facilities, should not promote or facilitate land uses that undermine the purpose and integrity of the greenbelt.
7. That the Province should review the way in which the need for infrastructure is assessed to ensure proposals reinforce greenbelt and growth management objectives.
8. That where new services are proposed for co-location with existing infrastructure, consideration should be given to easing or streamlining the requirement for an environmental assessment.

Natural Resources

A diverse range of natural resources exist within the lakes, streams, wetlands, and wooded areas of the Golden Horseshoe. Natural areas and features, when well-managed, can sustain economic production and the related social activities while achieving the goals of environmental protection.

Economic activities related to renewable natural resources that can be considered include the sustainable production of lumber and other forestry products; fishing, hunting and nature appreciation opportunities; and outdoor recreational opportunities in parks and on trails in natural areas.

Preliminary studies carried out by the Ministry of Natural Resources showed that the greater Golden Horseshoe area benefits economically by more than \$300 million annually from renewable resource activities.

A significant resource in the Greenbelt Study Area, however, is aggregates, which is non-renewable resource. Large deposits of limestone, sand, gravel, clay, shale and sandstone exist in numerous locations across the Golden Horseshoe. Extraction of these minerals and other related operations are licensed under the *Aggregate Resources Act*.

Mineral aggregates provide essential building materials for the housing that population growth requires, and the availability of aggregates close to market is important.

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That the Province ensure that renewable natural resources such as forestry, fisheries and wildlife species are managed to maximize economic, social and environmental benefits.
2. That areas that have been identified as high-potential mineral aggregate sites should be included in the greenbelt.
3. That building and development land uses that prevent or restrict the possibility of future mineral aggregate extraction in high potential areas should be precluded.
4. That the Province should clarify what are appropriate provincial and municipal official plan policies related to new licenses for mineral aggregate extraction, while respecting that individual site licensing and expansion will continue to be subject to municipal and provincial approval processes.
5. That mineral aggregate extraction in the greenbelt should be subject to more rigorous requirements for rehabilitation, and more recycling of aggregate material should be strongly encouraged; and that monitoring take place to ensure rehabilitation proceeds as required.
6. That the Province should review the licensing process to facilitate new supply, as well as to ensure the integrity of hydrogeological and ecological systems, and natural features and functions, taking into account the requirement to rehabilitate.

Mineral aggregates provide essential building materials for the housing that population growth requires, and the availability of aggregates close to market is important.

Continued urban area expansions risk the degradation or disappearance of surrounding green spaces. This loss of greenspace would reduce the variety of cultural, recreational and tourism attractions currently available. A rapidly growing population needs more, not fewer, opportunities.

Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Important cultural, recreation and tourism features and attractions exist within the Greenbelt Study Area.

The area is home to the Bruce Trail, the Oak Ridges Trail, Rouge Park, the Royal Botanical Gardens, internationally recognized bird watching areas, and the reconstructed Iroquois Village at the Crawford Lake Conservation Area.

The Niagara peninsula boasts Niagara Falls, a thriving food and wine industry and the Shaw Festival. The Niagara Escarpment, designated as a World Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations for its distinctive natural landscape and internationally significant ecosystem, provides opportunities for various recreational activities.

The East Humber Valley Complex is home to the Boyd Conservation Area, the Kortright Centre for Conservation, and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection.

Large tracts of regional, county and conservation authority forests have been established on the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and throughout the Greenbelt Study Area that provide tremendous opportunities for outdoor recreation activities such as hiking and nature appreciation.

The close proximity of these amenities contributes to the high quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe. However, there are pressures on these resources.

Continued urban area expansions risk the degradation or disappearance of surrounding green spaces. This loss of greenspace would reduce the variety of cultural, recreational and tourism attractions currently available. A rapidly growing population needs more, not fewer, opportunities.

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That the greenbelt be branded and marketed as a publicly valued and important resource in the Golden Horseshoe for cultural activities, recreation and tourism.
2. That culture, recreation and tourism opportunities should respect and be compatible with other greenbelt priorities.
3. That landowner interests be respected when locating venues and activities on greenbelt lands, and public access to privately owned land be allowed only with the prior agreement of landowners.
4. That culture, recreation and tourism opportunities be capitalized on to strengthen the vitality, integrity and profile of the greenbelt through:
 - Recognition and promotion of cultural sites, districts and landscapes important to community identity, history and character;
 - A network of protected public open spaces, where people can enjoy recreational and leisurely pursuits, that includes provincial parks, conservation areas, navigable waterways and municipal parks and forests;

- Private lands that have been identified for recreation, tourism and conservation uses;
- A system of trails on public and private lands supported by a provincial regulatory framework to address issues such as location and design, user conflict, public safety and liability; and
- Tourism destinations that support and depend on farms, natural areas and rural communities.

5. That a greenbelt parks and trails strategy be developed to identify potential sites for future public parks, and opportunities to make selected greenbelt lands accessible to the public.

Administration and Implementation

There are various examples of administrative and implementation tools and models, both regulatory and non-regulatory that apply approaches to protecting environmental, agricultural, specialty and unique crop lands, natural resources, and cultural, recreation and tourism opportunities.

The task force received information during the consultation period concerning a wide variety of private, non-profit, government and agency programs and activities that could aid in achieving goals for greenbelt protection and enhancement. If coordinated and focused, they could represent a significant pool of incentives for the protection of agricultural land, and cultural heritage conservation and enhancement.

REGULATORY TOOLS

Regulatory mechanisms can build on initiatives currently underway, and could be used in tandem with a land-use planning framework to achieve the overall objectives of the greenbelt. These tools generally do not apply to agricultural operations, where the *Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998* applies.

NON-REGULATORY TOOLS

More than 90 per cent of a Golden Horseshoe greenbelt will be composed of privately owned lands. Non-regulatory programs, therefore, will be an integral part of implementation. These programs must accomplish the greenbelt vision and goals while being respectful of landowner interests.

Public and stakeholder comments and submissions received during the consultation period endorsed the draft approach to administration and implementation envisioned by the task force.

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends:

1. That the Province develop legislation and a plan that creates a permanent greenbelt linking existing policies governing the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and other lands necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives of the greenbelt.
2. That the legislation and plan include the clear identification of greenbelt lands, and make provision, through the inclusion of authority to make regulations, if deemed necessary, for the addition of lands outside the Greenbelt Study Area for protection as part of the growth plan.

Programs and activities, if coordinated and focused could represent a significant pool of incentives for the protection of agricultural land, and cultural heritage conservation and enhancement.

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3. That the greenbelt should be recognized in the Province's forthcoming "Places to Grow" growth plan, as part of "protecting what is valuable."
-
4. That the greenbelt plan should:
 - Be administered by municipalities, outside of the Niagara Escarpment Commission jurisdiction, and consistently incorporated into municipal official plans across the greenbelt;
 - Take advantage of existing administrative structures and tools, both regulatory and non-regulatory, where possible;
 - Provide for an appellate tribunal with greenbelt-specific expertise to uphold the integrity of the plan;
 - Include fiscal measures to fulfill the objectives of the greenbelt, particularly where natural and cultural heritage conservation, and agricultural viability are concerned; and
 - Be subject to performance standards and a 10-year review.
-
5. That the Province should allocate sufficient resources to assist municipalities with implementation.
-
6. That a Greenbelt Advisory Committee be established to advise the minister on implementation, administration, marketing and monitoring issues on a biannual or annual basis, based on terms of reference established by the minister.
-
7. A monitoring process and performance measures be established through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Municipal Performance Measurement Program, and further that:
 - Readily ascertainable data should be gathered by municipalities, and results should be published; and
 - Performance measures should reflect the Greenbelt Task Force's six goals.
-
8. That the Province should work with stakeholder groups active in these areas to develop a coordinated approach, a strategic plan and government assistance to establish a greenbelt implementation tools program; and that consideration should be given to implementation tools that recognize the importance of agricultural land uses and activities.
 - ***Regulatory mechanisms could include:***
 - *Mandatory tree conservation by-laws*
 - *Mandatory site alteration by-laws*
 - *Conservation authority fill, construction and alteration to waterways regulations*
 - *The Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act;*
 - *The Niagara Escarpment Commission's development permit system; and*
 - *The Aggregate Resources Act.*
-

- ***Non-regulatory tools could include:***

- *Public education and land stewardship information, incentives and special programs, to be coordinated by a proposed Greenbelt Trust Fund, and could be coordinated by Ontario stewardship councils, conservation authorities, provincial and municipal governments, and non-government organizations such as:*

- *the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association,*
- *the Ontario Federation of Agriculture,*
- *Ontario Nature,*
- *Land trusts,*
- *the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and*
- *Ducks Unlimited.*

- *Options for securing privately owned lands, in cooperation with landowners, include conservation, heritage and agricultural easements, gifts of land, and land acquisition.*

- *A greenbelt acquisition and stewardship strategy to help guide resource allocation and provide consistent direction for greenbelt stewardship programs.*

- *Federal and provincial tax incentive programs such as:*

- *The Ecological Gifts Program*
- *The Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program*
- *The Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program, and*
- *The Farm Property Taxation Policy*

Next Steps

With this final report and recommendations, the Greenbelt Task Force recognizes that the job of creating a permanent Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt has only just started, and will continue in more detail over the summer by provincial government staff, drawing on the expertise of knowledgeable stakeholders and others.

With the moratorium on changes from rural to urban land uses in the *Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004* due to sunset on December 16, 2004, the process will be condensed out of necessity. The task force looks forward to reviewing the results of the summer's work, and will follow the progress of this important initiative.

Greenbelt Legislation

The Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004

In December 2003, the Government of Ontario introduced Bill 27, the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, as the first step toward establishing permanent greenbelt protection in Southern Ontario. The greenbelt would protect environmentally sensitive lands and farmlands, and help manage and contain urban growth.

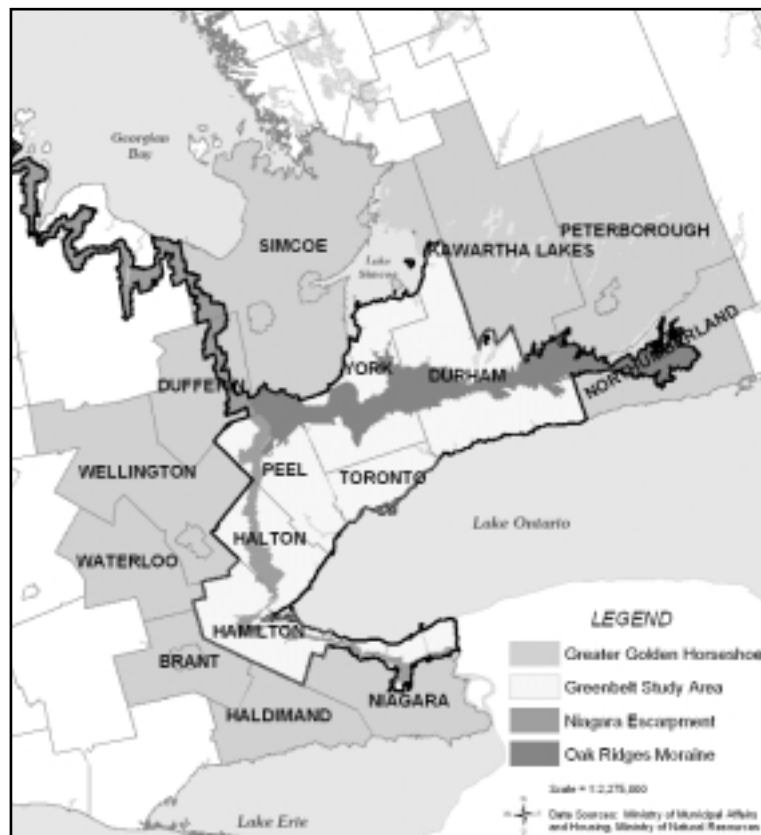
Passed by the Legislature and proclaimed on June 24, 2004, the act created a Greenbelt Study Area.

Inside the study area, a moratorium on changes from rural to urban uses allows time for research and consultation with stakeholders and the public on permanent greenbelt protection, while protecting rural areas from further urbanization.

THE GREENBELT STUDY AREA

The Greenbelt Study Area is located within the Greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan area. The greenbelt study area includes lands under the jurisdiction of the Greater Toronto Area regions of Durham, York, Halton and Peel; the cities of Toronto and Hamilton; the tender fruit and grape lands as designated in the Region of Niagara's official plan; the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

The Golden Horseshoe's major urban areas, as well as its hamlets, villages and towns, are all a part of the study area. In countryside areas, it includes farmlands and rural areas, cultural and natural heritage features, provincial and regional parks, and rivers and river valleys. It also includes highways and railways, transmission lines and fibre-optic cables, as well as the many other activities and landscapes that contribute to a vital countryside.



Ultimately, the provincial government will decide what should constitute the greenbelt, within the Greenbelt Study Area, based on the Greenbelt Task Force recommendations.

Related Initiatives

Places to Grow. Better Choices. Brighter Future. A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was released on July 12.

The greenbelt will provide Ontario's "Places to Grow" growth plan with identification of areas where growth should not go, and act as the counterpoint to the Plan's identification of priority and emerging priority growth areas. Similarly, "Places to Grow" will help redirect development pressure from greenbelt lands to existing urban areas and priority growth centres.

As the task force was constrained geographically by the terms of the *Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004*, it recommends consideration of additional natural and cultural heritage resources and systems that extend beyond the Greenbelt Study Area.

Infrastructure, including transportation planning, developed as part of Ontario's proposed "Places to Grow" growth plan, should respect the principles and recommendations of the Greenbelt Task Force. The greenbelt should not be considered a land reserve for future infrastructure needs.

Planning Reform, including draft policies of the Provincial Policy Statement, *Planning Act* amendments, implementation tools and Ontario Municipal Board reform, should provide a policy foundation for the greenbelt, minimizing the extent of greenbelt-specific policy development required to achieve the task force vision and goals.

The Agricultural Advisory Team and Strong Rural Communities Plan initiatives of the ministries of Agriculture and Food and Municipal Affairs and Housing respectively, will address a wide variety of rural issues, enhancing rural quality of life in the greenbelt and beyond.

The Agricultural Advisory Team will consult with experts and agricultural stakeholders regarding their concerns about the protection of agricultural land. The team will provide

advice to the Government of Ontario on several issues related to protecting and promoting agricultural land uses and activities. These could include protecting normal farm practices, the identification of prime agricultural areas and the protection of specialty croplands. The team will provide ongoing advice until October 2004. The advice will be taken into consideration by the government as it develops its greenbelt plan, and other linked land-use planning and growth management initiatives.

Draft Source-water Protection Planning Legislation will provide a province-wide, watershed-based water quality protection planning system that will meet the related objectives of the greenbelt. Ontario is currently developing watershed-based source protection legislation, which will mandate the development of watershed-based source protection plans for all watersheds in the Province.

The proposed legislation takes a watershed-based approach to the protection of both current and future sources of drinking water, and addresses all sources, including inland lakes, rivers, groundwater and the Great Lakes.

The Proposed Ontario Heritage Act, 2004 amendments will give municipalities additional tools to preserve and maintain heritage resources, many of which represent cultural and tourism opportunities in the greenbelt. In addition, the amended act would enable the Province to designate and protect heritage resources deemed of provincial significance. The act would also strengthen the mandate of the Ontario Heritage Trust, currently named the Ontario Heritage Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, which is dedicated to conserving, protecting and promoting heritage in Ontario, and is authorized to acquire and hold property and easements for public benefit.

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