

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Our Greenbelt gets a world of respect, as Act plays big on global stage

A Danish family enjoys the natural splendour of a hike in the woods just outside Copenhagen. German birders marvel at Greylag geese clustered in a meadow amidst lands that once divided East and West Germany. A Brazilian toddler in São Paulo takes a breath of air made cleaner by the abundant trees in the nearby biosphere. And in Oregon, USA, a Portland-area farmer hands a pint of locally grown berries to an appreciative shopper at a farmer's market.

While moments like these occur thousands of kilometers apart, they share a common bond: all are the product of protected, sensitive lands known as greenbelts - a movement that has been slowly, and crucially, gaining ground for almost 75 years. Yet for those who support these unique regions around the globe, no land-use-protection policy has earned greater admiration than the one in our own backyard: Ontario's Greenbelt Act.

That admiration was in full force earlier this spring in Toronto at the first-ever Global Greenbelts Conference, hosted by Ontario's own Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation. For two days, 201 delegates from 16 land-use-protected regions including in Europe, Australia, South America and the U.S. gathered to discuss how greenbelts can help address our century's agricultural, environmental and social challenges - in particular protecting vulnerable lands against wasteful development, a threat in any language.

The consensus: Ontario's got it right. Our Greenbelt, established in 2005, is a teeming expanse of permanently protected lands including green spaces, farmland, vibrant communities, forests and wetlands, spanning 1.8 million acres from Niagara Falls to Tobermory to Peterborough.



The area provides drinking water for millions of people, contains wetlands and forests that control

flooding as well as filter water and air, and supports some 7000 farms producing the

Possibility grows here.

high quantity and quality of food our population depends on - feeding over \$4 billion annually into our economy, and sustaining some 50,000 jobs. Add its precious ecosystems and tourism value, and one can see why the Greenbelt isn't just a nice-to-have, it's a must-have.

We're not alone in the need to protect such vital lands. Around the world, populations are growing at unprecedented rates; land-use-protection policies are often limited and fragmented; and barriers that limit development are being challenged.

By rising to the occasion with tough, comprehensive



The Burlington Easement Trillium

laws, Ontario has become a leading light among the shadows of global urban sprawl. According to Dr. Agata Cieszewska from the Department of Landscape Architecture at Warsaw Science University, Poland, "After researching Greenbelts around the world, we've concluded that Ontario's Greenbelt is the model to emulate. We're looking for a large-scale greenbelt that's multifunctional, with legal protection and strong agricultural, environmental and economic policies like we see in Ontario."

Dr. Cieszewska is just one of many whom we might call 'green with envy' over Ontario's policies. Jeremy Madsen, Executive Director of San Francisco's Greenbelt Alliance, knows how hard it is to safeguard sensitive lands without the protective umbrella of government:

"The biggest difference between the greenbelt in the San Francisco Bay area and Ontario's Greenbelt...is that your government stepped up with great leadership, and said 'we're going to des-

ignate this area of land as our greenbelt and then we're going to nurture it.' You've taken the step here to think of it at a provincial level. Our greenbelt doesn't have that government protection."

While Ontario's government may gain approval from the world outside Ontario, it also has huge support from the world within Ontario: its public, composed of thousands of new Canadians from over 200 countries and speaking over 130 languages. The Greenbelt serves the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GTA, Niagara and Hamilton regions), one of the fastest growing regions in Canada and home to a vibrant immigrant population.

Their heritage and contributions are in turn fostered by the heritage and benefits of the Greenbelt, such as a thriving economy, healthy and delicious local foods, and abundant opportunities to enjoy Ontario's natural beauty with their families.

From individuals to entire countries, Ontario's Greenbelt is inspiring a healthier, more sustainable world, something more critical today than ever before. As Jeremy Madsen observes, "Though one act, Ontario obtained a future that's taken us more than 50 years to realize." By influencing global experts like Madsen, our Greenbelt is reaching beyond our borders, from the rich farmland of Melbourne's Green Wedges to the aged oaks of Frankfurt's Greenbelt to the scenic rivers of The Netherlands' Green Heart, a vital example of how to get it right - here, there and everywhere.

For more information please visit www.greenbelt.ca.

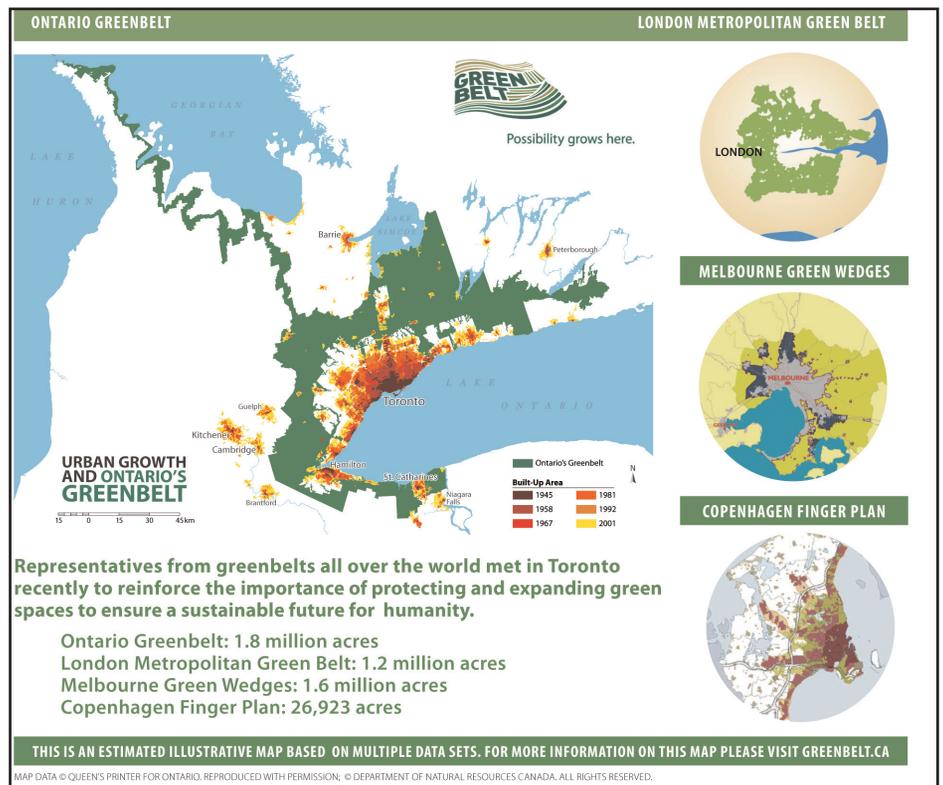


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