



Possibility grows here.

Greenbelt Foundation

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Erin Shapero

2020 Friend of the Greenbelt Recipient for Municipal Leadership



A child of the suburbs, Erin grew up with a firsthand view of suburban sprawl as neighbouring farmland and important natural heritage areas began to disappear. In her community of Markham and beyond the Oak Ridges Moraine faced serious threats.

The impact unsustainable planning had on her community inspired Erin to run for municipal council. First elected in 2000, she spent a decade in office representing her community of Thornhill Markham, quickly becoming known as one of Ontario's greenest politicians. She was one of the first elected politicians in the 905 to stand on a matter of principle and fund her election campaigns through grass roots support rather than taking funding from the development industry.

Over her three terms on Markham council, Erin worked to ensure that sound planning and environmental sustainability permeated the City's actions. She spearheaded many initiatives; protecting air, water, nature and prime agricultural land. Markham quickly became a leader in sustainability and one of the first in Ontario to develop an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan to guide the municipalities decision making process and actions. Erin pushed the boundaries on both natural heritage protection as well as farmland protection and coined the term "Foodbelt"- accurately describing the remaining agricultural system across the GTHA and advocated strongly for its continued protection.

Erin cares deeply about livable communities and creating public policy that puts people's health, quality of life and the wellbeing of the planet first. She encouraged sustainable land use planning, renewable energy investment, local food systems and the creation of Ontario's Greenbelt as a founding member of Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt (MLGB). MLGB is a model based on municipal collaboration - a hallmark of her way of doing politics. She participated provincially and nationally as a member of Ontario's Greenbelt Council, and board member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

After retiring from politics, Erin came to Environmental Defence Canada thrilled to work with local communities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region to protect the jewel that is Ontario's Greenbelt.

In her 5 years at Environmental Defence, Erin worked enthusiastically to ensure the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment were protected and enhanced. She coordinated the work of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance (OGA), spearheading growing the Greenbelt and the creation of the Urban River Valleys designation that now protects the major rivers and streams across the GTA. Her work also included the OGA coordinated Greenbelt and Places to Grow 10-year review submissions - resulting in strong GB protections. She also continued to support the work of the Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt and helped to grow support for the organization.

These days, Erin primarily spends her time as a mom with her two kids, and can be found picking apples, hiking, skating and exploring her passion for photography in the Greenbelt. She also continues to find time to consult on sustainability-related projects close to her heart. Erin holds an honours degree in Environmental Studies from York University.



