



Possibility grows here.

Greenbelt Foundation

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Greenbelt Foundation Backgrounder

2021 Friend of the Greenbelt Award

Date: January 17, 2022

Prepared For: Various Media

Prepared By: Greenbelt Foundation

Overview

The annual Friend of the Greenbelt Award recognizes leaders from across the Greater Golden Horseshoe region who champion, innovate, and ensure the ongoing success of Ontario's Greenbelt. This year, award recipients will join Greenbelt Foundation CEO Edward McDonnell for an online viewing party and ceremony on **Monday, January 17, 2022, from 2:00-3:15pm EST**. Following the ceremony, a series of videos about the recipients will be released online and on social media.

Past recipients of the Friend of the Greenbelt Award have included Canadian singer-songwriter, Sarah Harmer (2006), former Premiers of Ontario, Bill Davis (2007) and Dalton McGuinty (2015), former Mayor of Toronto, David Crombie (2017), former Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Carolyn King (2020), Oak Ridges Moraine conservationist, John Russell Powell (2020), founder of the Gosling Foundation, Philip Gosling (2020), current Oakville and Halton Regional Councillor, Allan Elgar (2020), former Scarborough Centre City Councillor, Glenn De Baeremaeker (2020), former Mayor of the Town of Ajax, Steve Parish (2020), former Thornhill Markham Municipal Councillor, Erin Shapero (2020), and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (2020). [Read a news release about the 2020 recipients HERE.](#)

About 2021 Recipient Conservation Ontario

- Conservation Ontario represents Ontario's 36 conservation authorities (CAs). Conservation authorities ensure the conservation, restoration, and responsible management of Ontario's water, land, and natural habitats.
- Conservation authorities in southern Ontario also play a critical role in supporting the watersheds and natural systems within and around the Greenbelt area creating a healthy and vibrant environment.
- Conservation authorities collectively own and manage approximately 500 conservation areas across the province with approximately 300 of them available to the general public.
- Conservation authorities provide a wide variety of year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, nature-based events, and environmental education programs.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Conservation Authorities

Approximately half of the conservation authorities closed some or all of their conservation areas in the early days of the pandemic. However, conservation authorities pivoted very quickly to adapt their

operations to re-open, because they were aware of the mental and physical health benefits provided by being in nature. By spring 2020, most conservation areas were re-opened to visitors.

Initially, overwhelming numbers on narrow trails and other bottlenecks made it very difficult for conservation authorities to meet public health requirements. To accommodate these challenges, conservation authorities used innovation approaches such as new or updated reservation systems (for example: Halton Conservation, Credit Valley Conservation, and Hamilton Conservation) and developed new pandemic protocols to ensure they could remain open while still meeting pandemic guidelines. Conservation authorities also created new innovative programming including: Forest Therapy programs, “Storybook Walk(s)” in partnership with a local library, and mobile apps to create a “Talking Forest”, teaching visitors about biodiversity in the area.

About 2021 Recipient Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network

- The Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network is a network of over 85 markets that spans southern Ontario. It supports and connects markets, farmers, and shoppers around Ontario’s Greenbelt and aims to increase the success of farmers’ markets in the region.
- Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network members play a critical role in opening up market opportunities, enhancing farm gate revenue, and contributing to the success of farmers and local food providers at a time when local food is “increasingly important” to 60 per cent of Greater Golden Horseshoe consumers, according to [recent Greenbelt Foundation polling](#).
- The goal of the network is to support local farmers and increase the success of local markets. This has been done by providing professional development for market organizers, allocating small grants to markets and individual farmers, and developing research reports on local agriculture and farmers markets.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network

Health restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic meant that farmers’ markets could not operate as usual. To ensure fresh local food still made its way to residents and that farmers were able to sustain their operations during this difficult time, the Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network created an online hub and platform where consumers could engage with their local farmers’ market virtually, buy food from their favourite vendors, and have it delivered to safe locations. This ultimately resulted in \$1.3 million in sales from May to December 2020 and supported 570 farmers and vendors.

Additional Quotes

“We really saw our parks as a way for the community to get outside, to be active, and to connect with each other, so we focused our programs and efforts on maintaining and creating those opportunities for the community to connect.” - Kristie Virgoe, Kawartha Conservation

“We would not have been able to see the success of our farm last summer without going online with the help of Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network.” - Joti Kooner, Kooner Farms

“In a time when it felt like a lot of things were being taken away from us, we didn’t want to lose the market too.” - Alexa Pereyra, Leslieville Farmers' Market



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About Greenbelt Foundation:

Greenbelt Foundation is a charitable organization, solely dedicated to ensuring the Greenbelt remains permanent, protected and prosperous. We make the right investments in its interconnected natural, agricultural, and economic systems, to ensure a working, thriving Greenbelt for all. Ontario's Greenbelt is the world's largest, with over two million acres of farmland, forests, wetlands and rivers working together to provide clean air, fresh water, and a reliable local food source.

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