

WHAT KIND OF FUTURE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE FOR ONTARIO?



Possibility grows here.

COORDINATED LAND-USE PLANNING REVIEW: GREENBELT 101

The Solution for Clean Air, Fresh Water, and Healthy Local Food: Ontario's Greenbelt

Here in south-central Ontario, we have all of the ingredients for a sustainable future. With abundant sources of fresh water, iconic natural places, a thriving economy, and the best quality farmland that can be found in Canada, it's not surprising that the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) is one of the fastest growing areas in North America.

Here's the sticking point: The growth that is expected in the region over the coming decades has the potential to threaten the natural and economic systems that are allowing us to prosper. The growth patterns of the past several decades have been characterized by car-dependant, sprawling subdivisions busting the seams of the Greater Toronto Area.

A bold solution was needed to stop this trend in its tracks and ensure a thriving quality of life for the future. And it was delivered in 2005 through the creation Ontario's Greenbelt.



The Greenbelt includes the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and Rouge Park.

What is the Greenbelt?

The Greenbelt is nearly two million acres of protected agricultural and environmentally sensitive land. Stretching in and around the GGH, the Greenbelt protects the productive farmlands that feed us, the landscapes that clean our water, and the trees that filter our air. It supports the health and economies of our communities.

The Greenbelt works in tandem with the Growth Plan for the GGH to provide a framework to achieve a vision for the future in which smarter growth prevails. Essentially, the **Greenbelt outlines where growth should not occur** and the **Growth Plan outlines where and how it should.**

“THE ENTIRE WORLD DEPENDS ON CLEAN WATER. ANY MAJOR CITY, IN ANY COUNTRY, SHOULD FOLLOW THE GREENBELT’S MODEL. IT SHOWS THAT ONTARIO’S GOT IT RIGHT!”

Gail Krantzberg
Water Scientist, McMaster University

Quick Facts

- The Greenbelt includes the **Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges Moraine**, and nearly one million acres of Protected Countryside.
- The Ontario Greenbelt is **the largest and best protected Greenbelt in the world** and is larger than Prince Edward Island. It surrounds the western shores of Lake Ontario from Niagara-on-the-Lake, through the GTA, to just north of Cobourg in Northumberland County.
- Ontario's Greenbelt **provides \$9.1 billion in economic benefits** and 161,000 jobs.
- The Greenbelt **protects habitat for wildlife**, including 78 species at risk, within a continuous band of green countryside.
- The forested area of the Greenbelt **can offset 27 million cars** driven over one year.

How Was the Greenbelt Created and How Does It Work?

The Greenbelt Plan is a provincial land use plan that permanently protects prime farmland, specialty cropland, and environmentally significant land from inappropriate development. Like the Growth Plan, the Greenbelt Plan requires municipalities to ensure their Official Plans conform to its policies.

At the most basic level, the Greenbelt preserves existing use – for example, if a piece of land was zoned/designated as agricultural when the Greenbelt Act was passed in 2005, it must remain that way.

The Greenbelt was primarily created to meet three goals:

- **Prevent fragmentation** and the loss of farmland and natural heritage
- **Restrict urban sprawl**
- **Work with the Growth Plan** to direct where new urban development should occur

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Protected Countryside, or the Greenbelt lands outside of the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine, are made up of an **agricultural system** and a **natural heritage system**.
- **Prime agriculture areas** are designated areas that cannot be re-designated for non-farm uses. All farm practices and a full range of agricultural secondary uses are permitted within these areas.
- There are about 5,500 farms in the Greenbelt. On average, Greenbelt farms are 33 per cent smaller, but produce 12 per cent more gross income than the typical Ontario farm.
- The **Natural Heritage System** includes lands that support natural heritage and hydrological features and functions. Agriculture also exists within the Natural System, and therefore all normal farm practices are permitted within it. Development within the Natural System is subject to tighter regulations, and requires environmental studies and setbacks to ensure natural heritage features are properly protected.
- The Greenbelt is home to the province's only two **specialty crop areas** – the Holland Marsh and the Niagara Peninsula's Tender Fruit Region.

Photo: Vartkes Peltekoglu



In 2011 alone, agriculture production in the Golden Horseshoe brought \$6.3 billion into our economy.

“THE NATURAL LANDSCAPES PROTECTED UNDER THE GREENBELT LEGISLATION PROVIDE A CONTINUOUS SUPPLY OF BENEFITS TO RESIDENTS AND VISITORS WITHIN THE CREDIT RIVER WATERSHED; SUCH AS PROVISION OF CLEAN WATER, PROTECTION FROM FLOODS AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES – THESE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES HAVE A MAJOR INFLUENCE ON OUR QUALITY OF LIFE!”

Mike Puddister
Credit Valley Conservation

What Options Currently Exist for Municipalities to Add Land to the Greenbelt?

There are two ways that municipalities can grow the Greenbelt. The first is a set of criteria to extend the natural or agricultural system and the second set of criteria enables municipalities to protect urban river valleys. These options are available to municipalities to request an expansion of the Greenbelt in their jurisdiction at any time.

Quick Facts

- **Safeguarding nearly 244,000 acres of lakes, wetlands, rivers, and streams** – The Greenbelt protects the headwaters of our Great Lakes, giving us clean water for drinking and swimming.
- **Urban River Valleys** – Natural connections are essential for the health of the Greenbelt. By growing the Greenbelt into urban river valleys, we can connect urban waterways from headwaters to the lakeshore, and ensure their permanent protection.
- The Greenbelt’s wetlands and forests are of the greatest value to our water safety. **They save \$2.3 billion a year** in water filtration, drinking water treatment, and flood control.

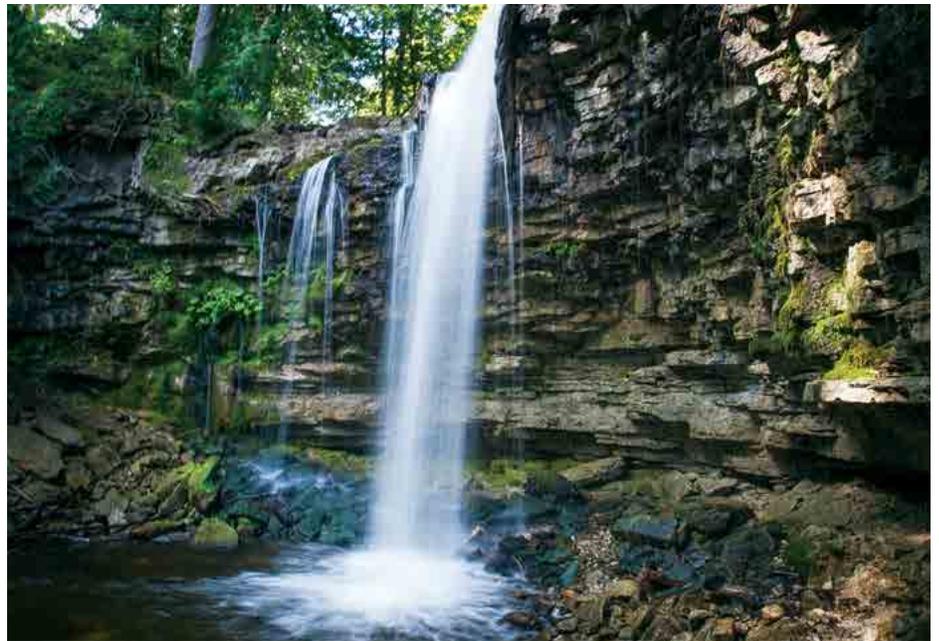


Photo: Lou Cabigao

The Greenbelt’s ecosystems clean our air and water, keep storm waters at bay, and provide spaces for active recreation and reflective strolls. And all for free!

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And There's More Good News

As part of the Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review currently underway, the Province is recommending a series of changes that will result in greater support for agriculture and local food and a bigger, stronger Greenbelt.

- **The 5,500 Greenbelt farms will benefit from the proposed changes**, which will enable farmers to be entrepreneurial by placing fewer restrictions on what they can do or build on their farms.
- The revised Plans will also **identify and protect an agricultural system for the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe**, which builds on the Greenbelt to ensure that the \$11 billion industry continues to grow and provide us with healthy, fresh local food.
- The province is proposing to **grow the Greenbelt** to include 21 urban river valleys and seven coastal wetlands, bringing the Greenbelt into cities and towns with over 6 million residents!

The province also added four parcels of protected countryside in the City of Hamilton and Niagara Region, **however, the widely supported initiative to expand the Greenbelt and protect a 'Bluebelt' of vulnerable water resources was left out of the amendments.**

Believe in Smart Growth and a Protected Greenbelt? The province is currently seeking input on their proposed changes until September 30, 2016.

Join Us To Call on the Province to Move Quickly and Decisively to Grow the Greenbelt Further and Protect These Vital Water Resources.

Here's how to get involved:

1) Get informed

Visit our website for updates and resources related to the Coordinated Land Use Planning Review and province's proposed changes at www.greenbelt.ca

2) Join the #GrowourGB movement

A grassroots coalition of more than 100 community groups have joined forces to advocate for quick and decisive action by government to grow the Greenbelt to protect vital source and drinking water resources.

3) Share your voice!

Attend one of the province's public open houses in May and June 2016 or submit a comment online through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website or through the Environmental Registry before September 30, 2016