

What is the Greenbelt?

The Greenbelt is permanently protected countryside of almost 2 million acres that protects key water sources, local foodlands, and green spaces for future generations. It is the world's largest permanently protected Greenbelt. Since its creation ten years ago, it has become very popular with Ontarians – 93% voiced approval in a 2014 study carried out by Environics, with 74% feeling it was very important to continue to grow the Greenbelt¹.

What Does the Greenbelt Do?

The Greenbelt protects over 533,000 acres of forests, lakes, wetlands, rivers and streams, saving us \$2.3 billion in water filtration, flood mitigation and drinking water treatment. Further, it protects the habitat of 78 species at risk and protects the land of over 5,500 farms².

Why Does Simcoe County Need the Greenbelt?

Simcoe County is the largest municipality in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, with an anticipated growth to 667,000 people by 2031³. We have a responsibility to protect the things that make Simcoe County a great place to live and play and that strengthen our local economies. Provincial studies show that our two main watersheds in Simcoe are no longer able to keep up with our population growth⁴ and that Barrie, Bradford, and Midland/Penetanguishine may not have the quantity of groundwater needed to support their residents in the future⁵. Frequent beach closures, water restrictions and water bans indicate that our water systems need more effective protection before it's too late.

What Would the Greenbelt Mean for Simcoe County?

The Greenbelt would strengthen the policies that protect our water (hydrologic) systems, natural heritage, and our farmland. The Greenbelt plan ensures:

- ✓ **Simcoe's water systems will be protected**, including areas that are not adequately protected through current Simcoe County policies such as Lake Couchiching, Severn River and Georgian Bay.
- ✓ **Communities can continue to grow responsibly**. Simcoe County (minus the cities of Barrie and Orillia) has enough land designated to grow until at least 2031 and also has an oversupply of land to accommodate an additional 150,000 people beyond this date⁶. Greenbelt protection would limit costly sprawl and ensure future growth is concentrated where infrastructure and jobs already exist.
- ✓ **The health of our forests, streams and wetlands will be protected** so that they can continue to support Simcoe's \$600 million tourism and recreation industry.
- ✓ **Simcoe's 2,189 operating farms⁷ and agricultural communities will be protected** so that they can continue to provide local food and generate jobs.

¹ www.greenbelt.ca/majority_of_ontarians_want_to_see_greenbelt_grow2014

² http://www.greenbelt.ca/about_the_greenbelt

³ Simcoe County Official Plan Available at: <http://www.simcoe.ca/dpt/pln/official-plan>

⁴ Intergovernmental Action Plan for Simcoe County, Assimilative Capacity Study, 2006

⁵ Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Map “Areas Where Stress on Groundwater Quantity May Require Further Study”, 2015 Available at: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=10866>

⁶ Simcoe County Land Budget Information - <http://www.simcoe.ca/dpt/pln/growth>

⁷ Statistics Canada Census, 2011