

Apr 19, 2021

Dear Minister Clark,

Re: ERO # 019-3136 Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt

Thank you very much for your welcome pledge to grow the Greenbelt. While I support the inclusion of the Paris Galt Moraine and public lands within urban river valleys, I believe a much more ambitious approach is needed to protect precious farmland, groundwater and natural areas across the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and build the region's resilience to climate change.

I urge you to use a science-based approach to expansion that will:

- ensure safe and abundant drinking water and local food for the region's 9 million residents;
- sustain local ecosystems and biodiversity; and
- optimize resilience to climate change impacts such as flooding and drought.

To this end, I recommend that expansion include:

all moraines within the GGH; private lands as well as public lands within urban river valleys; cold water streams, wetlands and headwaters; the former glacial Lake Algonquin and Iroquois Shorelines and Plain; and the Lake Simcoe basin and northern Simcoe County.

Also, the Province has an important role to play in respect to ensure municipalities and the transit expansion agency are following adopted protection standards regarding the ESAs and ANSIs located in the urban areas.

Provincial Policy Statement 2014 requested that municipalities study, map and designate and adopt into the Official Plans the natural heritage most significant locally, regionally and in some cases provincially or beyond – the Environmentally Significant Areas. Some of these protected areas are a part of the Iroquois Shorelines and Plain, other are located in urban river valleys.

The Municipal Official Plans adopted protections having to conform to the Growth Plan, The Greenbelt Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement.

The ESAs constitute important component of the Southern Ontario ecosystems and play a critical role in supporting biodiversity in urban areas but can only survive if adopted protection policies are fully implemented to prevent impacts from surrounding development/transit expansion and if the public use remains sustainable.

These consultation are taking place in time when all of us are aware of Covid19 devastating impacts on our society. Most of us are also acutely aware of climate and biodiversity crisis as our most threatening existential crisis. All of these phenomena are connected to our activities and "growing the Greenbelt" is an opportunity in Ontario for us Ontarians how to limit our impacts on climate/biodiversity crisis.

Recent Report by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario Value-for-Money Audit: Conserving the Natural Environment with Protected Areas stresses:

"At the time of our audit, only 10.7% of Ontario was protected and only 0.6% of southern Ontario was protected, the part of Canada that is the most biologically diverse and where biodiversity is among the most at risk because of the high human population. The Mixedwood Plains Ecozone in the southernmost part of Ontario covers about 8.5 million hectares or 9% of the province's land area, is home to 13.5 million or 92% of Ontarians".

"The most significant contributors to biodiversity loss around the world, in order of impact, are:

- changes in land use—for example, converting land from its natural state to residential or farm land;*
- resource extraction or activities—such as hunting, logging, fishing, and mining (aggregates)—that involve withdrawing materials from the natural environment;*
- climate change, which threatens the habitat and life cycles of many species;*
- pollution, which threatens both individual species and natural processes; and*
- invasive species, which are plants and animals that are not native to an area and that disrupt natural processes."*

Growing the Greenbelt, in an ambitious, inclusive manner, has a potential to represent our common will and efforts to start reversing/preventing growth impacts, especially in the Southern Ontario - Crisis Ecoregion.

In keeping with your promise not to remove lands from the Greenbelt, I also ask that the government cancel plans to build Highway 413 (GTA West) and the Bradford Bypass (Holland Marsh Highway), which will damage existing Greenbelt lands and accelerate sprawl.

As a part of this submission, I would like to express a full support for comments and points drawn in below submissions:

1.

Ontario Nature recommendations: Growing the Greenbelt Consultation (ERO#019-3136)

<https://view.publitas.com/on-nature/suggested-responses-growing-the-greenbelt/page/1>

and

2.

The Ontario Headwaters Institute submission RE: ERO 019-3136 -- Growing the Size of the Greenbelt

<https://waterscape.ca/wp-content/uploads/PDF-Version-of-Submission-of-March-31-with-App-A.pdf>

I look forward to participating in further consultations about growing the Greenbelt.

Yours sincerely,