



GRAND RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

April 21, 2022

The Honourable Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Mr. Clark:

Re: Proposed amendment to the Greenbelt Plan, ERO #019-4485: proposed amendment to the Greenbelt Area boundary regulation O. Reg. 59/05, ERO #019-4483.

At a time when the stability and resilience of our southern Ontario countryside is threatened in many ways, there was one bright spot in the Grand River Watershed: Bill 71, the proposed Paris-Galt Moraine Act 2019. This occurred when provincial politics was characterized by bitterness, disagreement, highly polarized publics, low accountability, and sagging confidence in government operations.

An initial proposal, modeled on the much respected, pathbreaking Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, was introduced by Guelph MPP Mike Schreiner, as a private member's bill. Your government responded positively to the spirit of this proposal by bringing forward the Paris-Galt Moraine Act 2019. We were all very heartened by the proposal. The unanimous passage of second reading seemed to mark a possible turning point in reaching harmonious agreement on important issues concerning land-use protection.

We were bitterly disappointed when the Galt-Paris Moraine - which we regarded as the centerpiece of carefully crafted expansion of the Greenbelt - was summarily deleted from the inventory of prospective additions to the Greenbelt.

The Grand River Watershed has benefitted from innovative, effective land use planning over 50 years under the administration of the Grand River Conservation Authority which was awarded the most prestigious international award for river basin management, the Thies International

Riverprize, in 2001. We were indeed proud of this accomplishment. It's nice to know that we have become a model for other jurisdictions in many different countries. The added protection of the Greenbelt would be a natural extension to this fine record.

One of the most challenging current issues in the Grand River watershed is groundwater protection. Waterloo Region, the fourth fastest growing urban area in Canada, is also the area most dependent on groundwater as its municipal water source.

The 2021 ERO posting notes that the Galt-Paris moraine is a vital headwater for numerous streams and "helps to protect and recharge the groundwater aquifers that provide the basis for a broad range of needs, including drinking water supply for many of the communities sustaining local ecosystems, and growth and economic management." Thus we had high expectations that this initiative of your government would finally fulfil a crucial need to consolidate protection of the health of a particularly important area of Ontario's countryside.

But now the opportunity appears lost. Please reconsider this decision and return to the original plan to include the Paris-Galt moraine as well as other vital areas needed proper protection in the Greenbelt.

It would be a wise decision from many perspectives such as community health, natural area protection, agricultural viability, and long-term resilience and stability of the countryside.

Sincerely,

Greg Michalenko and the diverse membership of the Grand River Environmental Network
www.gren.ca