

**Submission on ERO 019-7739**  
**Proposal to return lands to the Greenbelt - Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023**

November 24, 2023

**FRIENDS OF THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE**

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## Proposal to return lands to the Greenbelt - Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023

While the return of lands to the Greenbelt and the re-establishment of the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Protection Act and easements are appropriate given the highly irregular and improper manner in which they were removed, as documented by the Auditor General and Integrity Commissioner, Bill 136 does not go far enough.

When the Premier announced the Greenbelt reversals he stated "As a first step to earn back your **trust**, I'll be reversing the changes we made and won't make any changes to the Greenbelt in the future."

In reversing the Ministerial imposed urban expansions, Minister Callandra stated  
*...he has been reviewing past decisions of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (on urban boundaries) to ensure they were made in a "manner that maintains and reinforces public trust." He said "it is clear" the changes made to urban boundaries "failed to meet that test" and that there was "too much involvement from the minister's office, too much involvement from individuals in the minister's office" in those decisions.*

Minister Callandra has further stated that this same concern about the public trust applies to the flood of Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) enacted by his predecessor, triggering his recent decision to review all those MZOs.

Both the Premier and former Minister of Municipal Affairs repeatedly promised not to touch the Greenbelt. There was no mention of any intention to do so during the Spring 2022 provincial election – and yet almost immediately thereafter the Premier issued his Mandate Letter to the Minister to **"codify processes for swaps, expansions, contractions and policy updates for the Greenbelt"**.

### Remove "swap" provision in the Greenbelt Act

The ERO posting states that Bill 136 will: "continue to provide that *no Plan amendments can be made that would reduce the total area in the Greenbelt Plan*" (the language of section 12(2) of the Greenbelt Act). This clause has been misinterpreted to mean lands can be removed from the Greenbelt as long as other lands are added such that the total area is not reduced – the so-called "swap" clause – specifically referenced in the Premier's mandate letter to **"codify processes for swaps...."** (see above excerpt).

This was never the intention of this clause as it would remove all certainty with respect to the area of the Greenbelt, conflict with the stated goal of "permanent" protection, and lead to a "migrating" Greenbelt which completely undermines the need to protect systems of agricultural and natural lands/features and their ecological functions that were included in the Greenbelt in the first instance

Section 12(2) of the Greenbelt Act contains the above language and yet it was the clause the Government used to defend the Greenbelt removals – pointing to other lands it added to the Greenbelt.

Maintaining the current language of section 12(2) is directly in conflict with the Premier’s public statement in announcing the Greenbelt reversals that “.....we won’t be making any changes to the Greenbelt in the future”.

While this was in reference to “removals” given the context and content of his remarks – and hopefully not additions (noting in 2021 the Premier and former Minister claimed they were going to engage in the biggest expansion of the Greenbelt ever), Bill 136 needs to be amended to revise section 12(2) to clarify that “swaps” are not allowed.

**Recommendation 1:**

Amend Bill 136 to further revise the Greenbelt Act, 2005 to clarify in section 12(2) that “swaps” are not allowed.

**Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve**

With respect to the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP), even with the re-establishment of the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Protection Act, the Government’s repeal of the provincial Central Pickering Development Plan (CPDP) means there is no longer any vision or policies in relation to the DRAP. This is because while the area of the DRAP is included in the Greenbelt – neither the DRAP Protection Act or the Greenbelt Plan contain any commentary or policies about the DRAP – as both relied on the Central Pickering Development Plan as the home for the vision/policies.

**Recommendation 2:**

Amend Bill 136 to further revise the Greenbelt Act, 2005 to include a new subsection 6(1)e under Content of the Plan which reads as follows:

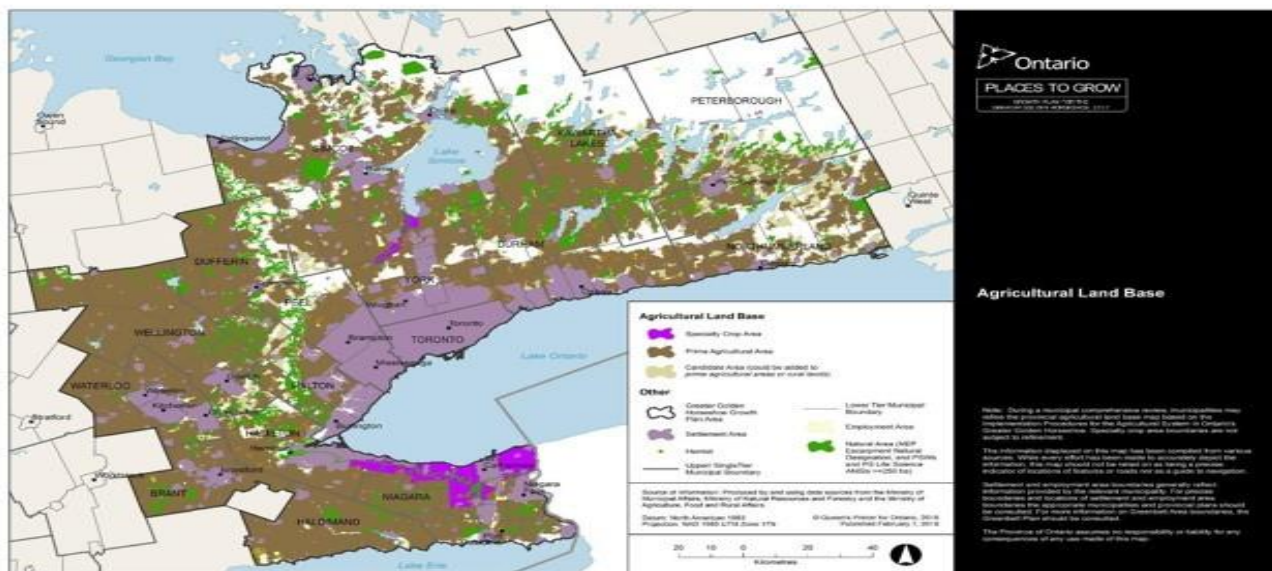
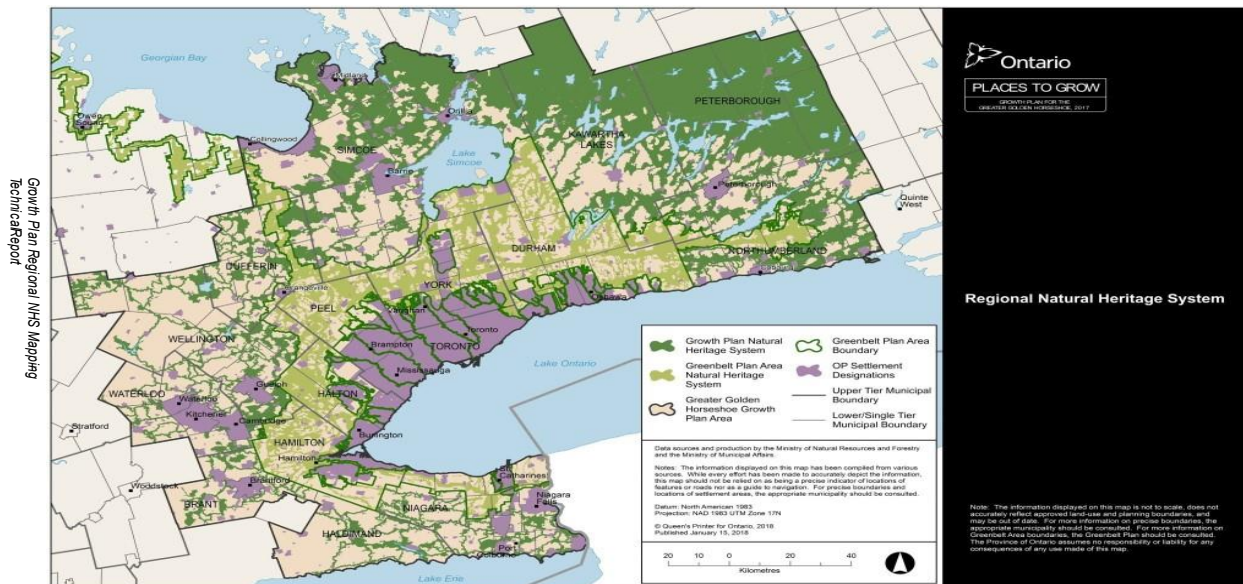
- e) specific policies and maps for the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve

The Greenbelt Plan should then be subsequently amended to include the DRAP commentary, vision and policies from the Central Pickering Development Plan.

## Growth Plan Natural Heritage and Agricultural Systems

The most important change to the Growth Plan with respect to Protecting What Is Valuable arising from the 2017 Coordinated Review of the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan was the major strengthening of this section through the inclusion of maps of and policies for Natural Heritage and Agricultural Systems for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (see below)

Figure 19. Regional Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.



Both systems were designed based on the same methodology used to create the Greenbelt Natural Heritage and Agricultural Systems and seamlessly connect to/with those systems. The policies for key natural heritage and water resource features essentially mirror the Greenbelt policies. As such, the Growth Plan Natural Heritage and Agricultural Systems are effectively extensions of the Greenbelt, help tremendously in strengthening it and are already reflected in all upper and single tier official plans and numerous lower tier official plans.

The proposed repeal of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe will result in the loss of the provincial plan which contains these maps and policies.

**Recommendation 3:**

Amend Bill 136 to further revise the Greenbelt Act, 2005 to include a new subsection 6(1)f under Content of the Plan which reads as follows:

- f) specific policies and maps for the Natural Heritage and Agricultural Systems of the Greater Golden Horseshoe