



does not support the proposed policy that would impose Greenbelt expansion on the County and has stated that municipal support should be a requirement.

- **The Region of Peel** has recommended that affected communities and landowners must be consulted by the Province and sufficient time allowed for reviewing proposed boundary changes if new Greenbelt expansions are proposed. Regardless of where the Greenbelt expansion is proposed, the Province should ensure that extensive consultation is undertaken with affected communities and landowners.
- **Pickering** has recommended the province establish a simplified process to consider limited refinements to the Greenbelt and ORMCP that result from further ground-truthing the boundary.
- **York Region** has stated that the Greenbelt Plan should be amended to permit compatible community uses.
- **York Region** has also requested that a process be developed to review boundaries associated with the Greenbelt Plan and the ORMCP in response to individual landowner requests.
- **Markham** has endorsed a resolution to conduct an open and transparent process to define potentially minor boundary refinements to the Greenbelt Plan in response to individual landowner requests and that the timeline for this process also be clearly stated. This could be done through the Secondary Plan process to the satisfaction of York Region and the Province.
- **Markham** has also stated that given the abundance of Greenbelt lands that will interface with the urban area, the city wants guidance of the types of 'facilities' that would be permitted – what would be included in a 'system of publicly accessible parklands' – to ensure a clear understanding of which recreational and parkland uses would be permitted in the Greenbelt
- **Markham** has also requested that the province provide criteria on how to respond to requests to adjust the Greenbelt NHS layer, as provided for in policy 3.2.2.5, or in the absence of criteria, this policy should be deleted and the Province retain authority for NHS refinements.
- **The Region of Durham** has recommended the province establish a more clearly defined process including criteria and timeframe to consider site specific requests for minor adjustments to the Greenbelt Plan Area boundaries, and that the province complete this process in a transparent and consultative manner.
- **The Region of Durham** has recommended that a new financial arrangement is needed for the Greenbelt Communities in the form of provincial grants for greenbelt communities to compensate for the reduced ability of municipalities to increase their assessment through growth.
- **Innisfil** recommends municipal support should be attained for expansions to the Greenbelt.
- **The City of Vaughan** requested an open and transparent process with criteria be established to review Greenbelt technical mapping adjustments, including those related to site specific requests, and that these adjustments be made prior to finalizing the plan amendments and schedules and further that the Province permit adjustments to the outer boundary of the Greenbelt Plan for Vaughan's in progress New Community Areas Secondary Plans and that such regulations be promulgated in a timely manner so as to minimize delay on the approval timing.
- **The City of Vaughan** has requested the Province to consider expanding uses permitted within the Greenbelt to include uses such as active public parks and public stormwater management facilities.
- **The City of Vaughan** as also stated that it cannot support the approval of the amended Greenbelt Plan, as currently drafted, due to unresolved concerns respecting policies for establishing a review process for the evaluation of proposals for amendments to the Greenbelt's boundaries or proposals for permission to include additional compatible uses within the Greenbelt;
- **The Town of Georgina** proposed the Greenbelt Plan be modified to include a policy that allows local municipalities to recognize small areas or pockets of non-agricultural uses within the defined Prime Agricultural Area and allow the opportunity for redevelopment provided such redevelopment is compatible with, or does not conflict with, the surrounding uses.
- **York Region** has stated that additional SWM uses should be permitted in vegetation protection zone
- **The City of Hamilton** has recommended that the province revise policy 3.4.4.1 of the Greenbelt Plan to indicate that Hamlets shall not be subject to the policies of the Growth Plan regarding complete communities, as rural Hamlets serve a different function in the overall planning structure than urban Towns and Villages, and due to size, population and servicing constraints, will not develop with full community services;
- **The City of Hamilton** has also recommended that the Province revise policy 3.2.5.6 of the Greenbelt Plan regarding *habitat of endangered species and threatened species* to be consistent with the PPS 2014;

- **The County of Dufferin** supports proposed policy changes to allow upper and single tier municipalities to consider expansions to settlement area boundaries for settlements within the Greenbelt Plan, at the time of a MCR.
- **Dufferin County**, the restrictive nature of the Escarpment Natural Area and Escarpment Protection Area designation, coupled with the proposed changes, are anticipated to have a significant impact on future land uses within these designations. The County and local municipalities have significant concerns related to the negative impacts on tax revenues that will result from the redesignation of lands, given the associated tax relief that would be available to impacted landowners through the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program. If redesignations are being proposed, further consideration of the fiscal impacts and a means for compensation to the municipality should be established.
- **The County of Dufferin** Council passed a motion stating that the County does not support the proposed changes or expansion of the Niagara Escarpment Plan until a collaborative consultation process has been completed, including more detailed mapping being provided to allow municipalities and landowners to better understand the proposed changes.
- **Niagara Region** has recommended the Greenbelt Plan policies should be amended to reflect Niagara's unique-sized farm parcels. Niagara has also outlined concern regarding restricting the ability to expand or change uses on properties with legally existing uses as that would not foster economic viability, which is contrary to the intent of the Plan, but may offer additional choice and amenity to the landscape.
- **This is not a complete or exhaustive list of municipal recommendations. OHBA expects that the Ministry will review and engage directly with all municipalities that submitted recommendations to the Province.**

### **Greenbelt Expansion of the Outer Boundary**

OHBA recognizes the government has a platform commitment to expand the outer-boundary of the Greenbelt. The 2014 Liberal Election Platform stated that: "as part of our review of the Greenbelt, we will work with communities and expand the outer boundary of the Greenbelt over the next six years, using established processes." OHBA will support a clear, transparent, accountable and science based expansion process provided that landowners receive notification, are consulted and that prior to the finalization of any proposed boundary changes or any new land use designations have an appeal window.

The robust criteria that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing established in 2008 to provide an opportunity for municipalities to identify areas that could be included in the Greenbelt should be utilized as the Province looks for opportunities to grow the greenbelt at the outer edge. OHBA, believes it is important for the provincial government to be transparent and accountable to the public as well as municipal and regional government partners and use the six criteria of the Growing the Greenbelt process established in 2008. For reference, the six criteria include: begins with a municipal request, passed by a council resolution; identifies an area either adjacent to, or having a functional relationship to the Greenbelt, embraces the Greenbelt purpose, connects to Greenbelt systems, complements the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and timing and relationship to other provincial initiatives.

- **As many municipalities have stated, OHBA recommends that the Province establish clear criteria and a transparent process including timelines for Greenbelt expansion. OHBA further recommends that affected communities and landowners must be directly consulted by the Province and sufficient time allowed for reviewing proposed boundary changes if new Greenbelt expansions are proposed.**

The Province has indicated that it will lead a separate process to identify areas to potentially be added to the Greenbelt Protected Countryside beyond the GTA, particularly in areas having significant ecological and hydrologic features facing development pressure. Regardless of where the Greenbelt expansion is proposed, the Province should ensure that extensive consultation is undertaken with the impacted municipality, the affected communities and all impacted landowners are consulted and receive notification.

- **OHBA recommends that prior to finalizing any new land-use designations the Province establish an appeal period where the municipality or landowner can appeal a Greenbelt expansion designation weighed against the expansion criteria established by the Province.**

## Transition

Further OHBA would like to reinforce the importance of transition. Transition is an appropriate in all major land use planning policy changes and is an essential element of any policy legislation adopted in a democratic society.

- **OHBA is supportive of all transition measures currently provided in the Greenbelt Plan and as such, strongly support that they remain within the Final Greenbelt Plan.**

## Urban River Valley Designation

- **OHBA supports the Urban River Valley (URV) designation on publicly-owned and protected URVs and the proposed expansion into 21 URV corridors and associated coastal wetlands to be added to the Greenbelt Area in the Greenbelt Plan as URV areas.**

The proposed Greenbelt Plan's policies would apply to only publicly-owned lands in these new areas. In 2013, OHBA welcomed the new Greenbelt URV designation that gave municipalities the opportunity to connect publicly-owned and protected URVs to the Greenbelt through a public Official Plan process. On January 10, 2013 in [a joint OHBA Press Release with Environmental Defence](#) spokesperson Gillian McEachern, OHBA CEO Joe Vaccaro stated: "The new Greenbelt designation gives municipalities the opportunity to connect publicly-owned and protected urban river valleys to the Greenbelt through a public official plan process. This is the appropriate way to grow the Greenbelt for future generations to enjoy."

- **OHBA continues to support URVs and encourages the Provincial government, conservation authorities and municipalities to consider additional appropriate publically-owned lands that could be included in the Greenbelt. Furthermore, within urban areas, OHBA believes there are opportunities to add existing parkland that is connected to the Greenbelt to the Greenbelt. This would enhance recreational opportunities as well as enhance urban access to the Greenbelt.**

## Expanding Uses Permitted: Recreational Uses / Public Parks

The policies in the Greenbelt Plan continue to be vague with respect to the types of recreational facilities that are associated with the terms "parkland" and "open space" both of which are described as acceptable activities within the Protected Countryside, but are undefined. Municipalities note that given the amount of Greenbelt lands that will be adjacent to urban development or are in the urban boundary, more guidance is required regarding the types of "facilities" that would be permitted, and what could be included in the "system of publicly accessible parklands" to ensure a clear understanding of which types of recreational and park uses are permitted.

OHBA notes that, as part of the planning process, developers are required to dedicate parkland or cash-in-lieu of parkland to municipalities for acquisition of parkland. As a number of municipalities have supported, parkland dedication could support the acquisition of new parkland in the Greenbelt to service communities that are directly connected/adjacent to the existing Greenbelt.

- **As many municipalities have recommended, OHBA recommends that the Province should consider Greenbelt amendments, greater partnership programs and strategic investments to enhance recreational opportunities throughout the existing Greenbelt plan. The Province should also consider creating new designations in the Greenbelt that would support specific provincial goals and objectives (i.e. recreational designation).**

OHBA notes that the Greenbelt Plan not only permits municipalities to develop parks (including community parks with active uses) within the Greenbelt (including the Protected Countryside), but it encourages them to do so. OHBA notes that Sec 3.3.2 makes a distinction between "parkland" and "open space" which further reinforces the point that active public parks are permitted and encouraged in the Greenbelt.

The Parkland, Open Space and Trail Policies states that: "The Province should, in partnership with municipalities, conservation authorities, non-government organizations, and other interested parties: Encourage the development of a system of publicly accessible parkland, open space and trails where people can pursue the types of recreational

activities envisaged by this Plan, and to support the *connectivity* of the Natural Heritage System and the development of *complete communities* in *settlement areas* across the Greenbelt;”

OHBA notes however that this issue has been complicated by an OMB decision in North Leslie that ruled, a park is not permitted in the Greenbelt, if that park is intended to serve the area residents, but it would be permitted if it was intended to serve the population of the municipality (or a larger area) in general.

- **OHBA therefore recommends that in order to provide clarity that municipalities be required to accept Greenbelt lands to be used for parkland dedication, the Greenbelt Plan must be revised to specifically state that Greenbelt lands in the Protected Countryside may be permitted to be used for parkland dedication as required by the Planning Act. The will support clause 3.3.2.1 of the Greenbelt Plan.**

### **Expanding Uses Permitted: Storm Water Management / LID**

A number of municipalities have requested the province to consider expanding uses permitted within the Greenbelt to include uses such as active public parks and public stormwater management facilities.

- **OHBA is supportive of allowing storm water management facilities in the protected countryside and to allowing green infrastructure (LID) features in vegetation protection zones.**

Generally, according to Policy 3.2.5.5(b) this protected buffer is intended to be made of natural self-sustaining vegetation. Within this policy section there are some exclusions for agricultural, agricultural-related and on-farm diversified uses in Policies 3.2.5.7, 3.2.5.8 and 3.2.5.9, however there is a need for additional clarity within the policies to ensure they are implemented as intended and allow for green infrastructure.

### **Expanding Uses Permitted: Rural Communities**

A number of municipalities have recommended that the Province revise Policy 3.4.4.1 of the Greenbelt Plan to indicate that Hamlets shall not be subject to the policies of the Growth Plan regarding complete communities, as rural Hamlets serve a different function in the overall planning structure than urban Towns and Villages, and due to size, population and servicing constraints, will not develop with full community services.

- **OHBA is supportive of the Province’s policy revision proposal to Policy 3.4.4.1 to indicate that Hamlets shall not be subject to the policies of the Growth Plan regarding complete communities.**

### **Provincial Proposed Adjustments to Greenbelt Area Boundary Regulation: Notice #012-7198**

The province has proposed a regulation that would make a number of following amendments to the area of land designated as Greenbelt Area in O. Reg. 59/05. O. Reg. 59/05 was made on Feb. 25, 2005 and established the boundary of the Greenbelt Area pursuant to the Greenbelt Act, 2005. The regulation was amended by O. Reg. 6/13 in January 2013 to add an area (255 Hectares in Glenorchy) in Oakville. As the EBR posting notes “The purpose of the proposed regulation is to adjust the Greenbelt Area boundary to remove lands to reflect matters that were already in a planning process prior to the creation of the Greenbelt Plan and thus allowed to continue. The provincially proposed changes align with municipal official plans and existing urban boundaries.”

- **OHBA is supportive of the proposed changes in the regulatory notice #012-7198 to reflect matters that were already in a planning process prior to the creation of the Greenbelt Plan.**

### **Adjustments to the Boundary of the Greenbelt**

Based on the Provincially proposed adjustments to Greenbelt Area Boundary Regulation #012-7198 the province is recommending adjustments to the Greenbelt. OHBA notes that during public consultations at Town Hall meetings across the Greater Golden Horseshoe in 2015, the Minister and Ministry staff invited the public and individual land owners to make submissions to the Environmental Registry regarding individual issues and concerns with respect to Greenbelt designations, previous lack-of-notification and perceived mapping errors. This invitation from the

Minister and Ministry has resulted in numerous requests through the Environmental Registry process to have individual site specific reviewed and considered by the province. Furthermore, the Ministry website states that “We are also obtaining detailed technical information from municipalities, conservation authorities and landowners to determine if further refinements are required to achieve the natural heritage protection objectives of the Greenbelt”

OHBA notes that the December 2015 *Planning for Health, Prosperity and Growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2015-2041* Panel report recommended the Province establish a criteria and a process for changes to Greenbelt designations and boundaries in Recommendation 73:

“Within the time period of this review, address designation and boundary concerns associated with the existing Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan through policy changes based on recommendations in this report related to such matters as settlement area expansion, complete communities, strategic employment lands, infrastructure and servicing, agricultural viability, protection of farmland, natural heritage systems, water resources, climate change and enhancing plan implementation”.

OHBA notes that a number of municipalities have supported that the Province establish a clearly defined and transparent process including criteria to review minor boundary refinements to the Greenbelt Plan in response to individual landowner requests and that the timeline for this process also be clearly stated. OHBA has heard concerns raised by municipalities and stakeholders in several sectors and from landowners with respect to mapping errors and mapping changes that occurred without consultation when the Greenbelt was initially established. OHBA also notes that there were also situations where landowners were notified that portions of their properties were included in the initial Greenbelt Plan *after* the mapping was approved without receiving notification prior to the approval. It is therefore important that the Provincial government respond to municipal recommendations to establish a process by which the existing Greenbelt boundary can be fine-tuned and adjusted to correctly correlate with Natural Heritage Features and existing/planned infrastructure and servicing on the ground. This process would protect the integrity and support the credibility of the Greenbelt.

- **OHBA recognizing the province is sponsoring boundary adjustments and supporting the panel’s recommendations, as many municipalities have recommended, OHBA recommends that an open and transparent process be established by the Province to review designations and boundary refinement in the Greenbelt Plan. This process must include clear criteria and a timeframe to consider site specific requests for boundary adjustments to the Greenbelt Plan. Further, the Province should complete this process in a transparent and consultative manner with all stakeholders including municipalities, Conservation Authorities and Landowners.**

Policy 3.2.2.6 of the Greenbelt Plan (2005) and 3.2.2.5 of the Proposed Greenbelt Plan (2016) states:

*“When official plans are brought into conformity with this Plan, the boundaries of the Natural Heritage System may be refined, with greater precision, in a manner that is consistent with this Plan and the system shown on Schedule 4.”*

The Greenbelt Plan (2005) and the Proposed Greenbelt Plan (2016) includes a policy that implements a process allowing a municipality to refine the boundary of the NHS, but it does not include a policy to permit the municipality to refine the outer Greenbelt boundary line as part of this process. The unintended consequence of this policy leaves small fragmented parcels of lands to then be defined as *Protected Countryside* in the Greenbelt to be left vacant and unused, and surrounded by urban uses which are too small to be economically viable agricultural parcels and serves no environmentally significant purpose.

- **OHBA recommends that the Province and Municipalities work together to resolve this boundary issue.**

## **Agricultural System**

While the Greenbelt Plan is primarily focused as a land-use plan, OHBA previously recommended in our 2015 submission an enhanced focus on improving the economic viability of agricultural opportunities for farmers. For the Greenbelt Plan to be a success, the economic viability of agriculture within the Greenbelt should be enhanced.

- **OHBA is supportive of a number of improvements to the Greenbelt Plan that supports and facilitates a wider diversity of agricultural and agriculturally-related uses that support farming operations and enhance the economic viability of farming.**

OHBA further notes that the Province has created a new assessment tool called an Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), which is to be completed during the consideration of proposals for non-agricultural uses within non-urban lands. While the draft policies would indicate that this tool will be supportive of the agricultural industry through considering the impact of proposed development on existing operations, little information is provided about the study requirements, who is qualified to prepare it, and how it relates to other assessment tools.

- **OHBA recommends the Province work with stakeholders and municipalities clarify the elements of an AIA study, including who would be considered a qualified party to conduct an AIA, and who would be a qualified party to review the AIA.**

## **Oak Ridges Moraine – Provincial Proposed Amendments to Southern Boundary**

The province has proposed amendments to the southern boundary which is to be confirmed at 245 masl (meters above sea level). The contour will remain in the Plan with some technical clarity around conditions by which the lands can be removed from the Plan. OHBA understands the province has not identified this boundary adjustment with the release of the Plans, but has confirmed with municipalities that review of all boundary issues is underway.

- **OHBA is supportive of this process to provide greater technical clarity on the boundary of the Oak Ridges Moraine.**

## **Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP)**

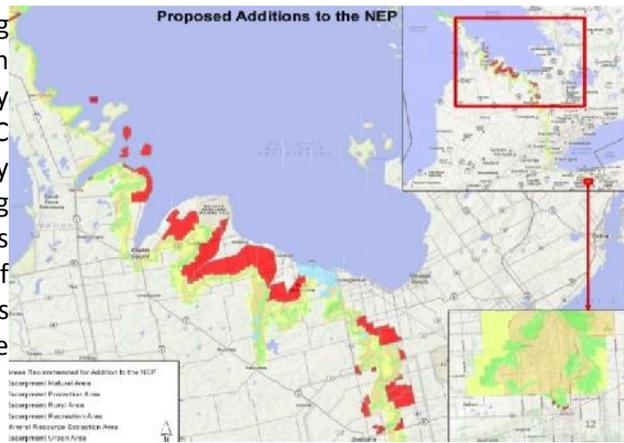
OHBA notes that the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) assessed over 80,000ha and proposed over 45,000ha of additions to the NEP Area, based on a set of criteria related to the purpose and objectives of the plan. It is OHBA's understanding that the proposed additions to the NEP are preliminary and no decisions have been made to add any lands to the area of Development Control under the NEP.

- **OHBA strongly supports the municipal request for additional consultation as a requirement to amend the Regulation under the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act*.**

The affected municipalities from Bruce, Grey, Simcoe and Dufferin met on August 4th to discuss the proposed changes and the proposed expansion to the NEP. OHBA understands that the two main areas of municipal concern were the proposed changes to land use designations and the proposed expansion of the NEP. Some municipalities have indicated that the proposed changes will result in a tax revenue loss as more properties will be eligible for the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program. These municipalities noted that they already have official plans and zoning by-laws that are consistent with the PPS which already ensures that the lands proposed to be added to the NEP would be developed in an appropriate and sustainable manner.

OHBA is supportive of harmonizing the Plans with each other and with the PPS, and clarifying linkages to other policy areas, including aligning terminology, definitions and policy approaches to ensure consistent interpretation and application (e.g. agricultural areas, aggregates). As an example, while the Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan provide proposed policies for the encouragement of excess soil reuse and management, the NEP speaks to the movement and management of 'fill'. A harmonized definition of excess soil, as well as the management of excess soil generated during development or site alteration, should be encouraged throughout all Provincial plans.

A number of municipalities voiced strong opposition to the proposed NEP expansion areas. Some municipalities have stated they do not see the need to expand the NEC boundaries. Concerns were raised by municipalities with respect to existing service delivery by the NEC including delays in the approval of development permits. If the proposed lands were to be added, this could result in further erosion of service delivery.



**OHBA shares these municipal concerns.**

### **Development Control and the NEP Permitting Process**

OHBA is concerned that it is increasingly common for the NEP/NEC permitting process to take in excess of one-year. Businesses, including agriculture, operating within the NEP area need to be flexible and able to quickly respond to changing markets and consumer demands. **OHBA believes that permit review times should be reduced as landowners within the NEP have expressed frustration with a permitting system that in too many cases results in excessive approval times, even for straight-forward applications.** Municipalities may be better positioned to carry out site specific permitting, while the NEP is better positioned to direct land use at a broader scale.

### **NEP Mapping Requirements**

In conjunction with the review of the NEP, the NEC is proposing updated mapping. The proposed new mapping shows an increase in the percentage of NEC plan area designated as Escarpment Natural Area and corresponding reductions in other Plan designations. This designation maintains the most significant natural Escarpment features, stream valleys, wetlands and related significant natural areas and associated cultural heritage features.

- **OHBA recommends that the province ensure that the underlying data used to identify these areas is up to date and correct.**

### **Conclusion**

OHBA continues to support the guiding principles of the Growth Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan and Greenbelt Plans. OHBA notes that these proposed amendments represent the beginning of a process for potential expansion and appropriate adjustment of Greenbelt boundaries. The next steps to generate clear, transparent and science based criteria and an appeals process is critical steps that OHBA looks forward to being consulted on. OHBA further supports the Province allowing for the opportunity to incorporate additional permitted uses in the Greenbelt, outside of the protected key features, based on their ability to enhance other Provincial objectives and where environmental protection has been balanced.

What this consultation fails to recognize is that the Greenbelt can be more than just lines on a map and that there are opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of the existing Greenbelt. Through the creation of a **Smart Greenbelt** there is an opportunity through partnership and active green investment for the Greenbelt to support a wide variety of key public policy objectives from recreational enhancements to biodiversity to fight climate change. Going forward it is important that the Greenbelt Review process continue in a transparent and accountable manner. OHBA appreciates the opportunity to be consulted and looks forward to continuing to work with the Province.

Sincerely,

  
Joe Vaccaro  
CEO  
Ontario Home Builders' Association