

Greenbelt recommendations

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Greenbelt Task Force to study the feasibility of a permanent greenbelt stretching from Niagara Falls to the Kawartha Lakes.

After hearing from more than 1,200 people, receiving over 1,000 submissions and speaking with more than 60 stakeholder groups, the Greenbelt Task Force has created and released a report containing a set of recommendations on the implementation of this permanent greenbelt to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

WE MUST FIND WAYS TO AID OUR FARMERS IN MAINTAINING PROSPEROUS OPERATIONS

The report lays out detailed recommendations for: defining the greenbelt, environmental protection, agricultural protection, transportation and infrastructure, natural resources, culture, recreation and tourism, as well as administration and implementation of the proposed greenbelt. It states that the province must develop a policy and fiscal framework that crosses ministries, saying that "no single ministry can adequately address all the relevant considerations." The report also remarks on the importance of the recently formed Agricultural Advisory Team and any recommendations which that advisory panel may present to the Province. The Greenbelt Task Force's report is clear that agriculture is an important industry in the Golden Horseshoe and must be protected through stringent criteria for urban boundary expansion onto prime agricultural lands. The Task Force also stressed the importance of the ability of these agricultural lands protected under the proposed legislation to support the agricultural economy and related activities. "Farmers in the greenbelt should not, in any way, be disadvantaged in terms of their ability to engage in normal farm practices... We must find ways to aid our farmers in maintaining prosperous operations, to ensure they can continue caring for the agricultural lands that are so vital to this region," says the report, which also states that "protection of the land alone does not ensure agricultural viability, and the Province should pursue complementary initiatives including economic development, research and monitoring, promotion of

agricultural easements and land trusts for farmers who participate in conservation activities and use best practices and management."

THE REPORT DOES NOT ADDRESS THE CONCERNS...BY FARMERS...THAT THEIR PROPERTY VALUES WILL DROP.

The report stresses that the Province should reassure farmers that not only will land uses adjacent to the greenbelt be compatible with greenbelt goals, but also that agricultural land designated for greenbelt protection will not be subject to public right of access. The report does not address the concerns raised by farmers at the public consultations that a permanent greenbelt will see their property values drop, with a consequent inability to secure their present indebtedness but it does suggest a federal and provincial tax incentive program such as a managed forest tax incentive program and a farm property taxation policy. It points out that more than 90 per cent of a Golden Horseshoe greenbelt will be composed of privately owned lands and hints at the possibility of a greenbelt acquisition and stewardship strategy that would guide resource allocations.

The Task Force is also recommending "that areas that have been identified as high potential mineral aggregate sites should be included in the greenbelt." They recommend Provincial clarification on appropriate municipal official plan policies related to new licenses for mineral aggregate extraction, and more rigorous requirements for rehabilitation of quarry sites. More encouragement of the recycling of aggregate materials is also recommended.

Looking at the administration and implementation of a permanent greenbelt, the Task Force is recommending that the greenbelt plan be administered by municipalities, with sufficient resources allocated by the Province.

The greenbelt study area includes the regions of Durham, York, Halton and Peel, the cities of Toronto and Hamilton, the tender fruit and grape lands in the Region of Niagara's official plan, the Niagara Escarpment Area and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. In

its report of recommendations, the Greenbelt Task Force proclaimed itself "constrained geographically" and recommends consideration of additional natural and cultural heritage resources and systems beyond the study area. The Task Force concludes it's recommendations with an acknowledgement that the job of creating a permanent legacy in the form of a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt is still just beginning, with more detail required by provincial staff who are expected to draw on the expertise of stakeholders and others. The report then concludes that "with the moratorium on changes from rural to urban land uses in the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004 due to sunset on December 16, 2004, the process will be condensed out of necessity."

Nearly There

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located behind the property at Bronte Road. At the time, the lagoons were acceptable as a form of environmental control, but with changes in acceptable practices and standards the company had to consider cleaning up the lagoons to meet environmental regulations. Mark Rabbior, a spokesperson with the MOE, says his ministry is "satisfied with the recent action the company has taken." He noted that the decommissioning project "will remove the sludge material from the property."

Robertson Inc. maintains its head office at the Bronte Road location now and plated parts are manufactured outside Canada at the company's plant in China.

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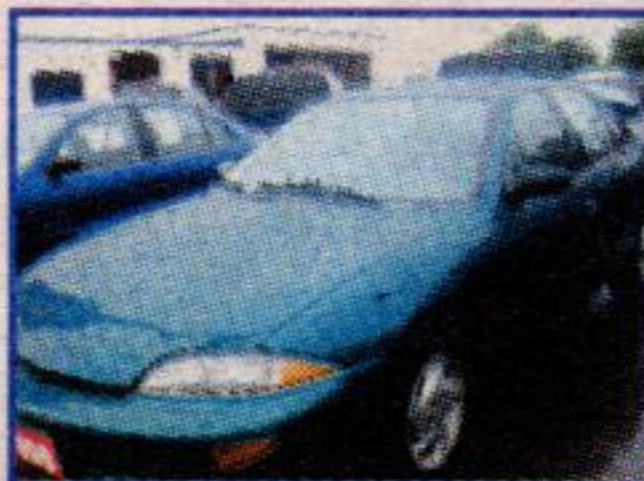
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