

Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt

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| Posted by | Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing |
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This consultation closes at 11:59 p.m.

on:

April 19, 2021

Proposal summary

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is seeking feedback on ways to grow the size of the Greenbelt.

Proposal details

The government has been clear that we are protecting the Greenbelt from development for future generations. The Greenbelt is home to much of Ontario's vital environmental, groundwater and agricultural resources. That's why in the government's 2020 Budget, we pledged to expand the size of the Greenbelt.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is seeking feedback on ways to grow the size and further enhance the quality of the Greenbelt, with a priority of:

- i. A study area of lands focussed on the Paris Galt Moraine, which is home to critical groundwater resources
- ii. Ideas for adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys

The maps available for this consultation are for discussion purposes only and do not represent a proposed boundary.

Context

The Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, have worked together for over 15 years to provide a framework for where and how growth should be accommodated in southern Ontario. The Greenbelt Area includes lands covered by the policies of the Greenbelt Plan, as well as the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Collectively, these plans identify where urbanization should not occur. The plans provide permanent protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological and hydrological features, areas and functions within the Greater Golden Horseshoe and beyond. They work together with A Place to Grow, which provides the overarching strategy for where and how growth can be accommodated in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Established under the *Greenbelt Act, 2005*, the Greenbelt is a broad band of protected land that:

- Protects against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and supports agriculture as the predominant land use
- Gives protection to the natural heritage and water resource systems that sustain ecological and human health and that form the environmental framework around which major urbanization in south-central Ontario will be organized
- Provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses
- Builds resilience to and mitigates climate change
- Allows critical new infrastructure and upgrades to existing infrastructure needed to serve the substantial growth projected for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, to be permitted subject to strong environmental conditions

Principles for Growing the Greenbelt Expansions

1. No consideration of removal requests or land exchanges
 - This proposal is about growing the size and quality of the Greenbelt, and the government will not consider the removal of any lands from the Greenbelt.
2. No consideration of policy changes

- Any potential expansions will be based on existing policies. The province will not reduce existing protections in the Greenbelt.
3. Supports Greenbelt Plan objectives, vision and goals
 - Lands to be considered for addition support the Greenbelt Plan's objectives, vision and goals of providing permanent protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological and hydrological features, areas and functions occurring on this landscape and providing for the inclusion of publicly owned lands in urban river valleys.
 4. Follows Existing Amendment Process
 - The *Greenbelt Act, 2005* sets out the legislated public process that will apply to any proposed Greenbelt Plan amendments. This would include requiring consultation with affected public bodies such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Greenbelt Council, municipalities in the Greenbelt Area, an opportunity for consultation with general public, as well as ensuring any proposed amendment does not reduce the total land area within the Greenbelt Plan. Engaging with Indigenous communities would also occur before any amendments are made.
 5. Connects physically and/or functionally to the current Greenbelt
 - The Greenbelt is meant to be a continuous broad band of permanently protected land. Any expansions shall build upon the systems approach of the Greenbelt Plan and should be directly connected or have a strong functional connection through the Greenbelt's natural heritage, water resource or agricultural systems to not create unconnected islands of Greenbelt land.
 6. Considers impacts on existing provincial priorities
 - As discussed below, expansions to the Greenbelt must consider their effects on other key provincial priorities outlined in the Provincial Policy Statement and A Place to Grow.

Initial Focus Areas

Since its establishment in 2005, there has been much discussion by a broad range of Ontarians on ways to grow the Greenbelt. With this input in mind, the government has some early ideas on where and how to grow the Greenbelt. Feedback is sought on the following areas:

1. **A Study Area of the Paris Galt Moraine (see link to Map 1 in Supporting Materials below)**
 - The Paris Galt Moraine is an important feature that runs roughly from Caledon in the northeast to Brantford in the southwest. Similar to the

Oak Ridges Moraine, it is an area of rolling, hilly terrain that is the headwaters for many rivers and streams flowing off of it. Comprised of sand and gravel deposits, it 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. Moraines allow rain and snowmelt to soak into the ground more rapidly and in much greater amounts than the surrounding, less permeable areas. This process provides a reliable, slowly changing supply of water called baseflow to rivers and streams.

- The map of the Paris Galt Moraine is for discussion purposes only and does not represent a proposed boundary.

2. **Urban River Valleys (see link to Map 2 in Supporting Materials below)**

- The Urban River Valley designation in the Greenbelt Plan applies to lands in river valleys within an urban context, connecting the Greenbelt's protected countryside lands to the Great Lakes and inland lakes (e.g. (for example), Don River, Duffins Creek, Twelve Mile Creek). The policies apply only to publicly owned lands within this designation and are often lands designated in municipal official plans as parks, open space, recreation, conservation and/or environmental protection. The Greenbelt currently includes 21 Urban River Valleys and associated coastal wetlands. There may be opportunities for additional urban river valleys to be added or existing ones to be expanded to include additional publicly owned land. The government is seeking feedback for adding new or expanding existing Urban River Valleys, including:
 - Connections to the Paris Galt Moraine through the Speed and Eramosa Rivers in the urban areas of Guelph and Cambridge
 - Ideas for adding other municipally supported Urban River Valleys and/or additions of publicly owned land to existing Urban River Valleys (e.g. (for example), where appropriate increasing the 60-m offset from the water's edge to include more public valley lands)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1:

- **What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of the Study Area of the Paris Galt Moraine?**

Question 2:

- **What are the considerations in moving from a Study Area to a more defined boundary of the Paris Galt Moraine?**

Question 3:

- **What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys?**

Question 4:

- **Do you have suggestions for other potential areas to grow the Greenbelt?**

Other Provincial Priorities

In deciding on where and how to possibly grow the Greenbelt, we must also consider other key provincial priorities that could be impacted. These key provincial priorities include:

Growth Management – Overall, the Greenbelt Plan broadly identifies where urbanization should not occur and A Place to Grow directs the majority of growth to fully serviced settlement areas. Currently, municipalities are working towards updating their official plans by 2022 to conform with the revised growth forecasts in Schedule 3 of A Place to Grow. Therefore, Greenbelt expansion needs to be considered in the context of these growth management exercises by municipalities.

Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems – The Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow are aligned with and build on the Provincial Policy Statement to provide policy protection for natural heritage and water resource systems, features and areas, including habitat for endangered and threatened species. Both the Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow contain policies supporting and protecting a Natural Heritage System that is made up of these natural features and areas along with the linkages that connect them together. Similarly, policies in these plans protect water resource systems on a watershed basis, with the Greenbelt incorporating significant headwaters, river corridors, wetlands and other features.

Agriculture – The Greater Golden Horseshoe contains some of Canada's best agricultural land. Both the Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow have policies supporting and protecting an Agricultural System that is comprised of an

agricultural land base (prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, and other productive lands that form a continuous land base for agriculture) and an agri-food network (infrastructure, services and assets that support the agri-food sector).

Infrastructure – Both the Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow recognize that new infrastructure and upgrades to existing infrastructure will be needed to serve the substantial growth projected for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Infrastructure, including highways to sewage and water treatment plants to corridors for transit and utilities, is permitted in these plans subject to certain conditions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 5:

- How should we balance or prioritize any potential Greenbelt expansion with the other provincial priorities mentioned above?

Question 6:

- Are there other priorities that should be considered?

Supporting materials

Related files

[Paris Galt Moraine Study Area Map \(high resolution\)](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20Paris%20Galt%20Moraine%20Study%20Area%20Map%20FINAL.pdf)
(<https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20Paris%20Galt%20Moraine%20Study%20Area%20Map%20FINAL.pdf>)
pdf.(Portable.Document.Format.file) 2.91 MB

[Urban River Valleys Map \(high resolution\)](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20URV%20Map%20FINAL.pdf)
(<https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20URV%20Map%20FINAL.pdf>)
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[Paris Galt Moraine Study Area Map \(low resolution\)](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20Paris%20Galt%20Moraine%20Study%20Area%20Map%20FINAL.pdf)
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pdf.(Portable.Document.Format.file) 547.33 KB

[Urban River Valleys Map \(low resolution\) \(https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20URV%20Map%20FINAL%20300dpi%20%281%29.pdf\)](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20URV%20Map%20FINAL%20300dpi%20%281%29.pdf)
pdf.(Portable.Document.Format.file) 618.19 KB

Related links

[Greenbelt Plan \(https://www.ontario.ca/document/greenbelt-plan-2017\)](https://www.ontario.ca/document/greenbelt-plan-2017)

[A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe \(https://www.ontario.ca/document/place-grow-growth-plan-greater-golden-horseshoe\)](https://www.ontario.ca/document/place-grow-growth-plan-greater-golden-horseshoe)

View materials in person

Important notice: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, viewing supporting materials in person is not available at this time.

Please reach out to the Contact listed in this notice to see if alternate arrangements can be made.

Let us know what you think of our proposal.

Have questions? Get in touch with the contact person below. Please include the ERO (Environmental Registry of Ontario) number for this notice in your email or letter to the contact.

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