



Hon. Ted McMeekin
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay St., 17th Flr
Toronto, Ontario
M5G2E5

Hon. Bill Mauro
Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
99 Wellesley St. W, 6th Flr Rm 6630
Toronto, Ontario
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February 9, 2016

Dear Minister McMeekin and Minister Mauro,

On behalf of Earthroots, EcoSpark, Ontario Nature and Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) Coalition, we are writing today asking you to champion important issues that directly align with your ministerial portfolios and will ensure long term protection for the water, land and communities of the Greater Golden Horseshoe. We commend both of your ministries in leading a thoughtful, informative and thorough Coordinated Land Use Planning Review thus far and hope that with your leadership, this review will leave a positive legacy for future generations of Ontarians.

As the government develops amendments and announcements for the next phase of the Coordinated Land Use Planning Review, we urge you to commit to: 1) growing the Greenbelt to protect highly vulnerable water resources and valuable source water areas; and 2) extending natural heritage systems protection throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Growing the Greenbelt and extending natural heritage systems protection throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe are complementary ways of conserving vulnerable water resources and enhancing landscape health and resilience in the face of climate change and increasing development pressures in this densely populated region. They will ensure that important ecosystem services, such as flood control, water filtration, soil retention, pollination and climate regulation, are maintained and protected in perpetuity. In particular, our organizations are urging your government to ensure any proposed amendments brought forward include the following:

1. A list of the features and areas where the government intends to grow the Greenbelt. These are to include: key headwater features, significant ground and surface water features, source water areas and urban river valley connections (please see map and excerpt from our May 28, 2015 EBR submission attached). This list should be part of a plan that sets out an ambitious timeframe (we recommend six months) to map the features and areas listed.
2. A process with clear and ambitious timelines and assigned roles and responsibilities through which the Province will work with municipalities, Indigenous communities,

conservation authorities and stakeholders to identify and protect natural heritage systems throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This process should follow a mapping protocol similar to that used to identify the natural core and linkage areas of the Oak Ridges Moraine and the natural heritage system of the Greenbelt. It should build off existing municipal natural heritage systems with consideration for regional scale connectivity (see excerpt from our May 28, 2015 EBR submission attached).

Our four organizations have been active throughout this review connecting with experts, local advocates and organizations, agricultural leaders, representatives of the development industry and others to provide thoughtful and practical recommendations. The priorities outlined above have broad support and have been echoed in the submissions to the government by the 120 members of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, 32 members of Ontario Nature's Nature Network and the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation. As well, the Advisory Panel's recommendations 43 and 71 of their report, *Planning for Health Prosperity and Growth*, support growing the Greenbelt and protecting the region's natural heritage systems.

We thank you for considering this request and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience to elaborate on our recommendations.

Sincerely,



Amber Ellis



Joyce Chau



Caroline Schultz



Debbe Crandall



Cc:

Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario

Hon. Jim Bradley, Chair of Cabinet

Excerpt from May 28, 2015 submission to Richard Stromberg Re: Co-ordinated Review of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan (EBR: 012-3256):

Grow the Greenbelt to protect vulnerable water supply areas adjacent to the Greenbelt, including: 1) key headwater features, 2) significant ground water recharge areas, 3) important surface water, and 4) urban river valley connections. Through discussion with community groups throughout the GGH, these expansions of the Greenbelt should include: headwater features of Carruthers Creek, the Humber River and the Rouge River; the Paris-Galt Moraine, Waterloo Moraine, Orangeville Moraine and Oro Moraine; The Lake Iroquois Shoreline; Lake Gibson; and urban river valley connections.

RATIONALE

Growing the Greenbelt will be an important outcome of this review. We are pleased to see that the government is seeking the public's advice on where to expand the Greenbelt. We note that this goal was also listed in the Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Municipal and Affairs and Housing. This review represents an important opportunity to include and protect areas with high ecological and hydrological significance in the Greenbelt. Greenbelt policies have proven very effective in protecting the region's natural heritage system and features. For example, according to a report by Ducks Unlimited Canada, Earthroots, EcoJustice and Ontario Nature (2012), there was "clear evidence that land-use policy in effect across the Greenbelt is protecting wetlands from most forms of development." Local experts and community groups throughout the GGH have identified many areas where the Greenbelt should be expanded to provide the same high level of protection. These include:

1. Key headwater features of Carruthers Creek, the Humber River and the Rouge River. These headwater features are extremely sensitive areas that reduce downstream flooding and provide critical habitat for native plants and animals.
2. Significant ground water recharge areas, including:
 - The Paris-Galt, Waterloo, Orangeville, Oro moraines. These moraines play an important role in groundwater recharge and in filtering and maintaining drinking water for many communities throughout the GGH. They also provide important habitat functions and migratory corridors for wildlife.
 - The Lake Iroquois shoreline which includes many features that provide important groundwater functions and help sustain groundwater base flow. The shoreline plain and beach features represent an important ecological corridor, extending east through Northumberland and into Prince Edward County.

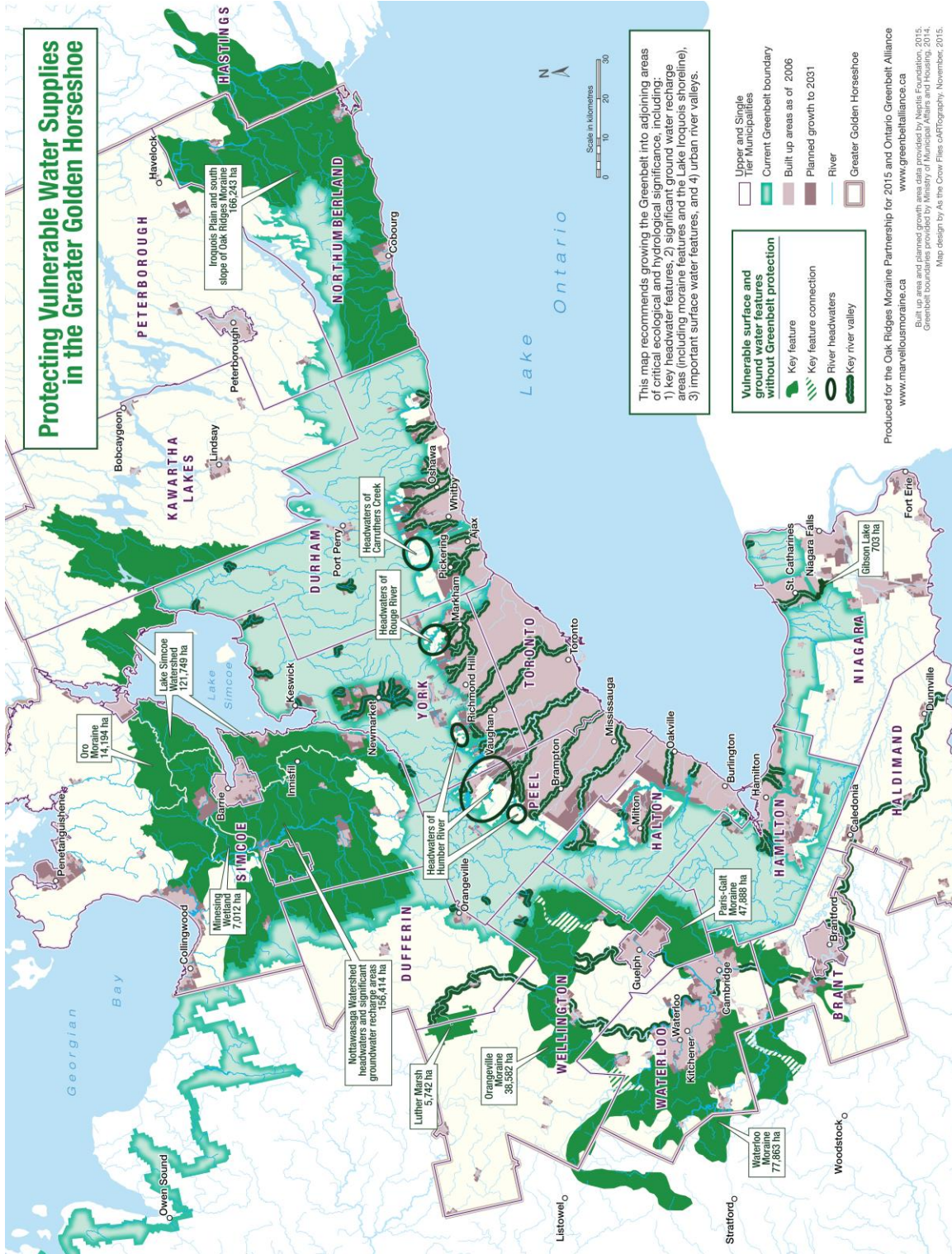
3. Surface water (including Lake Gibson): Lake Gibson supplies drinking water to half of Niagara Region, including St. Catharines, and is an important source of cold water brook trout streams.
4. Urban river valley connections (including the 14 and 16 Mile Creeks, Credit River, Etobicoke Creek, Humber River, Don River, Rouge River, Duffins and Carruthers Creeks, Lynde, Oshawa and Harmony Creeks, and Bomanville and Soper Creeks). These provide important physical, ecological and hydrological connections between the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine, and Lake Ontario, enabling wildlife movement and adaptation, and increasing the resilience of downstream areas to climate change.

RECOMMENDATION:

This review is a great opportunity to expand Greenbelt protection into adjoining areas of high ecological and hydrological value in order to ensure the GGH's critical source water lands are protected. Important places to grow the Greenbelt include headwater features of Caruthers Creek, the east Humber and the Rouge River; the Paris-Galt Moraine, Waterloo Moraine, and Oro Moraine; the Lake Iroquois Shoreline; Lake Gibson; and urban river valley connections between the Greenbelt and Lake Ontario. These areas should be clearly delineated in mapping layers that are produced by MMAH, in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and relevant municipalities.

Recommendation: Amend the Greenbelt Plan 'Schedule 1: Greenbelt Plan Area' and all other associated schedules to include headwater features of Caruthers Creek, the Humber River and the Rouge River; the Paris-Galt Moraine, Waterloo Moraine, Orangeville Moraine and Oro Moraine; the Lake Iroquois Shoreline; Lake Gibson; and Urban River Valley connections (See Map: "Protecting Vulnerable Water Supplied in the Greater Golden Horseshoe" attached)

** Map: *Protecting Vulnerable Water Supplies in the Greater Golden Horseshoe* updated November, 2015



Establish a regional Natural Heritage System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

RATIONALE

A protected and connected natural heritage system throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) is vital to conserving landscape health and resilience in the face of ongoing biodiversity loss and the impacts of climate change. It will help ensure we have clean air, clean water and a rich diversity of plant and animal life to sustain present and future generations.

Establishing a protected natural heritage system throughout the GGH is necessary to ensure that important ecosystem services, which benefit all GGH communities, are preserved and enhanced in this densely populated region. These ecosystem services include the provisioning of clean water, the regulating of floods, water storage, soil formation, prevention of soil erosion, carbon sequestration, and the enabling of outdoor recreation. They have been conservatively valued at over \$2.6 billion/year within the Greenbelt area (David Suzuki Foundation, 2008) and over \$84 billion for southern and eastern Ontario (Troy and Bagstad, 2009).

In terms of policy commitments, a protected natural heritage system throughout the GGH will help the Province meet commitments made in the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy, including especially target 13:

By 2020, at least 17 percent of terrestrial and aquatic systems are conserved through well-connected networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (Ontario Biodiversity Council, 2011).

Such a system will also help achieve the Province's vision for the region as laid out in the Growth Plan, section 1.2.1: "a healthy natural environment with clean air, land and water will characterize the GGH ... the GGH's rivers, streams, forests and natural areas will be protected and accessible for residents to enjoy their beauty."

Protecting natural heritage systems ensures we are planning for more prosperous, healthy and resilient communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To establish a regional Natural Heritage System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe the government should revise and implement section 4.2.1 of the Growth Plan. Currently the Growth Plan policy 4.2.1 contains language intended to lead to the identification and protection of natural systems through *sub-area* assessments. To date, however, this has not been implemented.

To drive implementation and ensure that the intent of the policy is realized, the policy should be revised to assign clear responsibility to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to include a fixed deadline for completion of the sub-area assessments.

Recommendation: Revise existing Growth Plan policies to assign responsibility for the identification and protection of a regional natural heritage system across the GGH to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Amend section 4.2.1(1) of the Growth Plan to read:

1. Through *sub-area* assessments, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing ~~the Minister of Infrastructure and other Ministers of the Crown~~, in consultation with other Ministers of the Crown and with municipalities and other stakeholders, **shall** identify ~~natural systems~~ a regional *natural heritage system*, including *Key Natural Heritage Features and Key Hydrologic Features*,) for the GGH, ~~and where appropriate and shall~~ develop additional policies for its protection.

Add new policy 4.2.1(2) to the Growth Plan to read:

2. For lands within the *natural heritage system* and identified *Key Natural Heritage Features and Key Hydrologic Features* of the GGH the policies of the Greenbelt Plan shall apply.

Amend section 5.3 (4) of the Growth Plan to read:

“The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing ~~The Minister of Infrastructure~~ will work with ...”

“4. *Sub-area* assessments at a regional scale **shall** be completed within twelve months following completion of the 2015 Coordinated Land-use Review, focusing on -- ...”

“d) Identification and protection of the ~~natural systems~~ *natural heritage system*”

Add the following new definitions to section 7 of the Growth Plan:

Natural heritage system: as defined in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2014 (PPS)

Key Natural Heritage Features: as defined in the Greenbelt Plan, 2005

Key Hydrologic Features: as defined in the Greenbelt Plan, 2005

Recommendation: Revise the Greenbelt Plan to assign responsibility to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to: consider impact of activities, promote and undertake appropriate planning, and undertake watershed based planning that relates to these areas identified as *external connections*.

Amend section 3.2.5 of the Greenbelt Plan to read:

“...To support the connections between the Greenbelt’s Natural System and the local, regional and broader scale natural heritage systems of southern Ontario, such as the Lake Ontario shoreline, including its remaining coastal *wetlands*, the Lake Iroquois shoreline, the Great Lakes Coast, Lake Simcoe, the Kawartha Highlands, the Carolinian Zone and the Algonquin to Adirondack Corridor, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in consultation with the federal government, municipalities, conservation authorities, other agencies and stakeholders, **shall**: ...”