### SUBJECT:
Growing the Greenbelt – Comments on Proposed Provincial Criteria (City Wide) (PED08108) – Referred from City Council of March 26, 2008

### RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That City Council inform the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing that the City supports the six proposed criteria, in principle, but would request the Ministry to include specific requirements (i.e. what groups, minimum number of public meetings) for public consultation to ensure a transparent and equitable process across all municipalities.

(b) That Report PED08108 be forwarded to the four Conservation Authorities for their information.

(c) That the request of Council of March 26, 2008, to consider correspondence from the Hon. Jim Watson, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, regarding the Growing the Greenbelt – Consultation 2008, be identified as complete and removed from the Economic Development and Planning Outstanding Business List.

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Tim McCabe  
General Manager  
Planning and Economic Development Department
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Province of Ontario introduced the Greenbelt Plan in 2005. The purpose of this plan was to permanently protect agricultural land, natural heritage and water systems and provide for economic and social activities for rural communities.

The Province recognizes there may be municipal requests to expand the Greenbelt Plan area, so they are introducing six criteria (each criterion has a set of requirements) that must be met prior to approval of any expansions. Deletions from the Plan are not permitted. Comments on the six proposed criteria are being sought from a variety of groups including municipalities, Conservation Authorities, (CAs) aboriginal communities and the public by April 30. Since the deadline for submission has passed, staff have forwarded a letter indicating their support for the criteria however, these comments are draft pending Council approval.

The criteria (including a series of requirements) seek to ensure any additions to the Greenbelt Plan area enhances its Vision and Goals (i.e. protection of agricultural and natural resources), other Provincial initiatives are met (i.e. growth plan targets, source water protection) and adequate public consultation by the municipality has occurred.

Staff has reviewed the proposed criteria/requirements and are satisfied they are thorough and represent a broad spectrum of planning needs. The one suggestion is the requirement for public consultation should direct which groups must be consulted and the minimum number of public meetings so as to ensure the process is transparent and equitable across all municipalities.

BACKGROUND:

In 2005, the Province introduced the Greenbelt Plan. The Plan encompasses a large band of land that supports the protection of agricultural and protects against the loss and fragmentation of agricultural lands; the natural heritage and water resources; and, supports economic, recreational, tourism and cultural opportunities for the rural community.

Implementation of the Plan is a responsibility of both the Province and municipalities.

1. Municipalities are required to bring their Official Plans (OPs) and zoning by-laws into conformity with the Greenbelt Plan. The City’s new Rural OP, once approved, will be deemed to be in conformity.

2. The Province has committed to reviewing the Plan in 2015. In the interim, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) has developed a set of draft criteria that municipalities could use should they choose to add additional land to the Greenbelt prior to 2015. Comments on the proposed criteria/requirements are the subject of this Report PED08108.
Extent of the Greenbelt Plan in Hamilton

The Greenbelt Plan is made up of three components: the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan and the Protected Countryside designation.

There are approximately 89,783 ha of the land is located in rural area of Hamilton. The breakdown of the rural land area; between the Greenbelt Plan and the Places to Grow Plan is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provincial Plan Jurisdiction</th>
<th># of acres</th>
<th>% of land area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Escarpment Plan Area:</td>
<td>7,837 ha</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected Country Side*:</td>
<td>74,873 ha</td>
<td>(83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places to Grow:</td>
<td>7,074 ha</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Rural Area:</strong></td>
<td>89,784 ha</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GIS Layers – Planning and Economic Development Department

Appendix “A” to Report PED08108 identifies the lands that are designated as Protected Countryside, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and Places to Grow Growth Plan.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

Process for Comments

The draft criteria have been circulated for comments to municipalities, CAs, aboriginal communities, stakeholders and the public. The deadline for submission is April 30, 2008. Based on the input received, MMAH will refine the criteria.

Draft Criteria

The purpose of the criteria is to establish a protocol which would allow municipalities to request the Province to add additional land to the Greenbelt. There are six proposed criteria and associated requirements (see Appendix “B” o this Report). The additions must:

1. be a request initiated by the municipality;
2. embrace the Greenbelt purpose (i.e. balance the needs of the communities while protecting the agricultural land and Natural Heritage System);
3. be a logical extension to the Greenbelt Plan (i.e. ensure no deletions from the Plan, and that land is contiguous);
4. connect to the Greenbelt system (i.e. build on the environmental and agricultural systems);
5. complement the Places to Grow Growth Plan; and,

6. complement the timing and relationship to other Provincial initiatives (i.e. allow source water protection plans to be completed.)

The process is the municipality prepares a report that addresses all the criteria, presents the report to the public for input, and then submits to City Council for approval, prior to the submission to the Province.

Comments

The proposed criteria for growing the Greenbelt are balanced, thorough and represent its Vision and Goals. There are a number of requirements municipalities must fulfill prior to the Province granting the request for an addition. The technical requirements (i.e. meeting growth targets, proof the addition supports agricultural and natural resource protection) which are associated with the criteria can be satisfied with limited additional work by staff. The most extensive requirement would be the extent and amount of public consultation required. The requirement attached to this criteria must be detailed (i.e. number of public meetings, the groups to consult - CAs, aboriginal communities) to ensure transparency and equity across municipalities. Therefore, staff supports the initiative by the Province subject to more detailed requirements for public consultation.

At this point, it is unclear how the process unfolds at the provincial level once a request for the additional land has been received. For example, are there rights of appeal should a landowner disagree with the municipality’s request? Staff will monitor the Growing a Greenbelt process for any additional information.

Additions to the Greenbelt Plan in Hamilton

At the present time, there is no need to add additional land in Hamilton to the Greenbelt Plan for a number of reasons:

1. 92% of the total rural land is within the Greenbelt Plan;

2. the new Rural OP supports the Visions and goals of the Greenbelt Plan even through some of the lands are outside the designated Protected Countryside; and,

3. a large portion of the rural lands that are outside the Greenbelt Plan and Airport Employment Growth District Study Area are subject to the Airport noise contours and therefore, have a limited range of uses and will continue to be used for agricultural purposes in the longer term.
Conclusions:

Based on the foregoing,

(a) City Council inform the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing the City supports the six proposed criteria, in principle, but would request the Ministry to include specific requirements (i.e. what groups, minimum number of public meetings) for public consultation to ensure a transparent and equitable process across all municipalities.

(b) Report PED08108 be forwarded to the four CAs for their information.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

Another alternative is the City does not provide any comments on the proposed criteria for growing the Greenbelt. However, it is expected that the Province will proceed with its legislation regardless.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial: N/A
Staffing: N/A
Legal: N/A

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

The intent of the Province is to grow the Greenbelt Plan area wherever possible. They have provided criteria upon which it evaluates whether the additional greenbelt lands are appropriate.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Given the short turn around time for comments, staff has spoken verbally to other Divisions within the Planning and Economic Development Department.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
The proposed criteria include a component on the public consultation. Staff is requesting this component be further refined to be more prescriptive.
Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
The proposed criteria take a balanced approach (environmental, social and economic) to adding lands to the Greenbelt Plan area. One of the Plan’s strengths is the protection of the natural environment.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
The proposed criteria take a balanced approach (environmental, social and economic) to adding lands to the Greenbelt Plan area. Another one of the Plan’s strengths is the protection and strengthening of the agricultural land base.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?
☑ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?
☐ Yes ☐ No

N/A

JHE:dkm
Attachs. (2)
INTRODUCTION

Ontarians have come to cherish the Greenbelt since it was created in February 2005. It protects 1.8 million acres of environmentally sensitive and agricultural land around the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Moving forward, growing the Greenbelt can improve Ontarians’ quality of life.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has developed some draft criteria for public consideration in order to accommodate potential requests to grow the Greenbelt.

This booklet provides some background information about the Greenbelt and its creation, and outlines draft criteria that could be used by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to consider municipal requests to expand the existing Greenbelt. Comments and suggestions on these draft criteria are welcome.

BACKGROUND

Providing agricultural and environmental protection, the Greenbelt also contains important natural resources and supports a wide range of recreational, tourism and cultural opportunities.

The Greenbelt helps protect the water we drink and the air we breathe. It offers greenspaces to enjoy hiking and skiing. It preserves farmland so that future generations can enjoy food that is grown and raised close to home.
The Greenbelt includes the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and land that is known as “Protected Countryside” and lies at the heart of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The Greenbelt is the cornerstone of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan, Ontario’s over-arching strategy for managing growth for the area. The Greenbelt Plan identifies where major urban growth cannot take place. The Growth Plan directs most growth to existing urban areas, away from environmentally sensitive and prime agricultural areas.

**THE GREENBELT ACT AND PLAN**

The Greenbelt Plan and Greenbelt boundary were established under the Greenbelt Act, 2005. The act allows only the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to propose amendments to the Plan. Only Ontario Cabinet can approve those proposals.

Decisions on planning applications must conform to the Greenbelt Plan. Municipalities are also required to bring their planning documents (e.g. official plans) into conformity with the Plan.

The act requires a comprehensive policy review of the Greenbelt Plan every 10 years. The review must be co-ordinated with the reviews of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. The first 10-year review is to take place by 2015.

The act also required the government to create the Greenbelt Council, an advisory body to the Minister on Greenbelt matters. The Greenbelt Council provides advice to the Minister on both the 10-year review and any proposed amendments to the Plan.

This consultation on the draft criteria is not intended to replace the 10-year review, or limit the ability of the Minister to propose any other amendments to the Plan. Amendments to the Plan would follow the legislative process outlined in the act.

**GREENBELT VISION**

The Greenbelt is a broad band of permanently protected land which:

- Protects against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and supports agriculture as the predominant land use;
- Gives permanent 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; and
• Provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses.

**GREENBELT GOALS**

To enhance our urban and rural areas and overall quality of life by promoting the following matters within the Protected Countryside:

1. Agricultural protection
2. Environmental protection
3. Culture, recreation and tourism
4. Settlement areas
5. Infrastructure and natural resources

Please refer to the Greenbelt Plan for more information on the Greenbelt’s goals.

**GREENBELT FACTS**

• The Greenbelt includes about 1 million acres of protected land in addition to the land protected by the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan. The total area of protected land in the Golden Horseshoe is now 1.8 million acres – an area larger than Prince Edward Island.

• The Greenbelt extends 325 kilometres from the eastern end of the Oak Ridges Moraine near Rice Lake, to the Niagara River in the west. It is about 80 kilometres wide at its widest point from the mouth of the Rouge River to the northern tip of Durham Region.

• The Greenbelt’s Protected Countryside natural heritage system is about 535,000 acres in land area and provides full protection for about three-quarters of the lakes, wetlands and forests in the Greenbelt.

• The Greenbelt brings under the Plan the headwaters of all major watersheds in the western Greater Toronto Area that were not protected by the Niagara Escarpment or Oak Ridges Moraine plans.

• The Greenbelt permanently protects about 100,000 acres of Niagara Peninsula tender fruit and grape specialty crop areas and the entire Holland Marsh specialty crop area of over 15,000 acres, located in York Region and Simcoe County.
INTRODUCTION TO DRAFT CRITERIA

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, working in partnership with other provincial ministries, has developed draft criteria to consider municipal requests to grow the Greenbelt. The ministry is looking for feedback on the following six criteria.

1. Municipal Request

Requests for growing the Greenbelt from regional, county and single-tier municipal governments will be considered.

A municipality requesting to expand the Greenbelt should address the following questions:

• Is the request supported by regional, county or single-tier municipal council?
• Does the request identify the geographic area within the municipality to be considered for addition to the Greenbelt?
• What specific measures has council taken to engage the public and key stakeholder organizations about growing the Greenbelt in its municipality?
• What specific measures has council taken to engage Aboriginal communities about growing the Greenbelt in its municipality?
• Is there consensus among a region or county and its lower-tiers affected by the proposal? Is the request supported by council resolutions?
• Has the municipality provided a supporting rationale as to how the criteria have been met?

2. Embraces Greenbelt Purpose

The Greenbelt establishes its main purpose through the vision and goals outlined on pages 2 and 3. Proposed expansions to the Greenbelt must recognize its key role in guiding land use planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and seek to maintain this purpose.

• Does the proposed expansion protect environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands while meeting the needs of growing communities?
• Is it consistent with the vision and goals of the Greenbelt Plan?

3. Additions to the Greenbelt

Greenbelt additions should be logical extensions to its existing area. New lands to be added should be easily connected and not create isolated patches. Further, the Greenbelt Act, 2005 provides that the Greenbelt’s area cannot be reduced through an amendment.

• Is the proposed expansion next to the existing Greenbelt?
• Does the proposed expansion consist only of additions to the Greenbelt and not include deletions?
4. Connections to Greenbelt Systems

The Protected Countryside was built using a provincial-scale ‘systems approach’ described in detail on page 6. Requests to grow the Greenbelt should connect to and build upon this framework that established the original Greenbelt.

• Is the proposed expansion based on a provincial-scale systems approach that formed the original Greenbelt (as opposed to local or regional scales)?
• Does the proposed expansion build upon the Greenbelt’s natural heritage system?
• Does the proposed expansion build upon the Greenbelt’s agricultural system?
• Does the proposed expansion build upon the Greenbelt’s water resource system?

5. Complement Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan

The Growth Plan sets a framework for managing growth and revitalizing existing urban communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. It also steers growth away from environmentally sensitive and prime agricultural areas. The Greenbelt Plan identifies where major urban growth cannot take place. To implement the Growth Plan’s policies, municipalities are required to update their official plans by June 2009.

• Does the proposed expansion complement the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan?
• Will affected municipalities be able to bring their official plans into conformity with the Growth Plan if the proposed Greenbelt expansion occurs?

6. Timing and Relationship to Other Provincial Initiatives

There are a number of provincial initiatives affecting the Greater Golden Horseshoe including broader transportation/transit planning, protection of water resources and planning for future growth.

Does the request for growing the Greenbelt complement and support these ongoing provincial initiatives? (E.g. Does it allow for the completion of Source Protection Plans under the Clean Water Act, 2006?)
BUILDING THE GREENBELT BY LAYERS

The process of building the Greenbelt in 2004/05 involved extensive consultation and collaboration. It was led by the Greenbelt Task Force, an advisory group that conducted public meetings and reported back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in August 2004. The Greenbelt Plan was drafted based on the Task Force’s recommendations and advice. For more information on those recommendations, please review the Task Force’s report “Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt” at www.mah.gov.on.ca/GreenbeltTaskForce.

The provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was developed at the same time as the Greenbelt Plan in order to consider the amount of land required to meet the needs of growing communities.

The Greenbelt Plan

The Oak Ridges Moraine Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan form the backbone of the Greenbelt. The Greenbelt’s natural heritage system includes and builds on the natural heritage systems in the moraine and the escarpment.

The final Greenbelt boundary was determined by identifying a natural heritage system and defining an agricultural system. The government also considered the amount of land required to accommodate anticipated growth. Together, these components form the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt.

The natural heritage system identified major core areas containing high concentrations of natural features and linking areas that ecologically connect the core areas. Major valley corridors of rivers flowing from the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment also provide links from the Greenbelt to Lake Ontario.

The agricultural system was identified based on a number of factors including the Greenbelt Land Evaluation Area Review (LEAR) study, the existing pattern of agriculturally protected lands set out in municipal official plans and a consideration of projected future growth patterns. The LEAR method uses a scoring system and considers a number of potential factors such as soils, climate, productivity and land fragmentation. Studies were also done to identify two Specialty Crop Areas: the Niagara Peninsula tender fruit and grape area and the Holland Marsh.
Greater Golden Horseshoe

Legend
- Greenbelt Plan Area
- Growth Plan Area
- Municipalities outside Growth Plan Area
- Approved Urban Areas
- Major Highways

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Growing the Greenbelt February 2008
Comments and Feedback

We want to hear from you on the proposed criteria for considering Greenbelt expansions. Your input will help build a clear approach for considering expansions to the Greenbelt.

Send your comments to:
Growing the Greenbelt
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
14th floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5
Phone: 416-585-6014
Fax: 416-585-4245
Email: greenbelt@ontario.ca
Comments must be received by April 30, 2008.

Other Resources

For more information on the Greenbelt, how it was built and other supporting and complementary programs and initiatives, visit:
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
www.mah.gov.on.ca

Greenbelt
www.greenbelt.ontario.ca
Greenbelt Council
www.mah.gov.on.ca/greenbeltcouncil

Ministry of Natural Resources
www.mnr.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal – Places to Grow
www.placestogrow.ca

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
www.omafra.gov.on.ca

Ministry of the Environment
www.ene.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Tourism
www.tourism.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Culture
www.culture.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Transportation
www.mto.gov.on.ca