

MID-TERM REPORT CARD

Proposed amendments to Ontario's Greenbelt and Growth Plans

OVERALL GRADE:

B⁻

The Ontario government must to bring its 'A' game to make the grade on the Greenbelt and Growth Plans. While doing a good job addressing climate change and supporting agriculture, the government must work harder to curb low-density sprawl, protect the Greenbelt's current boundaries, and halt urban expansion onto prime farmland and natural areas.

SUBJECT	GRADE	STRENGTHS/AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	PROVINCIAL ACTION NEEDED
 <p>Grow the Greenbelt</p>	B⁻	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - 21 urban river valleys, seven coastal wetlands, and four areas of land in Hamilton and Niagara to be added to the Greenbelt. Excellent - Proposal to grow the Niagara Escarpment Plan area by over 45,000 hectares. Needs Improvement - Province to map significant water resource areas and expand the Greenbelt. However, expansion areas must include unprotected sensitive headwaters south of the Greenbelt including Carruthers Creek, Don River, Rouge River, Humber River and others. Needs improvement - Province is currently meeting with developers, municipalities and conservation authorities to consider over 650 requests to take land out of the Greenbelt, including sensitive headwater lands along the Greenbelt's southern boundary. Unsatisfactory - No freeze on current municipal urban boundaries. While a stronger test for municipal urban expansions is proposed, this will not be enough to protect at-risk prime farmland and natural heritage systems. There is enough land already designated for urban growth to 2041. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Grow the Greenbelt to protect vulnerable water supplies in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Protect sensitive headwaters south of the Greenbelt including Carruthers Creek, Rouge River, Don River and Humber River. Freeze municipal urban boundaries.
 <p>Protect Source Waters and Natural Heritage Systems</p>	B⁻	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - New municipal requirements for watershed and sub-watershed plans to be completed before any development is approved in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, ensuring integration with the natural heritage system. Good - No new aggregate operations below the water table in core natural areas or in prime agricultural land. Good - New flexibility for agricultural needs, as long as water quality remains protected. Needs Improvement - Province to map a connected natural heritage system across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. However, the system to be protected in municipal official plans but not enshrined in provincial legislation. Unsatisfactory - Significant weakening of protection for species at risk under the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment Plans. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Extend Greenbelt protection to the natural heritage system across the Greater Golden Horseshoe and protect it in law. Cancel proposed changes that weaken protection for species at risk.
 <p>Infrastructure</p>	B⁻	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - Ongoing restrictions on Lake Ontario based water and sewer extensions limit sprawl in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Good - Communities relying on groundwater are required to complete environmental assessments before approving expansions to water or sewage infrastructure. Good - New focus on investing in green infrastructure and low-impact development. Unsatisfactory - No new restrictions in the Greenbelt on major infrastructure projects (highways, energy generation and transmission, pipelines and water/wastewater systems) which cut through the natural and agricultural systems and drive sprawl in the region. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Restrict linear infrastructure like highways and major transmission lines from fragmenting the Greenbelt's agricultural and natural systems. No expansion or construction of new 400 series highways in the Greenbelt.
 <p>Protect & Support Agriculture</p>	A⁻	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - New support to encourage diversification of agricultural products and services. Excellent - New rules will reduce the impacts of major developments built in close proximity to farms and require a new assessment process to reduce conflicts between farms and non-agricultural uses. Needs Improvement - Province to map an agricultural system across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. However, system to be protected in municipal official plans but not enshrined in provincial legislation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Extend Greenbelt protection to the agricultural system in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and protect it in law. Freeze current municipal urban boundaries to 2041 to protect dwindling prime agricultural lands and economies.
 <p>Smarter Compact Growth</p>	B⁻	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good - Mandatory intensification targets in place for transit hubs and corridors in urban growth centres, although the targets are low. Good - Municipal intensification targets raised to 60 per cent and Designated Greenfield Area (DGA) density targets increased to 80 people and jobs per hectare, increasing densities and housing choices in existing urban areas, with less development paving over prime agricultural lands. Good -The Land Needs Assessment (LNA) criteria used by municipalities to determine urban expansion needs will be revamped. The strength of these changes will determine their effectiveness in protecting the Greenbelt and farmland from urban sprawl. Needs Improvement - Restrict the "take out" land categories allowed in the calculation of municipal density targets. Otherwise, the increased density targets will have little impact. Unsatisfactory - Growth Plan still allows for exemptions for municipalities who do not want to achieve required intensification and density targets. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Require all municipalities to meet intensification and density targets for urban growth centres to 2041 without granting exceptions. Increase targets for mandatory intensification around transit hubs and corridors. Link transit investment policy to the achievement of mandatory intensification in these areas.
 <p>Action on Climate Change</p>	A⁻	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - Climate change policies added to the Greenbelt and Growth Plans. Good - Multiple actions to enhance resilience in the Greater Golden Horseshoe including requirement to improve management of infrastructure assets (such as storm water ponds), increase protection of water supplies, farmland and natural systems. Good - Municipal climate change mitigation and adaptation plans required, but specific strategies are only encouraged not mandated. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Require specific municipal climate change actions, including metrics and timelines. Require transparent, yearly municipal reporting on climate change action milestones.
 <p>Plan Implementation</p>	C⁻	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs Improvement - Unclear how the implementation, monitoring, oversight and reporting for the Greenbelt and Growth Plans will take place. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a provincial body in legislation to oversee the implementation of both updated Plans, including a clear process for monitoring and enforcement, public engagement, and transparent reporting.

