








FINAL REPORT CARD

2017 New Greenbelt and Growth Plans

OVERALL GRADE:

B⁺

In May of 2017, the Ontario government released the new Greenbelt and Growth Plans for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) region and concluded the Coordinated Review of the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Growth Plan. The new plans have strengthened regional planning and have made commitments to: curb low-density sprawl, diversify the province's housing mix, protect the Greenbelt's boundaries, further protect prime farmland and natural areas and mandate municipal action on climate change. Weaknesses remain, however, and the Plans include little commitment to monitoring and reporting on policy compliance.

| SUBJECT | GRADE | STRENGTHS/AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT | STILL TO DO |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p>Grow the Greenbelt</p> | B⁺ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - 21 Urban River Valleys, 7 Coastal Wetlands, and 4 areas of land in Hamilton and Niagara have been added to the Greenbelt. Good - Very limited land removed from the Greenbelt at less than 150 hectares. The province held the line despite strong pressure from the development industry and municipalities who were looking to carve up the Greenbelt with more than 700 land removal requests. Good - Province is mapping significant hydrological areas which should help define where Greenbelt expansion should occur based on the best science available. Fair - New criteria and process for urban boundary expansion and municipal comprehensive reviews which can occur outside of the 10 year review period. Fail - The province did not freeze current municipal urban boundaries despite there being enough land within urban boundaries to provide for growth until 2041. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the Greenbelt in key areas to protect vulnerable water supplies in the GGH. Protect sensitive headwaters south of the Greenbelt including Carruthers Creek, Rouge River, Don River and Humber River. |
|  <p>Protect Water Sources and Natural Heritage System</p> | B⁺ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - New municipal watershed and sub-watershed plans are now required to be completed before any development is approved in the GGH, ensuring integration with the natural heritage system. Enhanced provincial guidance on watershed planning. Excellent - The Greenbelt Plan's natural heritage system protection policies have been extended to include natural heritage features throughout the Growth Plan area, thereby strengthening and harmonizing protection across the GGH. Good - New flexibility provided for agriculture, as long as water quality remains protected. Fail - Significant weakening of protection for species-at-risk under the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment Plans as requested by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the provincial mapping of the natural heritage system and watershed mapping across the GGH is consistent with municipal and Conservation Authority mapping, enshrined in provincial legislation and enforced. Grow the Greenbelt to protect water sources. Reverse changes that have weakened protection for species-at-risk in Ontario. |
|  <p>Infrastructure</p> | A⁻ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - Ongoing restrictions on Lake Ontario based water and sewer extensions, which helps to limit sprawl in the GGH. Excellent - Emphasis on identifying infrastructure risks from climate change and a new culture of conservation for water, integrated waste management, and energy conservation. Good - New focus on investing in green infrastructure and low-impact development. Fail - No new restrictions on major infrastructure projects (such as highways, pipelines and water/wastewater systems) within the Greenbelt. These cut through the natural and agricultural systems and drive sprawl in the region. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibit linear infrastructure like highways and major transmission lines which would fragment the Greenbelt's agricultural and natural system. No construction of new 400 series highways. |
|  <p>Protect & Support Agriculture</p> | A⁻ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - New support and permission to encourage diversification of agricultural products and services. Good - New rules reduce the impacts of major developments built in close proximity to farms. And, there is a requirement for the development industry to complete an agricultural impact assessment to reduce conflicts between farms and non-agricultural uses. Good - Province mapping the agricultural system across the GGH to understand and support a strong and vibrant agricultural sector. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Extend Greenbelt protection and policies to the new agricultural system in the GGH and protect these in law through municipal official plans and provincial legislation. 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"> Excellent - The Growth Plan emphasizes creating low carbon communities by optimizing the urban land supply to make better use of our existing infrastructure. The majority of growth will be directed to cities and towns that can support the achievement of complete communities that are walkable and serviced by transit. Good - Mandatory intensification targets in place for transit hubs and corridors in urban growth centres, although the targets are low. This can be changed and will be phased-in over 25 years. Good - The province has closed a policy loophole to limit inappropriate urbanization. Good - The province is standardizing the calculation used by municipalities to determine urban expansion needs. Fail - Growth Plan still allows for exemptions for municipalities to reduce intensification and density targets. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure density targets in the growth plan are achieved by tying provincial funding to the achievement of density around transit stations in urban growth centres. |
|  <p>Action on Climate Change</p> | A⁻ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent - Climate change policies added to the Greenbelt and Growth Plans requires regional governments to develop policies in their official plans. Good - Multiple actions adopted to enhance climate change resilience and to support low carbon communities. Fair - Municipal climate change strategies and targets are not mandated. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Make climate change plans and actions a requirement for all municipalities. Require transparent, yearly municipal monitoring and reporting on climate change actions. Dedicate revenues from cap-and-trade programs towards investment in restoration, and enhancement of the GGH's natural heritage and agricultural systems. |
|  <p>Plan Implementation</p> | C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good - The Minister is required to develop performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of the policies in the Growth Plan. The Plan gives the Minister authority to obtain data from municipalities for monitoring and reporting. Fail - It is unclear how the implementation, monitoring, oversight and reporting for the Greenbelt and Growth Plans will take place. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and enforce the Growth Plan through strong provincial oversight to ensure municipalities are meeting the intensification and density targets and other required plans (such as watershed and climate plans.) Establish an inter-ministerial team to lead and develop the implementation plan, and make it publicly available including timelines for roll-out. Establish a provincial body in the Greenbelt and Growth Plan legislation to oversee monitoring, enforcement and transparent reporting. |