

Backgrounder on why the province needs to expand protection of vulnerable water supplies in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region

Protecting our waters provides important long-term benefits for farms, businesses and people living in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). Permanent protection secures water resources for irrigation of crops and livestock, reduces the need to build expensive pipes that divert water from our lakes, ensures drinking water supplies for 1.25 million people, reduces the impact of flooding, and helps supply adequate water in drought conditions.

Maps in the [provincial consultation document](#) show water sources the province is considering protecting, though they are missing key areas to the east including headwater areas and the Lake Iroquois shoreline. A comprehensive approach to protecting vulnerable water sources throughout the region is needed now as threats to water are growing.

Now is the time to protect water sources outside of urban areas before an additional 4 million people call the region home. Currently over 1.25 million people, 855,000 acres of farmland and numerous species of fish and wildlife all rely on groundwater and fresh water streams in the GGH. The sand and gravel of moraines act like rainbarrels, filtering, storing and recharging underground water vaults called aquifers that feed rivers and streams. These important recharge areas are highly sensitive to pollution and urbanization.

Climate change also increases risks to our water supply. By 2050, southern Ontario is expected to experience an increase of 4-4.5C in annual average temperatures. This may result in decreased water quality as more micro-organisms will be able to grow in lakes. Between periods of drought, we can also expect flood risk to increase due to severe weather events and higher than average rainfall. Ontario's Environmental Commissioner has warned that groundwater data is inadequate to properly manage water supplies in the context of climate change.

Growing the Greenbelt to include vulnerable water supplies will benefit millions of residents, our rural economies and nature. With more than 9 in 10 Ontarians supporting Greenbelt expansion to protect water supplies, it is essential that the province acts now to protect at risk water resources.

Supportive quotes:

"I encourage the government to move forward to take the bold and wise step to expand the Greenbelt; a major step forward to ensure the viability of farms and farmers as well as food security in this province. Organizations that have worked with the government, to this end, must applaud this positive announcement and should commit to continuing support of healthy agricultural systems." -- **Bernard**

Pope | Executive Director of Ontario Farmland Preservation; Chair of Ontario Farmland Preservation

"Considering that 2% of the population feeds the other 98%, it is crucial that our Farmers can rely on clean, safe, secure supplies of water, now, and for generations to come." -- **Avia Eek | Farmer and Ward 6 Councillor, Township of King**

"Land and water are our most vital natural resources. The Greenbelt will not only preserve our natural environment, but also the water resource by protecting groundwater recharge areas. Waterloo Region has shown that the protection of recharge areas is a critical component for securing water sustainability over the long term." -- **Dr. Emil Frind | PhD, P.Eng. Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo**

"Expanding the Greenbelt to protect hydrologically significant lands located outside of urban boundaries will not affect housing supply. "If these lands are protected from development under an expanded Greenbelt Plan, there are no changes required to how landowners currently use the land." -- **Jennifer Keesmaat, RPP, Former Chief Planner and Executive Director, City of Toronto. Distinguished Visiting Scholar, U of T.**

Additional Resources:

[Grow our Greenbelt Q & A](#)

[The proposed 'Bluebelt' map](#)

[Protectourwaters.ca](#)

About:

The [#Protectourwater](#) initiative is a collaboration between organizations and associations representing more than [120 member groups, and 300,000 members](#) across Ontario.