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Greenbelt Council's Progress Report 2007

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November 9, 2007

From:

Office of the Chair, 777 Bay Street, 16th Floor, Toronto ON M5G 2E5, Telephone: (416) 585-6828, Fax: (416) 585-6467

To:

Honourable Jim Watson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 777 Bay Street, 17th Floor, Toronto, ON, M5G 2E5

Subject: Greenbelt Council's Progress Report – Highlights 2007

Dear Minister:

I am pleased to provide you with the Greenbelt Council's year end report for 2007. The attachment to this letter provides an update on our activities starting in January 2007.

In June 2007, Council celebrated its 2nd anniversary. Council's achievements over these two years are attributed to the successful working relationships of our members. They are key proponents of Greenbelt protection. I am pleased that Howie Herrema, Virginia Maclaren, Clay Switzer and John Middleton were reappointed for another two years. They each bring a different and invaluable perspective to our discussions.

This year has been a very productive one for the Council. Most of the meetings tended to focus on Greenbelt related agriculture and Niagara matters. Last year the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable John Gerretsen, asked Council to form separate Agricultural and Niagara Committees to examine these areas further in accordance with our terms of reference.

In order to assist Council in formulating its advice to the government on Greenbelt related agriculture, we considered the input received from our Committees, various stakeholders, the recommendations of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' Strategic Advisory Committee, and presentations by staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The attached report outlines some details behind the advice.

After considerable thought and deliberation, Council presented a series of seven letters of advice to Minister Gerretsen in July containing recommendations with respect to the Greenbelt. Council's recommendations related primarily to agriculture, but included other matters such as Lake Simcoe, a Greenbelt speaker series, possible cross appointments with other Greenbelt related organizations and requesting that additional feedback be provided to Council. Earlier in the year, Council also recommended criteria

be developed by the government for possible expansions to the Greenbelt. It is our understanding that



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because a number of these matters largely fall within the mandate of other Ministries, our letters were forwarded to affected Ministries for their consideration.

Following up on our advice with respect to possible Greenbelt expansions, Council provided further direction to the government by recommending that the protection of Lake Simcoe's water quality be among the potential criteria to be considered. We are pleased that the government is committed to protecting Lake Simcoe through the Premier's announcement in July that the government intends to introduce legislation to protect the water quality of Lake Simcoe.

Council is also encouraged by the work of others in supporting agriculture and the Greenbelt. The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation and Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation have had success in funding a number of Greenbelt supportive agricultural activities. Council will keep apprised of this work through ongoing updates from Foundation staff and in particular from Donna Lailey who sits on the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, as well as Russ Powell and Debbe Crandall who sit on the Board of Directors of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Minister Gerretsen and his staff for their ongoing support and direction over the last two years. We have worked closely with them on the initial set-up of the Council and our office, which included establishing our mandate as the Minister's first advisory body for the Greenbelt. I appreciated Minister Gerretsen personally meeting with me over this time and his dropping in on a few of our meetings to share his views with Council on the Greenbelt.

As you take on your new responsibilities as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Council looks forward to working with you and your staff to provide the government with strategic input and advice on the Greenbelt in the coming years.

In closing, I would also like to thank Ministry staff and our Executive Co-ordinator, Bill Winegard, for their continuing support over this past year and look forward to working with them as we head into a new year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Elgie
Chair

Attachment

c.c. Honourable John Gerretsen, Minister of the Environment

- [ATTACHMENT - Progress Report Details \(November 9, 2007\)](#)
- [Minister's response to the 2007 Greenbelt Council Progress Report](#)



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Greenbelt Council Advice:

Council has developed advice to the government on a range of Greenbelt related issues. Earlier in the year, Council gave advice regarding the government developing criteria for possible expansions to the Greenbelt, including Simcoe County.

In July, Council presented a series of seven letters of advice to the Minister outlined below.

Agriculture:

- Based on input from Council's Agricultural and Niagara committees, various stakeholders, the recommendations of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' Strategic Advisory Committee, and presentations by staff from the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs, Council recommended the government should:
 - develop an integrated strategy for sustainable farming and food in the Greenbelt and adjacent near-urban farming areas;
 - encourage the preservation of land in the Greenbelt through agricultural land trusts; and,
 - consider a review of the property tax assessment policies of facilities for on-farm processing and the on-farm sale of farm grown products.
- Council understands the Minister forwarded this advice to the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for their consideration, as these matters fall within the mandate of these two Ministries.

Expansion of the Greenbelt:

- In February 2007, Council recommended that the government should develop criteria to consider possible areas for future expansion of the Greenbelt. Council offered to review the criteria and provide further advice.

Simcoe Water Quality:

- Following up on Council's advice with respect to possible Greenbelt expansions, Council provided further direction to the government by recommending that the protection of the water quality of Lake Simcoe be among the potential criteria to be considered.

Cross-Appointments:

- Council recommended that the government continue to cross appoint members to the Greenbelt Council from the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation and the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. They also recommended that a similar cross appointment be established between the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) and the Greenbelt Council.



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In response, the Minister indicated that although the Council has a full membership complement at this time, he advised the government would continue to look for cross-appointment opportunities.

- Council understands Minister Gerretsen forwarded this advice to the Minister of Natural Resources who is responsible for appointments to the NEC, and to the Minister of Tourism, who is responsible for the nomination of provincial members to the Board of Directors of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt Foundations.

Greenbelt Speaker Series:

- Council encouraged the government, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to consider funding and facilitating a series of lectures similar to the Massey Lecture series where high profile speakers are brought in to promote public awareness and discussion of the larger issues facing Ontario's Greenbelt. Council offered to work with the Ministry and any other parties to develop this idea further.

Feedback to the Greenbelt Council:

- Council requested that the Minister keeps the Council regularly informed as to what action has been taken as a result of its advice.

Implementation of Greenbelt Act and Plan:

- Throughout the year, Council has kept apprised of how the Greenbelt Act and Plan are being implemented through a number of updates and presentations provided by the staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and other provincial staff, as well as others.
- Council has been provided with updates on the status of the municipal official plan conformity exercise with respect to the Greenbelt Plan.
- Through the ongoing exchange of information of resource materials, reports, articles, etc by Ministry staff and Council members, Council has kept informed of current Greenbelt related issues.
- Council was also interested in Simcoe issues and were given a presentation by the Ministry's Central Municipal Service Office staff on the planning initiatives currently affecting Simcoe such as the Inter-Governmental Action Plan (IGAP).
- OMAFRA staff gave a presentation on the status of OMAFRA's provincial policy and program development focusing on the Greenbelt.
- Rita Burak, Chair of the Strategic Advisory Committee to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, also provided Council with an overview of the Committee's report and recommendations on opportunities for Ontario's Agri-Food sector.
- Environics Research, hired by the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, also gave a presentation to the Council on its polling results of December 2005 related to the Greenbelt.

Performance Measurement Framework:

- In accordance with its terms of reference, Council has also continued to provide input to Ministry staff regarding their development of a performance measurement framework for the Greenbelt. Ministry staff have provided Council with updates on this project throughout the year. Council's input has been primarily through Virginia Maclaren, whose expertise in performance measures has assisted Ministry staff. She has continued to meet with staff over the last year providing them with expert guidance and support.

Promotion and Outreach:

- Council members used opportunities this past year to promote the Greenbelt, and gain knowledge by attending conferences and events, as well as by giving presentations. The following are some highlights:
 - members participated in a two-day "Moraine for Life Symposium" in February 2007. The stakeholder summit looked at past achievements, future challenges and opportunities for the Oak Ridges Moraine;
 - the Chair and Donna Lailey attended the Premier's Agri-Food Summit held in March 2007 representing the Greenbelt Council; and,
 - in late spring, John Middleton, as part of his Brock University work, gave a presentation on the Greenbelt Plan at a conference in Chongqing Municipality, China.

Greenbelt Council Liaison:

- Early in 2007, the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation staff met with the Greenbelt Council to provide an update on the Foundation's goals, funding, accomplishments, and upcoming events.
- In July, Virginia Maclaren and Debbie Crandall participated in the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation's 'Measuring the Success of the Greenbelt' session which brought a range of Greenbelt stakeholders together to provide a forum for various stakeholders and groups (e.g. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Niagara Escarpment Commission, Monitoring the Moraine, Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation) to discuss various approaches to monitoring the Greenbelt.
- Council has also formally maintained linkages with the Foundations through cross appointments of members on the Council with the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF) and the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation (GBF). Both Russ Powell and Debbie Crandall, as Directors of the Board of the ORMF, and Donna Lailey, as a Director of the Board of the Directors of the GBF, have kept Council apprised of the activities of the Foundations.
- As noted above, Council's recent advice to the government is that cross-appointments be expanded to include the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC). In the interim, Council continues to foster its relationship with the NEC through opportunities to meet with the commission and staff, along with the GBF and the ORMF.

Reappointment of Greenbelt Council Members:

- Howie Herrema, Virginia Maclaren, John Middleton and Clay Switzer were reappointed by the Minister in June 2007 to the Greenbelt Council for another two-year term. Their original two-year terms expired this year.

Greenbelt Council Website:

- The Greenbelt Council's web pages were updated, with new information (e.g. Council minutes, Progress Report – Highlights 2005/06) being posted throughout the year. Council wants to conduct itself in an open and transparent manner so that the public and others are aware of its activities.

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January 16, 2008

Dr. Robert Elgie, Chair
Greenbelt Council
777 Bay Street, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON
M5G 2E5

Dear Dr. Elgie:

Thank you for your letter of November 9, 2007 in which you provided me with the Greenbelt Council's year end report for 2007.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Greenbelt Council for all of their hard work over the past two and a half years. The Council has assisted our government by providing direction and advice on a number of Greenbelt matters.

As the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, your report has been very helpful in providing me with an update of your activities. I am pleased to see that the Council has worked well with ministry staff, in particular with their work on developing performance measures for the Greenbelt Plan. I am also pleased to see the Council is taking on opportunities to promote the Greenbelt, as well as liaising with other bodies such as the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation and the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation. For the long-term success of the Greenbelt, it is important to continue building upon these relationships.

I will have the pleasure of introducing myself to you and the other members of the Council at your next meeting on January 23rd. I will also introduce you to my Senior Policy Advisor,

Mr. Rajesh Khetarpal, who will be working with you and the Council. This meeting will provide an opportunity to further discuss your role and possible activities for 2008.

Again, I would like to thank the Greenbelt Council for their commitment and dedication to the Greenbelt. On behalf of me and my staff, I look forward to working with you and Council members.

Sincerely yours,

Jim Watson, MPP
Minister



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