

Greenbelt Council

Conseil de la ceinture de verdure

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January 9, 2020

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Honourable Steve Clark  
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
777 Bay Street, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

Re: Mandating Inter-jurisdictional Collaboration at the Watershed Scale

Dear Minister Clark,

It is my pleasure to send you the Greenbelt Council's tenth progress report as we proceed through our 2019/20 work program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "David Crombie".

David Crombie  
Chair, Greenbelt Council

Copies to:

Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister

Greenbelt Council members

Ed McDonnell, CEO, Greenbelt Foundation

Kevin Curtis, Curtis Planning

Learie Miller, Peel Region Environmental Planning Advisor

Lilli Duoba, Markham Natural Heritage Manager

Gail Krantzberg, Professor, Engineering and Public Policy Program, McMaster University  
Greater Golden Horseshoe stakeholders

**Greenbelt Council for the Greater Golden Horseshoe**  
**Report #10 (January 2020)**

Continuing its practice of distributing progress reports after its meetings, the Greenbelt Council is pleased to share its tenth report. It communicates Council's work in considering matters of public interest with respect to Ontario's Greenbelt and the implementation of *A Place to Grow: Growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. The Greenbelt Council is mandated by the Province of Ontario to provide advice to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

At its meeting November 28, 2019, Council engaged the following experts to talk about the municipal role in watershed-based planning and watershed updates for upcoming Municipal Comprehensive Reviews: Kevin Curtis (Curtis Planning), Learie Miller (Advisor, Environmental Planning, Regional Planning and Growth Management Division, Public Works Department, Peel Region), Gail Anderson (Principal Planner, Environmental Planning, Regional Planning and Growth Management Division, Public Works Department, Peel Region), Lilli Duoba (Manager, Natural Heritage, City of Markham), Patrick Wong (Senior Planner, Natural Heritage, City of Markham).

At its meeting December 18, 2019, Council spoke with Gail Krantzberg (Professor, Engineering and Public Policy Program, Booth School of Engineering Practice and Technology, McMaster University) about watershed approaches to water governance and challenges to Great Lakes resilience.

The text below summarizes the ensuing discussions that informed the following recommendation of Council:

*The Greenbelt Council recommends the Province, through its upcoming Conservation Authority Act regulations, ensure that the mandate of the conservation authorities continues to reflect the watershed focus and that a fourth mandatory area be included to lead and facilitate inter-jurisdictional collaboration at the watershed scale to protect and improve watershed health.*

As noted in section 4.1, the 2019 A Place to Grow Plan recognizes that "watersheds are the most important scale for protecting the quality and quantity of water, municipalities are required to undertake watershed planning to inform the protection of water resource systems and decisions related to planning for growth." However, Council has heard from a variety of stakeholders that the watershed scale is a fundamental metric for achieving a number of provincial objectives, including natural heritage systems and community resilience in the face of climate change challenges. As such, cross-jurisdictional collaboration in watershed management is essential.

It was clear from the discussion that there are distinct roles for both municipalities and conservation authorities in watershed planning through the Municipal Comprehensive Review process. It was also clear that municipalities rely heavily on the expertise of conservation authorities for their cross-jurisdictional perspective, essential to planning at the watershed scale, and their specific knowledge in habitat conservation / restoration / enhancement, source protection and hydrogeology, water resource and protection engineering, forestry resource planning, outreach and education, and parks operation and land management. Municipalities do not have a similar technical expertise or mandate. It is through partnerships with conservation authorities that watershed planning and land use planning are linked, and water resources, for example, are protected.

This municipal-conservation authority collaboration enables decision-makers—provincial, municipal and stakeholder organizations—to understand how growth impacts should be mitigated and managed to protect watershed health and support community resilience as well as to comply with Greenbelt and Growth Plan policies.

The discussion also pointed to several areas where municipal watershed updates could be strengthened. These include guidance on how watershed plans should address climate change and integrate climate change plans, how they can become more effective in addressing cumulative impacts, how and when large-scale monitoring should be undertaken, and how to better align the subwatershed planning process and the timelines of the development review process.

Council members heard from Gail Krantzberg that trying to protect the Great Lakes using geopolitical boundaries fragments the system and is not effective. She stressed that water governance must involve a broad spectrum of people and organizations who share a desired future state—clean water, for example—albeit for a myriad of reasons from human health and wildlife habitat, to economic development and tourism. As a result, the economic return on investment from effective watershed management is substantial and touches many sectors. Further, planning at the watershed scale is absolutely essential for dealing with climate change impacts including the increasing financial and social costs of extreme weather.

Today, management of Greater Golden Horseshoe watersheds is primarily the responsibility of conservation authorities. With less than 8 per cent of conservation authority's budgets contributed by the Province, it is an extremely cost effective relationship from a provincial fiscal perspective. A shift in the focus and a narrowing of the conservation authority's role would necessitate other organizations to acquire these technical resources, likely at a considerably

higher cost, and without the cross-jurisdictional perspective the outcome may jeopardize good decision-making that supports clean water and economic prosperity. To that end, the Province should mandate cross-jurisdictional collaboration, led by the conservation authorities, to support watershed planning and management, and facilitate community resilience.