

Greenbelt Council

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Greenbelt Council

Conseil de la
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November 25, 2020

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

Re: Economic Value of the Greenbelt

Dear Minister Clark,

It is my pleasure to send you the Greenbelt Council's 17th progress report in consideration of the matters before Council at our October 29, 2020 meeting.

Also, Greenbelt stakeholders have been in touch and are concerned that Council's letters of advice are no longer being posted on the Greenbelt Council page of the provincial website as they had been in the past. As you are aware, Council firmly believes that transparent decision-making processes and an informed public are fundamental to an effective planning process. To that end, we request that all Council's letters of advice be posted at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Crombie". The signature is fluid and cursive.

David Crombie
Chair, Greenbelt Council

Copies to:

Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister
Greenbelt Council members
Ed McDonnell, CEO, & Kathy Macpherson, VP Research & Policy, Greenbelt Foundation
Jennifer Court, Executive Director, Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition
Greater Golden Horseshoe stakeholders

Greenbelt Council for the Greater Golden Horseshoe Report #17 (November 2020)

Greenbelt Council's priority focus for 2020-21 is on intensifying the interrelated values of the Greenbelt—economic, ecological and community—across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. To that end, Council's October 29th meeting focused on the economic value of the Greenbelt.

Council members were joined by Greenbelt Foundation CEO Ed McDonnell & VP, Research & Policy Kathy Macpherson who highlighted recent studies and strategies related to the economic value of the Greenbelt and its current and potential contribution to Ontario's social and economic prosperity. Also participating was Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition (GIO) Executive Director Jennifer Court who updated Council on the Economic Assessment of the Green Infrastructure Sector in Ontario. The following text highlights the discussion that informed Council's recommendations as set out below.

Economic Value of the Greenbelt

The Greenbelt Foundation worked with Ernst & Young Canada (E&Y) to complete an updated assessment of the economic contribution of key sectors supported by the Greenbelt's protected status. The assessment updated work from 2012 using the 2016 Statistics Canada census data and proprietary E&Y economic modeling methods.

Primary and secondary sectors dependent on the Greenbelt's unique protected status were included in the analysis. Primary sectors include agriculture, forestry, fishing, tourism and hospitality and secondary sectors include food manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, transportation and warehousing industries.

Results of the Economic Impact Assessment include:

- Primary sectors generate \$19.6B in gross output, \$9.6B in GDP and support 177,711 jobs (FTEs)
- Secondary sectors generate \$7.7B in gross output, \$3.3B in GDP and support 34,300 jobs (FTEs)
- Provincial tax receipts from primary sectors (2016) were estimated at \$1.03B with \$485M provided by secondary sectors.

For most regions, Greenbelt-dependent sectors are major contributors to local employment and GDP. For example, primary sectors in York Region generate \$4.4B in gross output and provide \$2.0B in GDP while sustaining 44,521 full-time jobs.

Participants noted that protecting and enhancing Greenbelt economic activity and jobs rely on protection of the Greenbelt as a whole, as well as effective municipal land use and economic development policies. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff can help ensure supportive policies are incorporated in municipal official plans as it consults with municipalities through the Municipal Comprehensive Review process.

Sectors such as tourism and recreation and food and agriculture present unique opportunities for future growth. The Foundation presented an overview of its recently completed tourism strategy, which highlights opportunities to work with Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) and other organizations to grow outdoor recreation and agri-tourism in the Greenbelt across two phases: COVID Recovery (2021 –2022) and Tourism Growth (2023 – 2025).

The Foundation also highlighted recent work to identify approximately \$100M in new farm-gate revenue across six crops. Future policy, investments and other required supports are detailed in the Foundation’s report, “[Plant the Seeds: Opportunities to Grow Southern Ontario’s Fruit & Vegetable Sector](#),” developed in conjunction with an advisory committee of government experts, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance.

Finally, the Foundation presented its work with partners in communities across the Greenbelt on a green infrastructure based economic stimulus program that could leverage the potential of natural infrastructure to address critical municipal ecosystem service and climate resiliency needs while creating thousands of jobs through local economic development. Such a program would be particularly important within the context of a post-COVID economy as municipalities continue to strive for sustainability in water and wastewater infrastructure financing and seek innovative ways to address climate changes and housing affordability challenges.

To highlight the importance of green infrastructure to Ontario’s economy, the Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition commissioned the “[Economic Impact Assessment of the Green Infrastructure Sector in Ontario](#)” with funding from the Greenbelt Foundation and additional support from Landscape Ontario. The report notes that in 2018, Ontario’s green infrastructure sector was responsible for:

- \$8.6B in gross output (revenues)
- \$4.64B in direct GDP (\$8.3B including indirect and induced)
- 84,400 direct jobs (FTEs), 122,000 including indirect and induced jobs (FTEs).

The green infrastructure sector provides a strong, local supply chain, wide range of jobs, and high return on investment and the sector has a strong growth potential to 2030—under current business-as-usual growth trends, Ontario’s green infrastructure sector is projected to grow by 22 per cent by 2030. With increased investment and a supportive policy framework, that growth could jump to 73 per cent.

Recommendations:

- 1. Greenbelt Council recommends the Province enhance the economic competitiveness of the Greater Golden Horseshoe by funding a green infrastructure economic stimulus program to leverage the potential of natural infrastructure to address critical municipal ecosystem service and climate resiliency needs while creating thousands of jobs through local economic development.*
- 2. Greenbelt Council recommends the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing facilitate the implementation of effective municipal land use and economic development policies that protect and enhance Greenbelt economic activity and jobs through the Municipal Comprehensive Review process.*