

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OCTOBER 18, 2004

***GREENBELT PROTECTION ACT, 2003*
**GREENBELT TASK FORCE ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTER OF
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING
GENERAL FILE 22.19****

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

1. **THAT** this report be received for information purposes.
2. **THAT** staff continue to provide updates to Council on the progress of Greenbelt Protection as necessary.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the progress of the *Greenbelt Protection Act*, with the recent release of the Greenbelt Task Force paper "*Advice and Recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing*".

Background - Analysis and Options

In February 2004, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing established the Greenbelt Task Force, comprised of 13 members. The Greenbelt Task Force was created to develop recommendations to the Province on establishing a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt.

In May 2004, the Greenbelt Task Force released a discussion paper, for public consultation sessions which took place in May and June through the Greenbelt Study Area. The discussion paper focused on broad greenbelt issues related to environmental protection, agricultural protection, transportation and infrastructure, natural resources, and culture, tourism, and recreation.

In August 2004, the Greenbelt Task Force, having completed their consultation sessions, and review, finalized their advice and recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The advice and recommendations of the Task Force will serve to inform of the Provincial creation of the forthcoming permanent Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt legislation and plan.

The Greenbelt Task Force (GTF) has not formally requested comments on their recommendations to the Minister. This staff report is provided to the Committee of the whole to outline their recommendations. It is anticipated that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will have a draft of a Greenbelt Protection Plan in the Fall, to be finalized by December 16, 2004, when the *Greenbelt Protection Act* sunsets. A detailed report will be brought forward to the Committee of the Whole when a draft of the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt Plan has been released.

Advice and Recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

The GTF envisions that the greenbelt should knit together the Golden Horseshoe's environmentally sensitive natural systems, and preserve and enhance natural heritage features, agricultural, and cultural resources, and protect these resources from urban development. It is recommended that the Provincial Greenbelt Plan be coupled with a Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan which focuses development away from the Greenbelt.

Defining the Greenbelt

The GTF recommends that the Province take a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach to defining the Greenbelt, and that the Province observe the following principles in deciding what lands ought to be included:

1. Lands that are already permanently protected by easements and those owned by charitable trusts;
2. Lands that the Province has previously expressed an interest in protecting such as the additions to the Niagara Escarpment; and
3. Lands that are publicly owned.

The GTF recommends that criteria should be developed to prioritize land use within the designated area.

Environmental Protection

The GTF recommends that a systems approach to environmental protection be utilized which encompasses natural heritage, water resources, landform conservation, and a network of open spaces. The GTF suggests that the greenbelt system should include provincially significant and/or major natural heritage and hydrological features and functions such as the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Niagara Escarpment, and the Rouge Valley, and connections between these major features and functions, including public parks and stream and river valley linkages to major water bodies such as the Great Lakes and Lake Simcoe.

Agricultural Protection

The GTF endorses the current direction of the draft Provincial Policy Statement, which provides more stringent criteria for urban boundary expansions into prime agricultural lands. Agricultural lands are proposed to be protected in the Greenbelt. The majority of non-urban lands within the Greenbelt Study Area are classified as prime agricultural lands, and proximity to urban areas make them attractive for new development.

The GTF advises that the agricultural lands within the Greenbelt should be able to support the agricultural economy and related activities, and in concert with this, there should be complementary initiatives such as economic development, research and monitoring to assist the agricultural community to ensure its continued viability.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The GTF advises that the Greenbelt should not be seen as a land reserve for future infrastructure needs, and infrastructure should not be located within the Greenbelt unless prescribed criteria have been met. Any proposed infrastructure within the Greenbelt should be consistent with the visions and goals of the GTF and any Provincial growth plan ("Places to Grow").

Natural Resources

The Greenbelt Study Area contains a range of renewable and non-renewable natural resources. The GTF suggests that there are some activities related to renewable resources which may be compatible with the Greenbelt objectives, such as the sustainable production of lumber and other forestry practices, fishing, hunting and nature appreciation.

Aggregates are perhaps the most significant non-renewable resource within the Greenbelt Study Area. The GTF suggests that the areas of high-potential aggregates should be included in the

greenbelt area, and that restrictions be placed on land uses which prevent or restrict the expansion of mineral aggregate. Aggregate operations should also be subject to rigorous requirements for rehabilitation, and there should be more requirements for the recycling of aggregate materials.

Culture, Recreation and Tourism

There are several important cultural, recreational and tourism features that exist within the Greenbelt Study Area. In Vaughan, the GTF identifies the East Humber Valley Complex and associated resources including Boyd Conservation Area, the Kortright Centre for Conservation, and the McMichael Collection.

The GTF suggests that the Greenbelt should emphasize the cultural, recreational and tourism opportunities and should respect and be compatible with other Greenbelt priorities. These resources should also be marketed to strengthen the viability, integrity, and profile of the Greenbelt.

Administration and Implementation

The GTF recommends that the Province develop legislation and a plan that creates a permanent greenbelt which is connected to existing policies governing Niagara Escarpment, and the Oak Ridges Moraine. The legislation and plan should clearly identify the greenbelt lands, and make provisions for the addition of lands outside of the Greenbelt Study Area, into the permanent greenbelt. This legislation should be recognized in the Province's forthcoming "Places to Grow" growth plan.

The GTF recommends that the Greenbelt Plan should be administered by municipalities, and similarly to the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, be incorporated into municipal official plans across the greenbelt, with sufficient resources provided by the Province to the municipalities to assist in the implementation. It is recommended that a Greenbelt Advisory Committee be established to advise the Minister on implementation and administration, and that a monitoring and performance measure be established to determine the effectiveness of the plan.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

The relationship with Vaughan Vision 2007 will be considered upon the release of the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt Plan.

Conclusion

The Greenbelt Task Force, was appointed to study the creation of a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, and provide advice to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Task Force has completed their study and has prepared a document detailing their advice and recommendations to the Minister. A summary of this document is provided in this report. It is anticipated that the Minister will be using this document to guide the development of a Greenbelt Plan as contemplated by the *Greenbelt Protection Act*. A first draft of this plan is expected in the fall, for its finalization by December 16, 2004, when the *Greenbelt Protection Act* sunsets. A detailed report will be brought forward to Committee when a draft of the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt Plan has been released.

Attachments

1. N/A

Report prepared by:

Karen Antonio-Hadcock, Senior Planner, Environmental, ext. 8630.
Grant Uyeyama, Manager of Development Planning, ext. 8635.

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN ZIPAY
Commissioner of Planning

MARCO RAMUNNO
Director of Development Planning

/LG

R:\WORKING\ANTONIOK\GREENBELTOCT2004.CW