

407 EAST *Environmental Assessment Fact Sheet*

The Greenbelt

WHAT IS THE GREENBELT?

The Greenbelt is a broad band of permanently protected land that sustains the ecological and human health of south central Ontario. Extending from the eastern end of the Oak Ridges Moraine near Rice Lake to the Niagara River, it is about 325 km long and 80 km at its widest (from the mouth of the Rouge River to the northern tip of Durham Region).

Approximately 800,000 acres are protected under the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) and the ORM Conservation Plan. An additional one million acres have recently been protected in an area known as “Protected Countryside”. (Coloured in a darker green on attached map - see reverse).

The Protected Countryside ‘systems’ follow existing designations found in local, regional and county official plans:

- **Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems** - roughly 535,000 acres (over 50% of the Protected Countryside) protects three quarters of the lakes, wetlands and forests and maintains the biological/geological diversity, natural functions, indigenous species and ecosystems within the Greenbelt.
- **Agricultural System** was identified using the Land Evaluation and Area Review system. Includes about 100,000 acres of Niagara Peninsula tender fruit and grape specialty crop areas and the entire Holland Marsh, over 15,000 acres in York Region and Simcoe County.
- **Settlement Areas** include a number of vibrant communities designated in official plans from municipalities and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

LEGISLATION

The government was authorized to establish the Greenbelt Area and Plan by the *Greenbelt Act, 2005*.

The Greenbelt is governed by the policies of:

- The Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP)
- The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP)
- The Parkway Belt West Plan area, and
- The Protected Countryside Policies of the Greenbelt Plan.

The key policies that provide direction for the location of transportation infrastructure, corridors and facilities are the NEP, the ORM Conservation Plan, and the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) issued under the Planning Act:

- The PPS states that, “Corridors and rights-of-way for significant transportation and infrastructure facilities will be protected”;
- The ORM Conservation Plan permits linear transportation infrastructure and utilities in all four of its land use designations, where the need for such projects has been demonstrated; and
- The NEP requires that transportation infrastructure be designed to ensure that the least possible change occurs in the environment and the natural and cultural landscape.

MTO COMPLIANCE WITH GREENBELT POLICIES

According to the Greenbelt Plan, transportation infrastructure is important to the economy, human health and quality of life in southern Ontario and the Greenbelt.

Major infrastructure serving national, provincial and inter-regional needs traverses the Greenbelt and it is anticipated that new and/or expanded facilities will also be needed to serve the substantial growth projected for southern Ontario.

The definition of provincial transportation infrastructure includes new, and/or expansions and extensions to, and/or the operation/maintenance of highways, transitways, and related facilities.

“Essential” transportation infrastructure will be determined through MTO’s needs assessment process and the successful completion of the EA process.

Existing, expanded and/or new infrastructure subject to and approved under the following approvals will be permitted within the Protected Countryside:

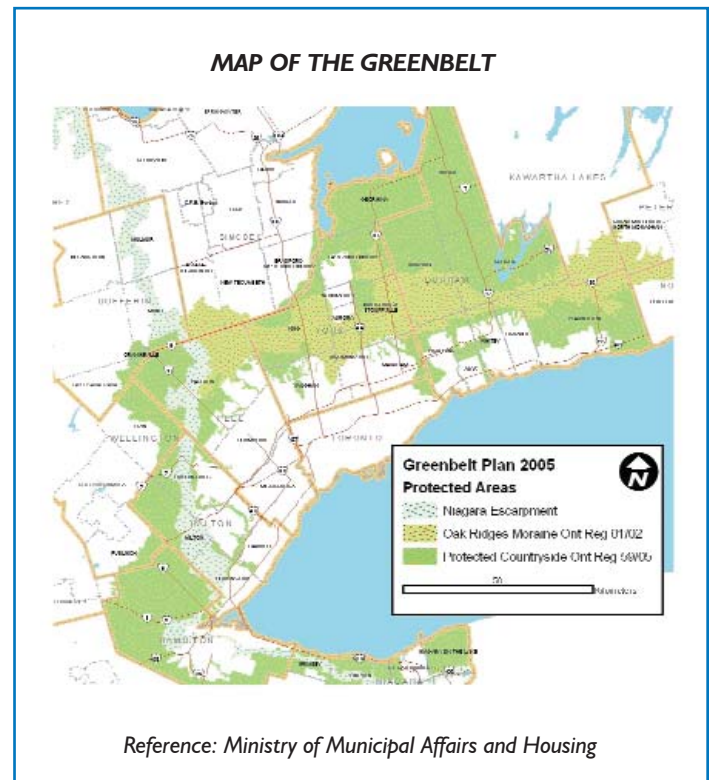
- *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act,*
- *Environmental Assessment Act,*
- *The Planning Act,*
- *Aggregate Resources Act,*
- Similar environmental approval,

provided that they are subject to the policies of the *Greenbelt Act* and also meet one of the following objectives:

- That it supports agriculture, recreation, tourism, rural settlement areas, resource use, or a rural economic activity that exists and is permitted within the Greenbelt; or
- That it serves the significant growth and economic development expected in southern Ontario beyond the Greenbelt by providing for the infrastructure connections between urban growth centres and Ontario’s borders.

For more detailed information about the Greenbelt Act / Plan please visit the following website:

www.greenbelt.ontario.ca



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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