

Prepared by Lura Consulting
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The summary reflects the comments and views of the individuals who participated in the town halls, which may not necessarily reflect the actual policies in the Growth Plan or the Greenbelt Plans.

This report was prepared by Lura Consulting, the independent facilitator and consultation specialist for the Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review.

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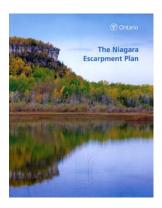


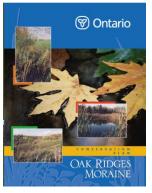
### **Table of Contents**

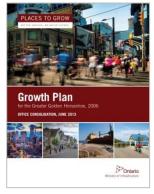
1.	Introduction	1
2.	What We Heard at the Town Halls	2
2	.1 Protecting agricultural land, water and natural areas	3
	Protecting and Expanding the Greenbelt	3
	Protecting agricultural land and supporting farmers	4
	Protecting natural areas and features	6
	Directing urban development	7
2	2 Keeping people and goods moving, and building cost-effective infrastructure	8
	Supporting public transit	8
2	3 Fostering healthy, livable and inclusive communities	9
	Towards compact and complete communities	9
	Ensuring diverse and affordable housing options	. 10
2	.4 Building communities that attract workers and create jobs	. 12
	Fostering vibrant rural economies	. 12
2	5 Addressing climate change and building resilient communities	. 12
	Integrating climate change into the plans	. 12
2	.6 Improving implementation and better aligning the plans	. 14
	Alignment and Implementation	. 14
3.	Next Steps	. 15

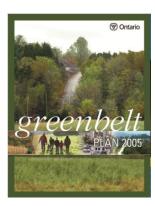
### 1. Introduction

Four complementary provincial land use plans, known collectively as Ontario's Greenbelt Plans and the Growth Plan, are currently under review. These four plans provide a comprehensive and integrated planning framework to manage growth, direct infrastructure investments and promote economic prosperity, while protecting and conserving the valuable natural heritage of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region and Greenbelt Plan area. The four plans are:









Niagara Escarpment Plan

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan

Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Greenbelt Plan

Consultations for the Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review of these four plans were open for 90 days between February 27 and May 28, 2015, and included 17 town hall meetings held in municipalities across the region (attended by about 3,000 people) as well as stakeholder and online consultations. The government anticipates that any proposed amendments will be released for public input in winter 2016.

This report provides a summary of the key themes and outcomes from the town hall meetings. The feedback received through other consultation channels including the project website, emails, written submissions, stakeholder meetings and the Environmental Registry are documented separately. Next steps in the Co-ordinated Review process are outlined on the last page.

Details of the dates, locations and number of participants at the 17 town hall meetings are listed below:

Date	Town Hall Meeting	Approximate Number of Participants
March 25, 2015	Kitchener	170
March 26, 2015	Caledon	400
March 30, 2015	Toronto	250
April 1, 2015	Barrie	240
April 7, 2015	Peterborough	110
April 8, 2015	Cobourg	120
April 13, 2015	Aurora	260
April 15, 2015	St. Catharines	350
April 16, 2015	Hamilton	180
April 18, 2015	Owen Sound	55
April 20, 2015	Ajax	180
April 22, 2015	Milton	200
April 30, 2015	Scarborough	50
May 4, 2015	Clarington	150
May 7, 2015	Oakville	85
May 12, 2015	Brantford	100
May 14, 2015	Vaughan	100
	Total	3,000

#### 2. What We Heard at the Town Halls

The purpose of the consultation was to obtain feedback on the six goals of the Co-ordinated Review to inform the development of proposed amendments to the Greenbelt Plans and the Growth Plan.

Town Hall participants provided their feedback through facilitated roundtable discussions and/or by completing and submitting their individual workbooks. In total, 293 table and 149 individual workbooks were obtained during the consultation.

The summary of participant feedback presented in this section is a synopsis of the key recurring themes which emerged from the town halls, organized under the six goals of the Co-ordinated Review.

### 2.1 Protecting agricultural land, water and natural areas

#### **Protecting and Expanding the Greenbelt**

The need to protect and expand the Greenbelt was consistently raised by participants at every town hall meeting, underlining the importance of this theme area in terms of protecting environmentally and agriculturally significant lands in the region.

Many participants feel that the removal of protected land from the Greenbelt should not be permitted, while several other participants identified the need for evidence-based and/or scientific criteria to review, remove or add key properties and significant natural features to the Greenbelt. It was suggested that these criteria could also be used to assess the structure and performance of the Greenbelt before considering urban boundary expansions.

Several participants also identified the need for a process for private landowners to add or remove their land from the Greenbelt to ensure site-specific boundary concerns or voluntary conservation efforts are addressed through a fair and transparent mechanism. Where privately-held property is essential to the form and function of the Greenbelt, some participants proposed compensating landowners for their land if inclusion was not voluntary. Some participants also recommended mandating the replacement of any land removed from the Greenbelt by an equal amount of land elsewhere (i.e., land swapping).

Participants were overwhelmingly supportive of growing the Greenbelt to enhance the protection of sensitive ecological and hydrological features and functions (e.g., headwaters, wetlands, forests, moraines, wildlife corridors, coastal areas, etc.), conserve valuable farmland and prevent leap frog development (where areas of greenbelt are located between areas of development).

While some participants suggested expanding the Greenbelt to include all natural features and functions in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, site specific recommendations included land along the north shore of Lake Erie, Niagara Falls, Brant County, Waterloo Region, Halton Region, York Region, Simcoe County, Durham Region, Prince Edward County, Northumberland County, Peterborough and the Kawartha Lakes. There was also broad support to expand the Greenbelt via the urban river valley designation, and more generally to include ravines. The Grand River watershed, the Credit River and its tributaries, as well as the Maskinonge, Sutton-Black and Pefferlaw Rivers in Georgina were identified by participants as suitable waterways for inclusion in the Greenbelt. Specific natural features identified for inclusion also comprise (but are not limited to) the Cootes to Escarpment corridor, Red Hill Valley, Fonthill Kame, Paris Galt and Waterloo Moraines and Rouge Park.

Recurring comments also emphasized the need to grow the Greenbelt to add or expand the protective buffer between sensitive natural heritage features (e.g., Oak Ridges Moraine) and

urban areas. Many participants noted that this would be beneficial from a climate change perspective in terms of protecting ecosystem services and increasing resilience.

Participants also provided a range of comments about the agricultural lands located between the Greenbelt and urban boundaries. Several comments indicated that more clarity is required to define the future of those lands. Some comments called for a review of these lands to consider the natural features and functions located within them and whether these should be included in the Greenbelt. There is a perception that these lands, together with the Greenbelt, have contributed to development "leaping" over protected areas in rural communities, causing unanticipated impacts (e.g., local traffic). Some participants recommended expanding the Greenbelt to include these lands, and generally all agricultural lands, as a means to protect valuable farmland from being developed and specifically to address leapfrog development.

While many participants clearly support maintaining the Greenbelt as a permanently protected area, feedback also raised several concerns about the Greenbelt's boundaries, the mechanisms originally used to identify them and the need for some flexibility to make minor adjustments. Participants also highlighted the need for a consistent approach to define the Greenbelt boundary, with several emphasizing that it should follow property lines based on ground surveys using updated mapping. This was however countered by others who noted that the Greenbelt boundaries should be based on ecological planning principles (e.g., watershed planning), which may not necessarily follow territorial or private property boundaries, to ensure the continuous protection of sensitive features and functions.

Participants also provided recommendations to prioritize the protection of Greenbelt land from competing interests. Many participants feel that the Greenbelt Plan policies should be strengthened and aligned with other provincial and municipal policies and plans (e.g., Provincial Policy Statement, official plans, etc.) to override exceptions that permit infrastructure development, specifically highway or renewable energy infrastructure, or aggregate resource extraction within protected areas. Several participants also recommended setting clauses that lapse or "sunset" after a period of time on historic or "grandfathered" uses, licences and permits within the Greenbelt.

Several tools were recommended to help expand and protect the Greenbelt including a land acquisition fund to secure land for conservation purposes, financial incentives or compensation for providing ecological goods and services, and the creation of connecting or "contiguous" access (easements) for trails over private land. Participants also suggested creating a Greenbelt Commission based on the governance model of the Niagara Escarpment Commission to oversee the implementation of the Greenbelt Plan policies.

#### Protecting agricultural land and supporting farmers

Protecting agricultural land and supporting farmers consistently emerged as key priorities in the feedback provided by participants at the town hall meetings. Many participants strongly support permanently protecting farmland from conversion to other land use designations,

particularly classes 1-4 in the Canada Land Inventory as well as specialty crop areas (e.g., fruit land).

Many participants recommended establishing a land bank as well as a process to study and map the quality and productivity of farmland to ensure the long-term protection of prime agricultural areas. There was also considerable interest in extending the Greenbelt policies that protect farmland outside the plan area to address issues such as leapfrog development, and increasing the total acreage of land designated for agriculture. Participants noted the need to ensure a balance between Greenbelt policies that protect farmland and natural heritage; some participants expressed concern that the current policies focus on environmental protection at the expense of agricultural productivity.



**Clarington Town Hall Meeting** 

Several recommendations were also put forward to prevent the fragmentation or degradation of agricultural land. Recurring comments suggested enhancing connections between agricultural areas to create a contiguous working landscape as well as the need to buffer farmland from other land uses to prevent degradation or potential conflicts. Guidelines and provincial support to help municipalities complete agricultural impact assessments were also recommended to identify and mitigate impacts from surrounding land uses.

Participants also emphasized prioritizing the protection of farmland from a range of activities, notably new highway corridors, renewable energy projects, residential development, aggregate activities and fill operations. Although many participants feel that land severances should not be permitted, a few suggested that severances less than 100 acres should be permitted to improve the prospects for farmland succession. Concerns were also expressed by several participants who made comments about the lasting impact of the Greenbelt designation on their properties. They voiced the need for a transparent process to appeal the inclusion of properties in the Greenbelt, noting that the designation has limited their ability to realize retirement plans and other goals (e.g., farmers who planned to sever land to sell for development).

Many participants also advocated for new policies to support farming as a viable livelihood and ensure protected farmland remains productive. The most frequently cited suggestions were:

- Relax existing policies or restrictions to increase the range of permitted uses on agricultural land such as secondary units and value-added operations (e.g., processing, agri-tourism).
- Provide tools and programs to support small-scale agriculture and sustain farming in general and as a viable business within the Greenbelt (e.g., financial incentives or subsidies for new or retiring farmers).
- Compensate farmers for the ecological goods and services they provide through contemporary farming practices or stewardship activities and the impact of the Greenbelt policies on their land (e.g., buy back development rights, reform the tax structure).
- Establish a clear and long-term agricultural plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe so farmers can plan into the future for successive generations.
- Enhance on-farm infrastructure and servicing to support value-added operations (e.g., natural gas, upgraded electrical and water infrastructure).

#### **Protecting natural areas and features**

Feedback obtained from many participants advocated for strengthening existing policies to protect the region's natural areas and the features within them. It was suggested that policies in all four plans should prioritize the protection of ecological and hydrological features that are linked to air and water quality through a systems approach to enhance local resiliency to climate change. Participants recommended establishing a natural heritage inventory as well as monitoring programs to evaluate and periodically review environmental protection efforts (e.g., water quality monitoring).

Some comments also noted the need for watershed planning throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe to protect natural areas and functions on a systems-based approach. It was also suggested that sub-watershed studies be conducted to consider the carrying capacity of natural areas and whether growth targets can be sustained by the landscape. There were also a number of comments to consider and expand the role of Conservation Authorities in the land use planning process. Some comments did raise concerns that environmental protection policies are overly restrictive on rural and agricultural properties (e.g., classifying drainage ditches as habitat) and stressed the need to find a balance between competing interests.

Participant feedback also expressed support to maintain the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) policies as an independent set of policies. A few participants documented the need to clarify and define "conservation lots" in the NEP and other provincial policies, specifying that these lots cannot be developed and therefore should not be subjected to standard municipal reviews or conditions applicable to developable lots. Lot size restrictions in the Greenbelt Plan may also impact the ability to create conservation lots in agricultural designations. Participants also favoured maintaining the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) and proposed adding smaller, local moraines to the protected area (e.g., Oro Moraine). The creation of an Oak Ridges Moraine commission was also brought forward as an idea to oversee the implementation of this plan.

Suggestions to protect the integrity of the region's environmental features and functions were similar to those brought forward to prevent the fragmentation of farmland. Participant feedback advised against permitting new highway corridors, renewable energy projects, aggregate activities, fill operations and pipelines within or near environmentally protected areas, notably the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine. In line with this is the need to strengthen environmental protection by removing or reducing the number of exceptions in the plans or other provincial plans that override policies to protect the natural environment (e.g., aggregate or water extraction).

Several comments noted that applications for infrastructure development and aggregate extraction are still being approved in the Greenbelt. Other concerns noted by participants include invasive species, the use of pesticides, and agricultural runoff. Participants also wanted policies to expand, connect and restore features of the natural heritage system (e.g., wetlands, forests, wildlife corridors, etc.) by growing the Greenbelt and using targets to verify progress.

A variety of tools were recommended to help protect the region's natural environment including technical guidelines and support, up-to-date mapping, conservation easements, stewardship programs, land severances, tax rebates or breaks (e.g., reduce land transfer taxes for conservation properties), and funding for conservation land acquisition (e.g., from development charges, water bottle taxes). Feedback also highlighted the need for site-specific criteria to define setbacks and buffers from natural heritage features, adding that setbacks should be more flexible and based on scientific evidence. Tools cited specifically to protect water resources were utilizing watershed and sub-watershed plans to inform land use planning decisions, establishing provincial standards for road/sidewalk salt application, buffers along river banks and other sensitive edges, and improving baseline mapping.

#### **Directing urban development**

Participants consistently expressed support for policies to manage growth and direct development by maintaining existing urban boundaries. Many noted that "freezing" existing urban boundaries limits development from encroaching on greenfield sites, urban sprawl and leap-frog development. Urban revitalization, efficient use of infrastructure, intensification, access to employment areas and transit-supportive development were cited as benefits of promoting development within established urban boundaries.

Comments from many participants also highlighted the need for municipalities to establish and enforce well-defined, permanent urban boundaries to prevent development from expanding outward, particularly in communities where built-up areas are located near prime agricultural land or sensitive environmental features.

Many participants also advocated against expanding urban boundaries noting that there is sufficient land within them for future development (i.e., establish "absolute" urban boundaries). Many participants recommended a moratorium on development outside

designated urban boundaries with scheduled reviews to assess the need for additional developable land (e.g., every 10 years).

Promoting the redevelopment of brownfield properties was brought forward as an idea to manage growth and direct development within built-up areas. A few participants recommended mandating the remediation of brownfield properties to support intensification and revitalization. Other participants noted that current policies discourage the remediation of brownfield properties in existing urban and rural settlement areas, limiting opportunities for their redevelopment. These participants suggested amending existing policies to incent brownfield redevelopment by removing liabilities to clean-up contaminated properties, reducing development charges or forgiving unpaid taxes. Participants also suggested enhancing collaboration between provincial and municipal levels of government to promote and support brownfield redevelopment (e.g., funding programs, establishing an inventory of brownfield properties, etc.). Several participants also noted the need to address the issue of excess soil being dumped on rural and environmentally sensitive lands (i.e., fill dumping).

Increasing intensification targets within existing urban boundaries was also suggested as another strategy by a few participants, while others noted the need to ensure intensification targets are met before considering expansions to current boundaries through ongoing monitoring and reporting.

A relatively small number of participants also expressed support for some flexibility to permit minor adjustments to existing urban boundaries, and taxing farmland outside the Greenbelt Plan areas to dissuade development on them.

### 2.2 Keeping people and goods moving, and building cost-effective infrastructure

#### **Supporting public transit**

Recurring comments underscored the importance of developing public transit as a cost-effective approach to help fulfill the objectives of the Growth and Greenbelt Plans, while enhancing intraregional and local connectivity.

Participants encouraged the alignment of provincial land use planning and transportation planning policies through firm urban boundaries, aggressive



Milton Town Hall Meeting

intensification targets, mixed-use development and locating publicly owned and operated buildings near transit corridors (e.g., schools, institutions, etc.) to support transit-oriented

development. Feedback also suggested incorporating targets for transit ridership and mode sharing in the provincial plans.

Several participants indicated that urban areas are appropriate for rapid public transit development as they have the higher population densities to justify investments. Feedback from many participants across the region also highlighted the need to improve options to take public transit in rural areas while increasing the use and frequency of existing transit infrastructure and services (e.g., commuter rail, high-capacity buses). Participants also strongly advocated for better intra-regional transit between urban and rural areas as well as the need to establish regional transit hubs to facilitate connections among growth centres outside Toronto.

Feedback also stressed the need for more tools to help municipalities, particularly smaller and/or rural municipalities, finance and maintain public transit infrastructure (e.g., mechanisms such as road tolls, gas tax revenues, development charges revenues, dedicated provincial funding, government or public-private partnerships). Many participants also suggested reallocating funding from new highway or road construction initiatives to transit projects or maximizing the use of existing transit infrastructure (e.g., network of railways). Many cautioned that developing new highways will contribute to urban sprawl and leapfrog development, countering other efforts to promote compact development.

Participants also recommended creating incentives or disincentives to spur a cultural shift toward public transit use through tools such as tax credits and congestion charges. Multi-modal planning was also brought forward as an idea to motivate transit use (e.g., integrating active transportation, commuter car lots, etc.). Other recurring comments stressed the importance of "transit equity" to ensure public transit is accessible, affordable and reliable for all residents of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

#### 2.3 Fostering healthy, livable and inclusive communities

#### Towards compact and complete communities

Recognizing the value of integrating services and amenities that enable Ontarians to meet their daily needs efficiently and cost-effectively, many participants suggested maintaining and strengthening policies to guide the development of compact and complete communities. Participant feedback highlighted the inter-related nature of this theme to other goals of the review process that are intended to enhance quality of life and promote sustainable community development. Key points discussed by participants included promoting higher density and mixed-use development to maximize investments in infrastructure (particularly public transit), attracting and decentralizing jobs, promoting active transportation, walkability and reducing commute times, providing a range of housing options (especially affordable housing) and protecting natural heritage and community greenspaces from development. Feedback also highlighted the importance of high quality urban design to support the development of vibrant public spaces and ensure communities are inclusive and accessible (e.g., for people of all ages).

There was some discussion about the use of density targets to encourage intensification. While some participants support an increase in density targets, others suggested reconsidering how densities are allocated among different communities as they impact the physical form of new developments. A concern expressed by some is that intensification will contribute to the homogenization of communities. Several participants stated that policies to guide compact growth should be flexible enough to maintain the unique identities of the region's urban and rural communities, while fulfilling broader objectives.

Participants also noted the need to align Greenbelt and Growth Plan policies to meet complementary objectives. Greenbelt policies currently limit the development of complete communities in rural areas as certain developments and uses are not permitted (e.g., fire stations, schools, fair grounds, park structures, churches, etc. are not allowed).

Participants also emphasized the importance of community greenspaces to connect different neighbourhoods and provide opportunities for social and recreational activity. In addition to increasing the required percentage of greenspace, it was suggested that all new developments should be required to enhance connections to natural and human-made greenspaces (e.g., ravines, trails, parks, etc.).

Specific tools cited to support the development of compact and complete communities included financial tools (e.g., incentives, funds from development charges, etc.) to achieve desired policy outcomes, more provincial guidance to apply Growth Plan policies (especially in rural communities) and more municipal control to implement policies at the local level.

#### **Ensuring diverse and affordable housing options**

The need for diverse and affordable housing options was raised by participants at nearly every town hall meeting, highlighting the importance of this particular theme. Participants recognized the importance of robust housing policies to support the various goals of the Co-ordinated Review such as developing accessible and complete communities and attracting jobs and workers.

Participants consistently highlighted the need for a diversity of housing types and ownership structures (e.g., rental and rent-geared-to-income apartments, co-op housing, family-sized condominiums, housing for seniors, etc.) to provide options for individuals and families at various stages of life and income levels, and to curb sprawl while supporting intensification through infill development.

Affordable housing, particularly for low-income populations and seniors, emerged as a priority for many participants within this theme area. According to participant feedback, there is a particular need for more diverse housing types to facilitate aging in place in rural areas. Several participants identified secondary suites as a means to increase affordable housing options, especially in rural communities, while fulfilling intensification targets. They noted that more

Lura Consulting 10 November 2015

provincial support is needed to encourage the uptake of the secondary suite policy in the Growth Plan (including addressing misperceptions about affordable or subsidized housing through education). Other participants also suggested setting targets to increase the availability of affordable housing units (e.g., policies requiring a certain percentage of all new developments to be affordable housing).

The application of density targets at a more detailed level, i.e., by dwelling type, was also raised as a way to ensure that a variety of housing types and sizes are built in communities across the region. This was countered by concerns about existing density and intensification targets, which are perceived to increase the cost of housing. Several participants noted the high cost of housing in the Greater Toronto Area is contributing to sprawling development elsewhere in the region. Participants recommended assessing the impact of plan targets on housing affordability, to see if there is a connection. They also suggested clarifying housing options by providing examples of what density looks like in different communities (e.g., midrise development in urban and suburban communities). There was also feedback recommending reduction of lot sizes in rural areas to promote intensification and limit the development of estate homes.

Feedback also recognized the importance of diverse housing options to support the development of mixed-use, walkable and transitoriented complete communities. Several comments encouraged locating higher-density and affordable housing near retail and transit to provide the population levels required to sustain these services. Diverse and affordable housing was also recognized as necessary to attract jobs and employees to different communities.



**Caledon Town Hall Meeting** 

Participants identified several tools and incentives to encourage the development of

diverse and affordable housing types. These included mechanisms such as "tiered" development charge rates, provincial and municipal partnerships, increasing the financial tools available to municipalities and adjusting tax rates to "reward" infill development over greenfield development. Participant feedback identified the need to provide greater clarity and direction about the terminology used in provincial plans (e.g., What represents the "right mix of housing"? How is land budget methodology applied?). It was also suggested that housing policies should be aligned with those in other provincial policies and plans.

### 2.4 Building communities that attract workers and create jobs

#### Fostering vibrant rural economies

Participants recognized that the smart growth principles of the Growth and Greenbelt Plans that guide the development of complete communities also attract workers and create jobs. While they support strengthening policies that encourage intensification, transit-oriented development, vibrant public spaces as well as diverse recreational opportunities, many participants also highlighted the need for new policies or mechanisms to foster rural economic development. They stressed that the constraints, opportunities and needs of rural communities are different from urban ones and require specific policy direction.

Many participants noted that policies to protect natural heritage and agricultural land preclude development within these areas, limiting opportunities to diversify rural economies, create new jobs or attract new employees. They highlighted the need for provincial policies and programs to help create more local, year-round employment opportunities in rural areas such as reducing development charges and servicing costs for employment areas, enhancing servicing and communications infrastructure to lower business costs (e.g., high-speed internet) as well as promoting tourism (e.g., eco-tourism and cultural tourism) and greenbelt commodities.

Improving public transit service, options and affordability in rural communities was also brought forward as an idea to support local economic development by improving access to employment opportunities. Participants also suggested relaxing current policies to permit home-based businesses, cottage industries and value-added operations on agricultural land (e.g., processing, agri-tourism) to recognize the role of agricultural and agri-food in long-term job creation.

Several participants also highlighted the need to retain and attract young people in rural areas, particularly the next generation of farmers, and suggested creating incentives or subsidies for start-ups and to make farming a viable livelihood.

#### 2.5 Addressing climate change and building resilient communities

#### Integrating climate change into the plans

Participant feedback about policies and actions to address climate change pointed to the interrelated nature of this policy theme with other policy areas and the need for tools to implement them. The need to integrate different policy areas in the Growth and Greenbelt Plans was raised repeatedly by participants as a means to address climate change. For instance, participant feedback suggested enhancing existing policies about water resources, natural areas and farmland conservation to simultaneously address climate related changes, or make the connection between them more explicit (e.g., planting buffers to protect river banks and other

Lura Consulting 12 November 2015

sensitive edges). The need to expand natural areas, water resources and agricultural systems came up as a consideration with respect to climate change adaptation.

Many participants also suggested recognizing the impact of ecosystem services, particularly on agricultural lands, toward climate change mitigation and adaptation goals (e.g., carbon sequestration, groundwater recharge, wildlife habitat, etc.). Another example cited frequently by participants was integrating land use and transportation planning to promote transitoriented development to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Recommendations to address climate change also included integrating policies and targets from the Province's climate change strategy with those in the Growth and Greenbelt Plans, and requiring municipalities to reflect these policies in their existing plans or by creating new climate change-specific plans. A few participants emphasized the importance of ensuring these policies and targets are based on scientific evidence and consider the worst-case scenarios for planning (e.g., infrastructure should be developed to withstand extreme weather events).

The connection between urban densities, transportation and transit oriented design and reducing greenhouse gas emissions was often raised. Several comments emphasized the need for promoting district and renewable energy generation, while others called for stricter restrictions on the Oak Ridges Moraine. Some participants also advocated for a "steady-state" plan (i.e., no growth) in place of one that aims to manage growth to effectively curb pressures on the environment.

Participant feedback also emphasized the importance of integrating green infrastructure and low-impact development (LID) strategies and materials in construction and development projects to support the development of resilient communities (e.g., managing stormwater on site to prevent flooding). They also recommended providing incentives and removing barriers to normalize green infrastructure and LID practices. Comments also referred to updating stormwater management infrastructure and design to incorporate and prepare for more severe weather events brought on by climate change. The importance of protecting natural and water related areas (e.g., headwaters in the moraine) came up as an important means to contain carbon, build resilience and reduce the severity of flooding.

Feedback also emphasized the need to co-ordinate efforts between provincial ministries and between the province and municipalities to plan for climate change. Specific tools and programs were suggested to help co-ordinate climate change policies such as: updated floodplain mapping, mapping vulnerable areas, creating technical guidance documents to address climate change at the local level and enhancing public education and awareness about individual actions to address climate change. The need to enforce existing environmental protection policies and apply penalties where necessary was also stressed.

### 2.6 Improving implementation and better aligning the plans

#### **Alignment and Implementation**

The importance of aligning the four plans was brought forward at every town hall meeting. Some participants suggested consolidating the plans into one set of policies using the highest level of protection or at least amalgamating the three Greenbelt Plans. Recurring comments however showed more support for maintaining each plan and harmonizing them using the terminology of the Provincial Policy Statement to improve their interpretation and implementation. Comments also noted the need to reduce the "technical planning language" used in the plans to make them more publicly accessible.

Participants recommended synchronizing policies in the four plans to clarify which takes precedence where there are inconsistencies and to ensure the plans complement each other. They also suggested amending other provincial statutes (e.g., Green Energy Act, Aggregate Resources Act) to remove exceptions that would impact the integrity of protected landscapes, particularly the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine. The connection between the four plans and other government initiatives was also raised in several instances (e.g., Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, Clean Water Act and Source Water Protection Plans, Planning Act and Development Charges Act amendments through Bill 73, the cap and trade program, the Conservation Authorities Act review and the Rouge Urban National Park Act and Plan), along with the importance of ensuring alignment and consistency. Feedback also noted the need for some degree of flexibility in implementation of the plans' policies.

Participant feedback also stressed the importance of collaboration and communication between provincial ministries to reinforce the policy intentions of each plan, explore opportunities for efficiencies, streamline administrative processes and promote accountability and transparency. Further collaboration was also recommended to clarify and streamline provincial, regional and municipal planning responsibilities and plans (e.g., provide a one-window approach to address agricultural issues facing farmers).

Implementation also emerged as a key theme. Feedback from participants highlighted that while they are supportive of the plans and their policy intentions, more tools, data and monitoring, resources and supporting programs are needed to fulfill their objectives and meet targets, particularly in smaller and rural municipalities. It was also suggested that better differentiation is needed between urban and rural targets. The most frequently cited suggestions to facilitate implementation were:

- Enhancing provincial support to interpret and implement the plans (e.g., guidelines, ongoing training, updated boundary mapping, sharing best practices, time-series data, case studies, dedicated provincial liaison, etc.).
- Increasing financial tools or funds available to municipalities (e.g., dedicated funding, gas tax funds, tax credits, incentives, subsidies, etc.).

Lura Consulting 14 November 2015

- Providing technical guidance in specific topic areas (e.g., land budgeting, climate change projections, design guidelines, low impact development, full cost accounting, etc.).
- On-going public education and outreach activities.

Participants also identified the need to ensure the consistent application and enforcement of the plans' policies at the local level and recommended ongoing provincial and municipal monitoring and reporting using the established key performance indicators for verification (e.g., mid-term assessment reports). A few participants recommended penalties if compliance or targets are not achieved.

Several participants also noted the need for a new governance structure to oversee the implementation of the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan modelled after the Niagara Escarpment Commission, including an appeal process to address site-specific concerns and boundary disputes.

### 3. Next Steps

The feedback received during the consultations as part of the Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review will inform the recommendations to be made by the Advisory Panel to the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Natural Resources and Forestry, as well as the identification of any proposed amendments to the Greenbelt Plans and the Growth Plan. The government anticipates that any proposed amendments will be released for public input by winter 2016.

Please visit the project website (<a href="http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10882.aspx">http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10882.aspx</a>) for news and updates about the Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review.

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