

# Growing the Green, Protecting the Blue

Spanning nearly two million acres, Ontario's Greenbelt evokes a sense of pride in Ontarians, who overwhelmingly appreciate its importance in shaping growth and protecting farmlands, nature – and **water**.

The Ontario government wants to grow the Greenbelt. Nine out of ten Ontarians **agree**.



Possibility grows here.



ontario greenbelt alliance



environmental  
defence  
INSPIRING CHANGE





# #GROWOURGB

## Act today, protect a legacy for tomorrow

Permanently protecting farmland, water supplies and air-purifying forests from sprawl, the positive impacts of the Greenbelt will only become more important over time. As our region continues to grow rapidly, the Greenbelt maintains a healthy, world-class quality of life and prosperous economy. The looming realities of climate change only magnify the Greenbelt's importance and underline the urgency to act and expand its reach.

### Protecting abundant clean water supplies for our future

Many groups and community leaders support growing the Greenbelt to protect more of the region's critical water supplies—creating a 'Bluebelt' around the existing Greenbelt. This would permanently protect the sources of clean drinking water for over 1.25 million residents as well as supporting agriculture and rural economies, and preserving natural heritage. The areas identified for permanent protection provide a variety of important functions: acting as 'rainbarrels' to filter and store precipitation, recharging aquifers and groundwater supplies, providing base flow to rivers and lakes, and protecting downstream communities from flooding and erosion.



## Benefits of the Greenbelt

### Provides Permanent Protection

- stops urban encroachment and inappropriate development
- sustains the source of drinking water for millions of residents
- increases resilience to climate change impacts such as droughts, floods and extreme weather events
- sustains pollution-fighting forests and prime growing soil
- reduces fragmentation and disruption of natural and agricultural systems
- uniformly protects wetlands, streams, seepage areas and springs

### Strengthens Local Economies

- provides certainty for future land-uses, spurring investment in agriculture and the rural economy
- directs investment towards natural capital and living green infrastructure and can reduce flood-related costs
- protects natural areas enjoyed by locals and tourists alike

### Supports Municipal Decisions

- provides stronger direction to protect and improve water quality/quantity
- supports and reinforces directing growth to compact, livable communities
- deters land speculation and Ontario Municipal Board appeals
- allows municipalities to adopt strong policies to support natural heritage and agricultural systems protection, acting as a provincial policy safety net against potential opposition



The Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe work together to protect clean air, fresh water and local food supplies, and support the development of livable, affordable and transit-friendly communities. The on-going Coordinated Land Use Planning Review is an opportunity to strengthen and grow the Greenbelt.

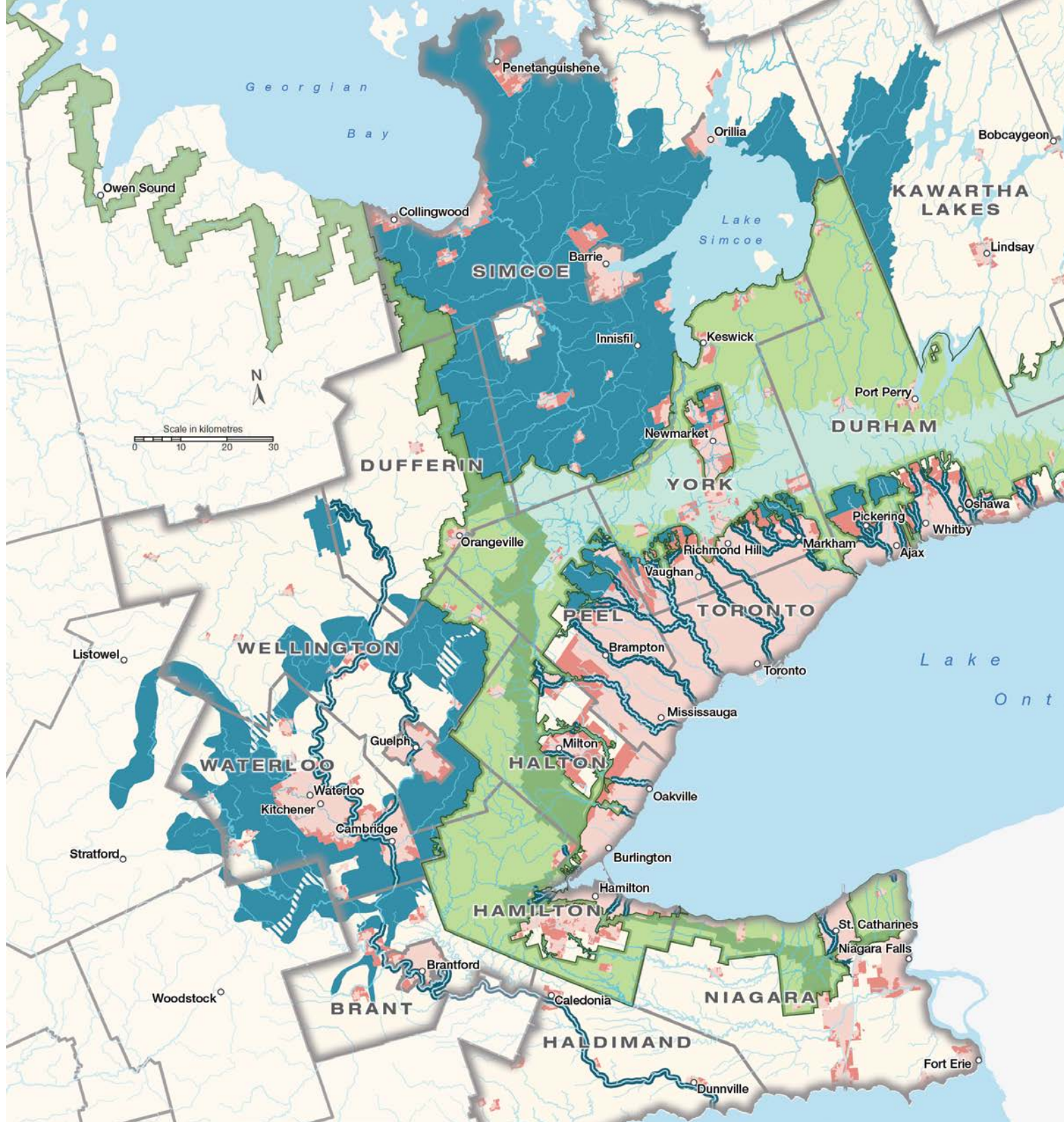
**\$ 9.1 billion**

The Greenbelt protects what sustains us and anchors the region's agriculture, tourism and recreation industries, contributing annually to Ontario: an economic impact of \$9.1 billion; 161,000 full-time jobs; \$2.6 billion in eco-services like water filtration and storage.



Growing the Green

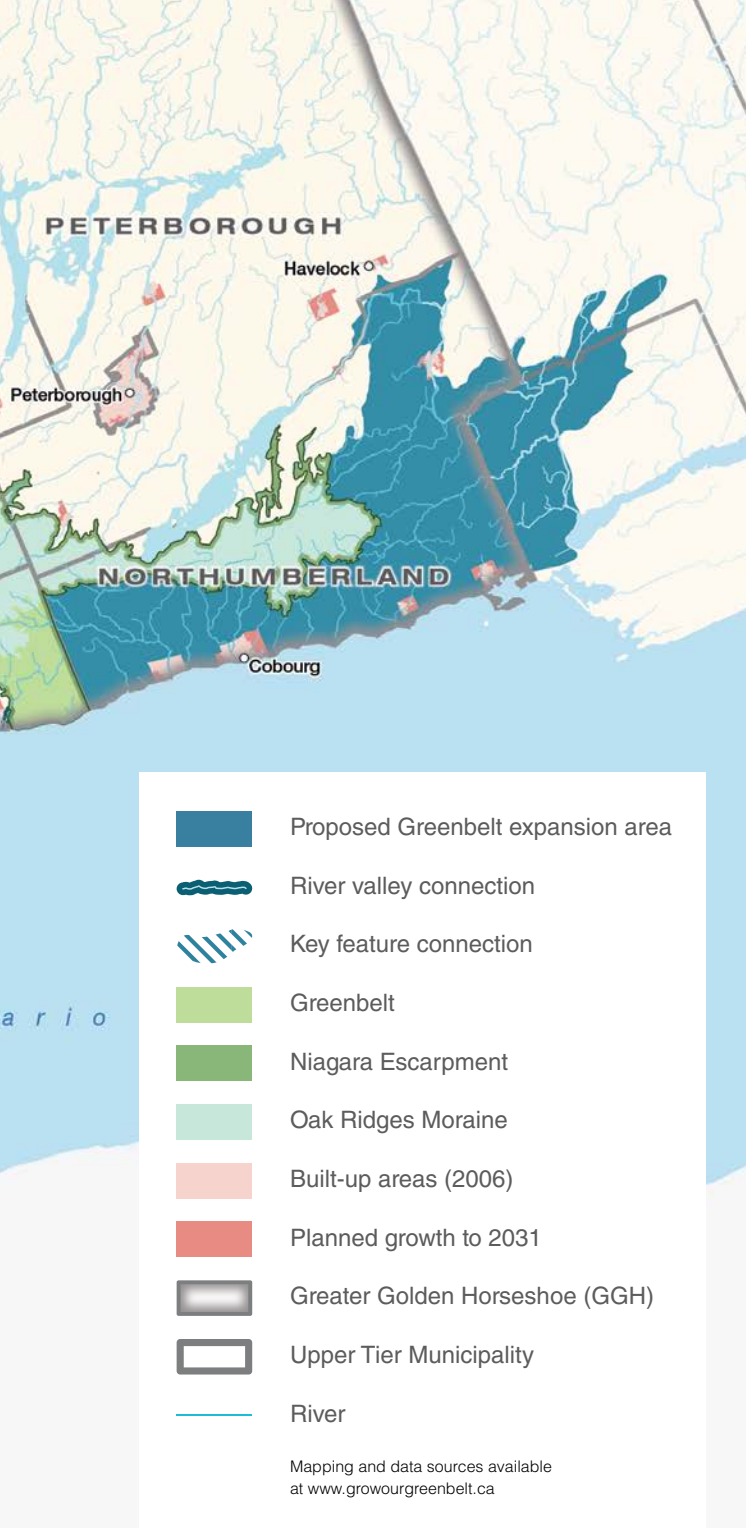
# Protecting the Blue



# Our Vision

To ensure a prosperous future, we recommend that the province of Ontario strengthens the Greenbelt and Growth Plans by making the following changes:

- Grow the Greenbelt to protect vital water resources
- Extend protection of the Greenbelt's agricultural and natural systems to the entire region
- Direct all urban growth over the next 25 years to existing built-up areas
- Create livable communities that support transit, walking, a range of housing types and prices, and mixed-use neighbourhoods to live and work in
- Consider the impacts of climate change in all decisions.



**“Land and water are our most vital resources.”**

**Professor Emil O. Frind, PhD**  
Distinguished Professor Emeritus in  
Groundwater, University of Waterloo

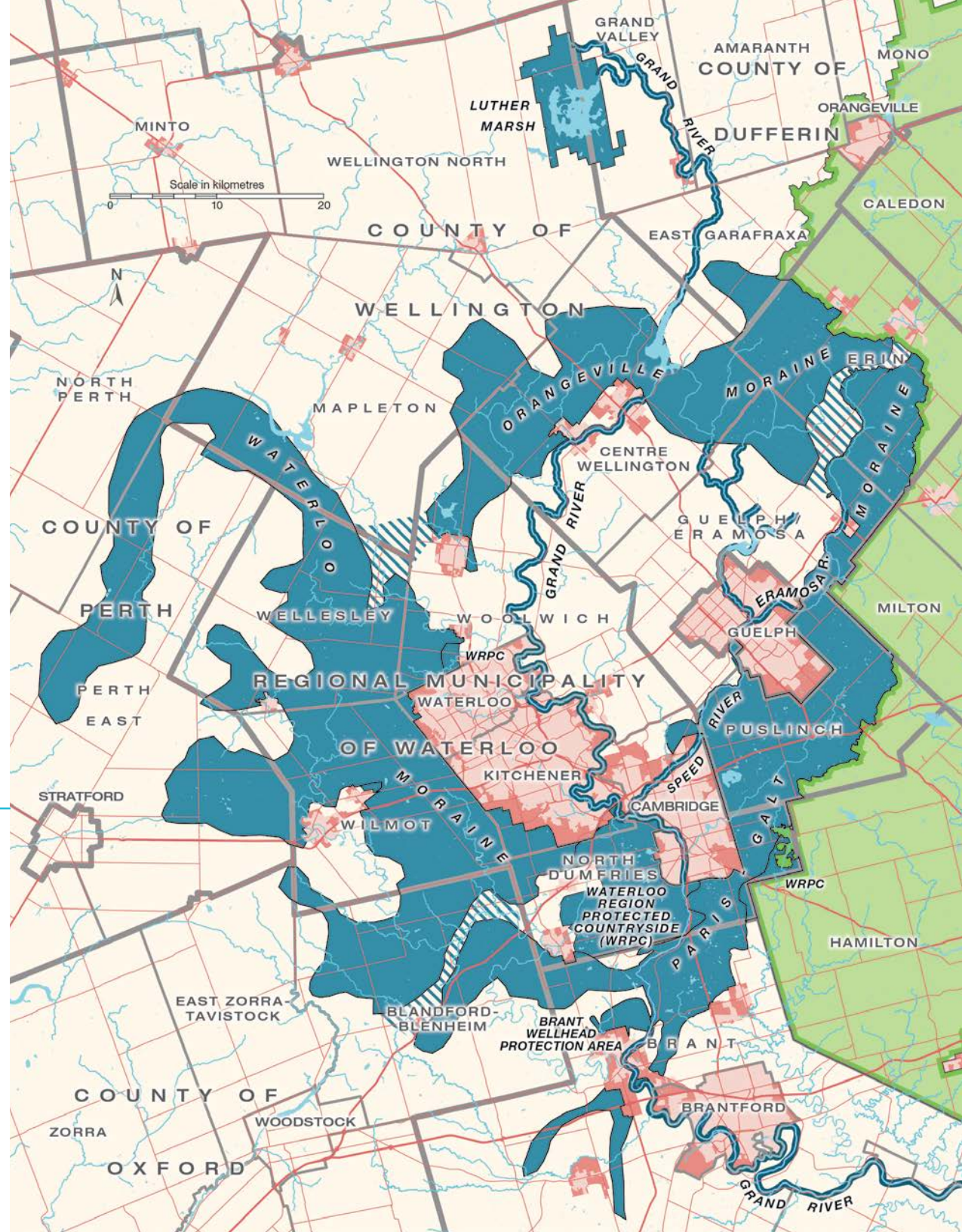


“Clearly, we need to protect our water, farmland and natural areas across all Ontario. Growing the Greenbelt in Simcoe and Brant Counties, and other areas under immense growth pressure, would permanently protect our farmland and all waters that impact our communities, such as recharge areas, wetlands and water courses.”

Bernard Pope  
Ontario Farmland Preservation

## Grand River Watershed Moraines

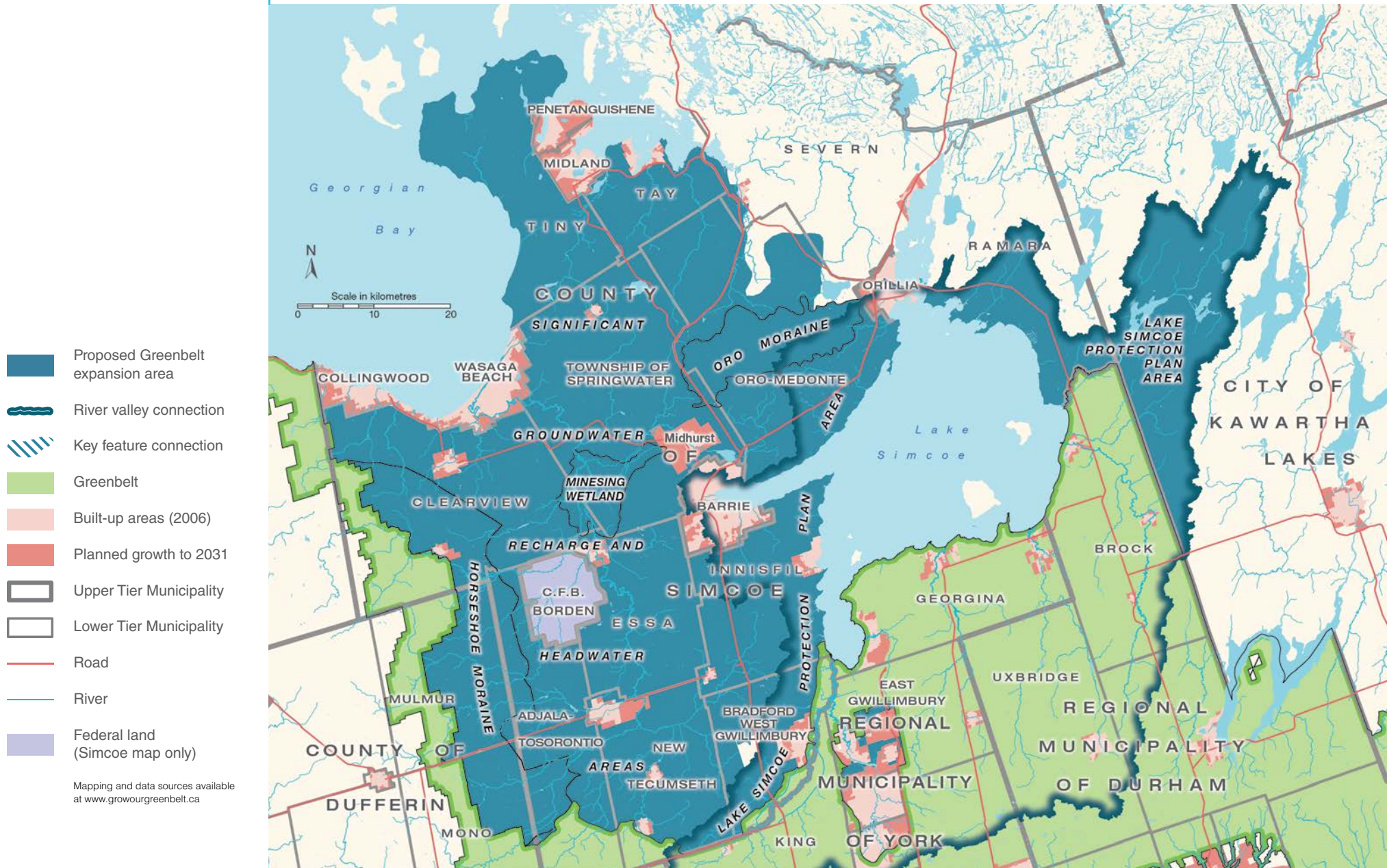
With 8 in 10 residents in the Grand River watershed dependent on wells for their drinking water, and an estimated 500,000 people moving to the area by 2041, the need to protect groundwater is clear. A trio of moraines—massive hills of sand and gravel left behind after the last ice age—filter and recharge most of the region's groundwater on less than one third of its land area. They cut across at least 19 municipalities and three conservation authorities, creating a complex patchwork of local policies and regulations. Local groups and elected officials are now calling for stronger provincial protection to ensure that growth pressures, drought and climate change do not endanger water supplies in the future.



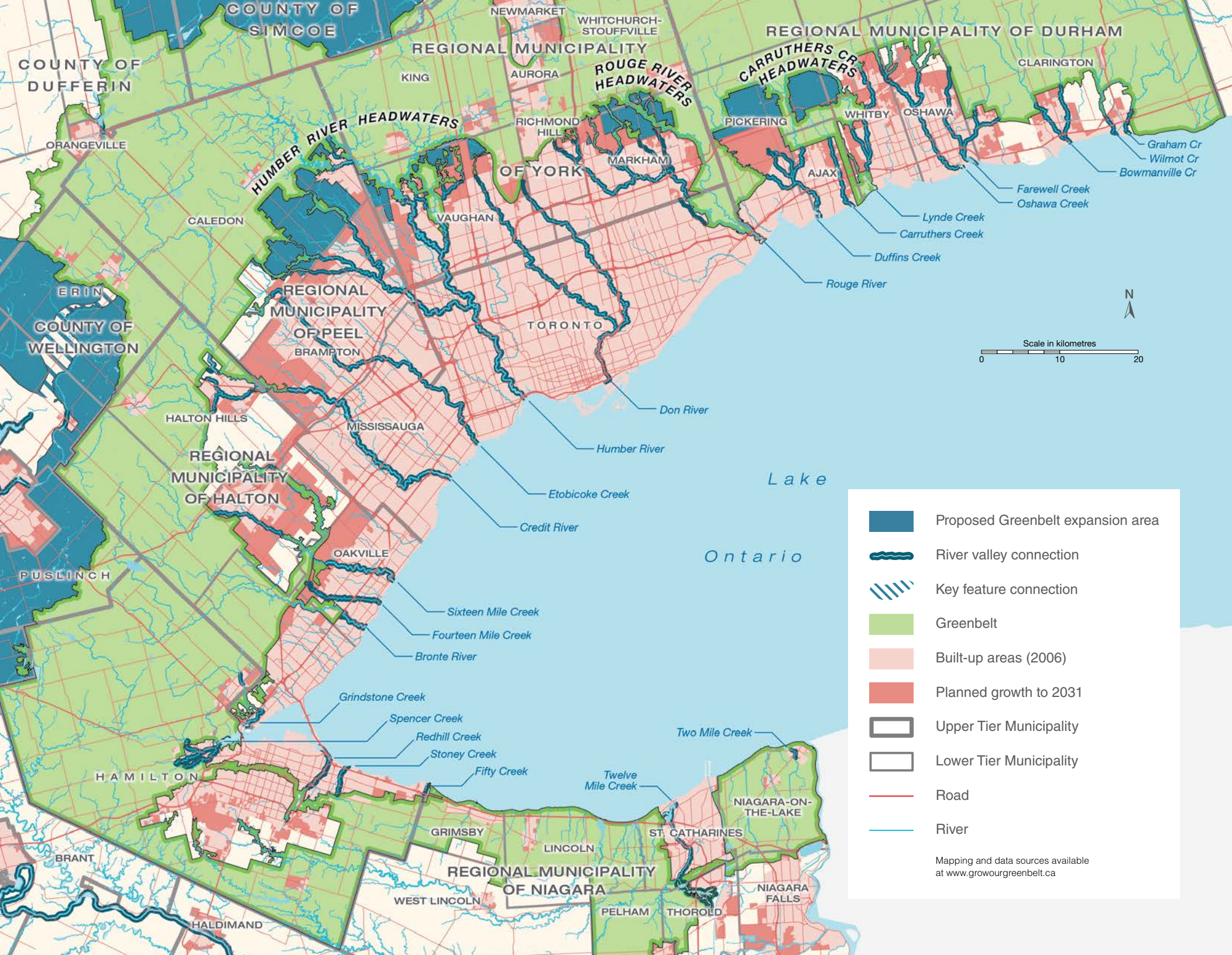


# Simcoe County's Rich Water Resources

One of the fastest growing areas in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Simcoe County is also blessed with an abundance of freshwater. From the globally recognized Minesing Swamp, to the tourism-attracting shores of Lake Simcoe, to a network of moraines, rivers, wetlands and recharge areas, the County's water resources are a source of pride for residents and visitors alike. Recent sprawl proposals to develop large swathes of rural land in Midhurst, Oro-Medonte, Minesing, and elsewhere are both fiscally and ecologically unsustainable. Inappropriate growth will incur economic costs for taxpayers and municipalities, exceed the watershed's capacity to assimilate waste, and may threaten farmers' irrigation sources and lead to local species extinctions.









**“We already have flooding issues today in the downstream portions of Carruthers Creek near Lake Ontario. Paving our headwaters would significantly increase the damage to the Creek and homes.”**

**Steve Parish**  
Mayor of Ajax and Co-Chair  
of the Municipal Leaders for  
the Greenbelt

## Headwaters and Urban River Valleys

(see left)

Many creeks and rivers begin in the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine, flowing through towns and cities before they empty into Lake Ontario. These river valleys act as vital corridors for freshwater, wildlife movement, and active transportation. A 2013 ‘urban river valley’ designation allows them to be simply added to the Greenbelt, ensuring that no future development will occur. Several key headwaters—in Peel, York and Durham Regions—remain in the ‘unprotected countryside’ south of the Greenbelt. Downstream municipalities like Ajax are concerned that future urbanization would cause flooding and economic losses, and are calling for the province to act and grow the Greenbelt.

## Lake Iroquois Shoreline (see below)

A remnant of a 13,000 year old lake that shrunk after glaciers retreated, Lake Iroquois is best known for features like the Scarborough Bluffs in Toronto and Niagara’s ‘Benches’. A federal conservation priority and major east-west habitat corridor, the Lake Iroquois Shoreline also plays a critical hydrological role in Northumberland County, supporting groundwater recharge and discharge, headwaters, river valleys, and coldwater streams and fisheries. A proactive move to protect Lake Iroquois by adding it to the Greenbelt will ensure its critical importance for local farmers, tourism and wildlife remains well into the future.

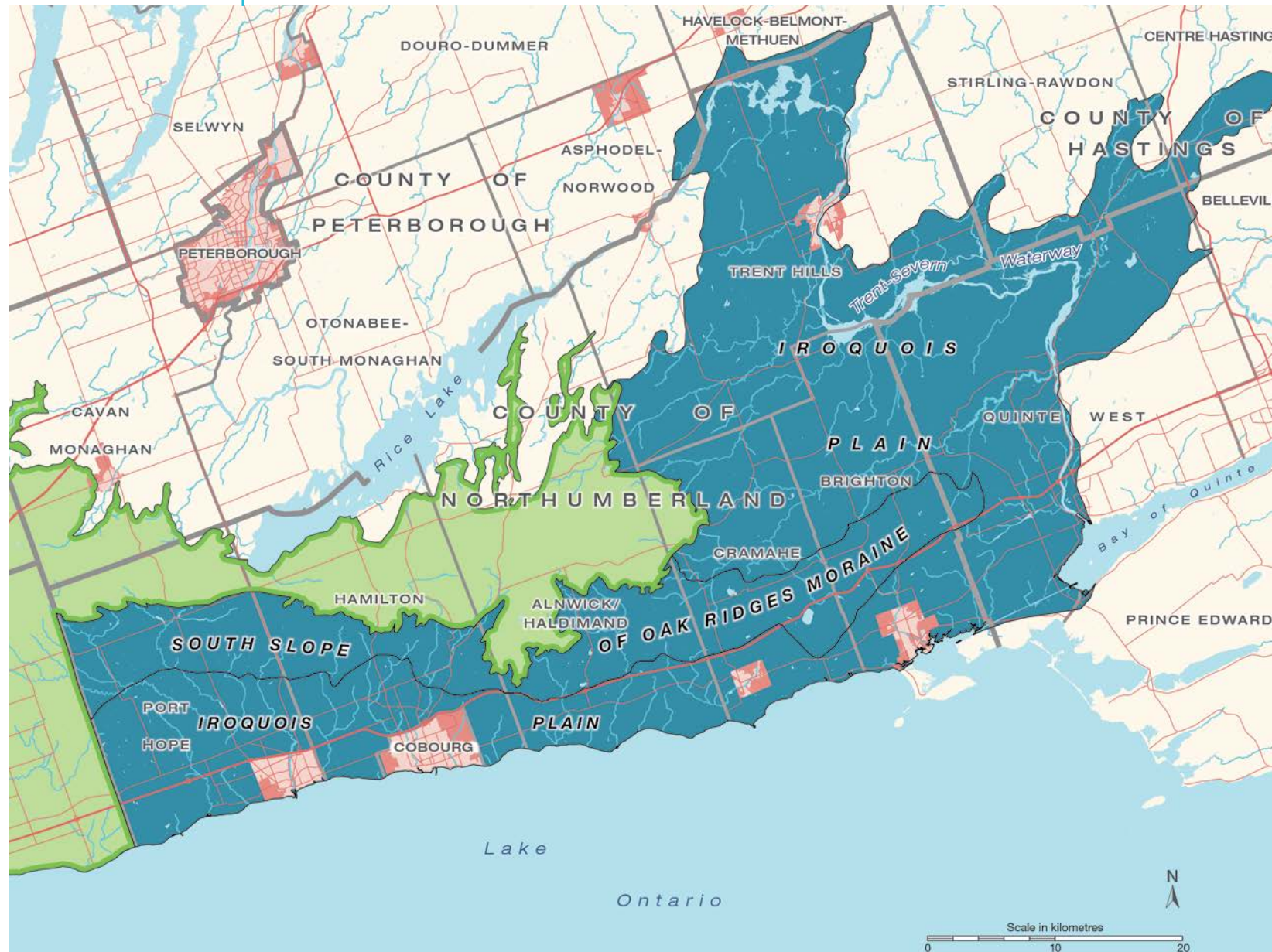






Photo: Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation



Photo: Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation



Photo: Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition

# Water Pressure, Growing Pains

The Greenbelt works together with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to protect what sustains us and steer sustainable growth. But more needs to be done to build livable, complete communities. The region must accommodate an estimated 4 million more residents by 2041 without increasing pressure on vulnerable water supplies, and in so doing undermining our health and prosperity.

Protecting the proposed 'Bluebelt' from urban development is particularly important for inland communities such as Waterloo, Guelph-Wellington and Simcoe County, as they rely heavily on groundwater supplies. The only alternative—building costly infrastructure to pipe in water from the Great Lakes—will cause urban sprawl outside built-up areas, paving over areas important for preventing downstream flooding and recharging aquifers.

## Protect, don't pave

An historic review of the Greenbelt and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, chaired by former Toronto Mayor David Crombie, recommends directing the majority of growth to existing urban areas, greater protection of the agricultural and natural systems outside the Greenbelt, and growing the Greenbelt to permanently protect critical water supplies.





Photo: Tanya Biglieri

# Act now to protect our water forever

1

Send a letter to Ted McMeekin, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and let him know you want to grow the Greenbelt to protect vital water supplies and direct future urban growth to existing urban areas. Go to [www.growourgreenbelt.ca](http://www.growourgreenbelt.ca)

2

Be part of the movement – use **#GROWOURGB** on social media to join the conversation

3

Connect with other champions in your community at [www.growourgreenbelt.ca](http://www.growourgreenbelt.ca)

 H<sub>2</sub>O

The province is asking where to grow the Greenbelt. The proposed Bluebelt protects drinking water supplies for 1.25 million residents. By 2041, this number is forecast to rise to over 2 million.

 9/10

Nine in ten Ontarians say growing the Greenbelt is important to protect water, farmland, and natural habitats from sprawl.



## Supporting Groups

AWARE Simcoe  
Concerned Citizens of Brant  
Couchiching Conservancy  
David Suzuki Foundation  
Earthroots  
EcoSpark  
Environment Hamilton  
Environmental Defence  
Food and Water First  
Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation  
Grand River Environmental Network  
Lake Ontario Waterkeeper  
Midhurst Ratepayers Association  
Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt  
National Farmers Union – Brant/Hamilton/Halton  
National Farmers Union – Ontario  
Ontario Farmland Preservation  
Ontario Greenbelt Alliance (117 members and growing)  
Ontario Land Trust Alliance  
Ontario Nature  
Ontario Network on Ecosystem Services  
Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) Coalition  
Sierra Club of Ontario  
Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition  
Smart Growth Waterloo  
Stop the Drop  
Sustainable Brant  
Sustainable Cobourg  
Toronto Environmental Alliance  
Tutela Heights Phelps Road Residents Association  
Water is Life: Water Justice Coalition  
Wellington Water Watchers

## Join the Movement

Over 100 community groups want to  
**#GROWOURGB**

Join them at  
**[www.growourgreenbelt.ca](http://www.growourgreenbelt.ca)**