



## **Greenbelt Primer**

This Greenbelt Primer outlines the benefits the Greenbelt provides to residents in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and highlights key facts you may wish to share while speaking in your community.

At over 2 million acres, Ontario's Greenbelt stretches from Niagara to Northumberland, and north to Tobermory. The Greenbelt protects farmland, forests, wetlands and rivers from urban development. Its urban river valleys flow through major urban centres and small communities to Lake Ontario.

The Greenbelt's permanence ensures the character of rural communities is preserved and stops farmland loss in our region. Its protected watersheds provide clean drinking water for millions of Ontarians in Greenbelt communities.

### **The Greenbelt & Farming**

The Greenbelt protects farmland and the agricultural system on some of Ontario's most productive farmland. This protection supports economic activity and vitality in our rural countryside.

- ✓ Family farming – there are 5,500 farms in the Greenbelt
- ✓ Highly productive – Greenbelt farms are 33% smaller but produce 12% more income than the average Ontario farm
- ✓ Prime farmland – the Greenbelt grows 55% of Ontario's fruit and 13% of its vegetables, and protects Ontario's two specialty crop areas: the Niagara Tender Fruit Area and the Holland Marsh

Niagara – Niagara's Tender Fruit Speciality Crop Area grows over 80% of Ontario's peaches, pears, plums, cherries, and grapes. Protecting this special growing area is essential for the success of Niagara's wine and stone fruit industries.

York Region – At the heart of York Region's farming sector, the Holland Marsh is known as Ontario's 'vegetable patch'. Farming in the Holland Marsh generates over \$50 million worth of produce each year.

### **The Greenbelt & Recreation/Tourism**

The Greenbelt offers active outdoor recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities, improving health and wellbeing. Tourism in the Greenbelt brings economic vitality to towns and villages, and supports Ontario's powerhouse local wine and beer industries.

- ✓ Cycling – the Greenbelt Route is a 475km cycling route, bringing cyclists through Greenbelt communities to shop, eat, drink and explore
- ✓ Walking & Hiking – Over 10,000km of walking trails welcome hikers of all abilities every year. It's the largest trail network in Canada.
- ✓ Good jobs – Recreation and tourism contribute over 97,000 jobs to the economy
- ✓ Strong economy - \$2.1 billion in recreation activity generated by the Greenbelt every year. From birding to angling to cross-country skiing, the opportunities in the Greenbelt are endless.



The protected vineyards in Niagara bring in tourists from all over Ontario and support local businesses.

In addition to the Greenbelt Route, local cycling loops in Hamilton, Halton, Peel, York, Durham and Northumberland regions take cyclists on adventures throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Studies have shown cyclists spend more money at local businesses than other visitors.

### **The Greenbelt & the Environment**

The Greenbelt is an environmental policy that people like, protecting wildlife and natural systems we all rely on.

- ✓ Protection from Climate Change Impacts – the Greenbelt’s protected wetlands help to prevent flooding, protecting \$224m in private property from stormwater risk every year
- ✓ A sponge for carbon pollution – the Greenbelt stores the equivalent of \$11B of carbon dioxide in its forests, soils, wetlands and natural systems
- ✓ Migration pathways –the Greenbelt provides linkages for plants and animals to move throughout the region, helping them respond to changing habitats

In Peel, York, Durham and Northumberland regions, the Oak Ridges Moraine watershed is the headwaters for more than 30 rivers and is home to diverse wildlife and species-at-risk.

### **The Greenbelt & Growth**

The Greater Golden Horseshoe is expected to grow by 4.5 million people over the next 25 years. This growth must be properly managed to prevent more congestion and farmland loss.

- ✓ 1 in 4 Canadians lives in or near the Greenbelt in the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- ✓ More compact communities pay lower property taxes and have lower energy costs than sprawl-based communities
- ✓ Over 300,000 acres of land is available for development without touching the Greenbelt – there is enough land designated to accommodate growth to 2031 and beyond

Transit investments are only possible when there are enough people living in close proximity to use the service. The viability of important transit projects are linked to keeping growth concentrated in already built-up areas.