



For immediate release

The Province's coordinated land use review is on the right track, but questions remain

Bolder action needed to grow the Greenbelt, protect species at risk and halt urban sprawl for good

TORONTO—May 18, 2017

After a 26 month review, the Government of Ontario is generally heading in the right direction with updated policies that govern the Oak Ridges Moraine, Greenbelt, Niagara Escarpment and growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), but some key missteps indicate a questionable commitment to the long-term protection of the region's water, nature and communities.

The coordinated review has been coloured by a dramatic attempt by the development industry to misrepresent the Greenbelt's role in limiting housing supply and increasing prices. This came to a head last week when provincial planner Victor Doyle squashed the misinformation campaign. "The Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt have increased the prosperity of those living within the GGH," remarks Joyce Chau, Executive Director of EcoSpark. "I hope today's announcement marks an end to this inaccurate rhetoric. The government needs to step up and get to the important task of growing the Greenbelt to protect vulnerable water supplies that are threatened by development pressures in communities like Simcoe and Brant County."

Disappointing policy changes in the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine include significantly weakening protections for the habitat of endangered species. "We are taken aback that policy safeguards for our most vulnerable plants and animals were removed," says Dr. Anne Bell, Ontario Nature's Director of Conservation and Education. "On one hand we're pleased the government has committed to protecting the Greater Golden Horseshoe's natural heritage system. On the other hand, if the policies don't protect species at risk in the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt, where is there left for those species to go?"

Changes to Greenbelt settlement areas raise questions about the Province's commitment to end urban sprawl. "There is no shortage of land for housing with many thousands of acres pre-approved for development across the region," says Debbe Crandall, Policy Director at Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) Coalition. "The province pulled back from freezing urban boundary expansions at this stage. We will be closely watching to ensure that new clarity in the plans will eliminate ongoing land speculation on prime farmland, important natural spaces and the edges of rural communities. Our fight will continue."

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Ontario Nature protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. Ontario Nature is a charitable organization representing more than 30,000 members and supporters, and 150 member groups across Ontario. For more information, visit www.ontarionature.org.

EcoSpark is an environmental charity whose mission is to empower communities to take an active role in protecting and sustaining their local environment. We do this by giving people the tools for education, monitoring and influencing positive change. We have directly worked with over 64,000 people in over 20 watersheds across Southern Ontario. For more information, visit www.ecospark.ca.

Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition (STORM) is focused on protecting the ecological integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Since 1989, STORM has been working at the local and regional levels to ensure that municipalities make good planning decisions to protect its ecological and hydrological functions. For more information, visit www.stormcoalition.org.

Earthroots is a grassroots conservation organization that works aggressively to protect wilderness, wildlife and watersheds in Ontario through research, education and action. We achieved effective protection of threatened ecosystems for over 20 years on behalf of our approximately 12,000 supporters in the province. For more information, visit www.earthroots.org.