



Media Advisory
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**Province announces strong intentions for Greater Golden Horseshoe:
Strong follow-through now needed**

Mississauga, May 10, 2016 – The Ontario government released its draft amendments to the plans that protect the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine, and Niagara Escarpment, and guide growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). These amendments are a promising move towards building ecological resiliency and healthy communities in an area under tremendous pressure from sprawling urban development. Bold leadership is now needed from the Province to quickly and decisively act on these good intentions.

In the face of climate change and a rapidly growing population, the government must defend water, nature and communities in the GGH so it remains ecologically viable and a great place to live.

“We commend the Province for taking immediate steps towards growing our Greenbelt into 21 urban river valleys, their coastal wetlands and select water sources like Lake Gibson,” says Joyce Chau, Executive Director of EcoSpark. “To truly protect the region’s water, we are expecting swift action to ensure a bluebelt of vulnerable water supplies in the GGH, like the Oro Moraine, just north of Barrie, are added to the Greenbelt.”

Earthroots, EcoSpark, STORM and Ontario Nature have been leading voices for bluebelt and natural areas protection in the GGH. The partnership is calling for stronger protection of the region’s natural areas that, among other ecological services, support wildlife and buffer communities from the impacts of climate change.

“We’re pleased that the Province has stepped up to the plate and is committed to protect and map the region’s natural heritage system,” says Caroline Schultz, Executive Director of Ontario Nature. “This is our insurance policy to enhance community resilience to extreme weather and other impacts of climate change.”

The government must contain urban sprawl and direct infrastructure to existing built-up areas to protect natural areas and headwaters. “Increases in density and intensification targets, as announced by the Province, are important steps to curb ever expanding urban sprawl,” says Debbe Crandall, Director, Policy, for Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) Coalition. “Our worry is that the needs of rural communities on the Moraine and Greenbelt are getting lost in the mix. We are asking that this review do more than just tweak a few rules; what’s needed is a comprehensive re-think on how to spark innovation to achieve multiple goals of ecological and social system health and viability of our rural countryside.”

“The Province’s draft amendments move us in the right direction,” says Josh Garfinkel Director, Southern Ontario Campaigns, for Earthroots. “We will be pushing the Province for strong implementation of these plans, with a need for added monitoring and enhancement of our natural areas.”

Today's announcement marks the start of the final chance for public input in to the Coordinated Land Use Planning Review and is a tremendous opportunity for the Province to take bold action in the face of increasing pressure from urbanization. The Province must take the lead on protecting water and nature, and building sustainable communities or more ground will be lost.

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For media inquiries please contact:

John Hassell, Ontario Nature: 416-786-2171, johnh@ontarionature.org

Josh Garfinkel, Earthroots: 416-562-3894, joshg@earthroots.org

Debbe Crandall, STORM: 905-880-4804, debbeday@rogers.com

To see a map of the vulnerable water supplies in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, visit: onnaturemagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/Growing-Greenbelt_NOV_3.jpg.

For a photo of a Greenbelt farm, visit: www.ontarionature.org/images/farmeastgwillimbury.jpg.

For a photo of a Greenbelt stream, visit: www.ontarionature.org/images/watercaledon.jpg.

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.

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.

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. To date, we have directly worked with over 57,000 people from across Southern Ontario in over 20 watersheds. For more information, visit www.ecospark.ca.

Earthroots is a grassroots conservation organization that works aggressively to protect wilderness, wildlife and watersheds in Ontario through research, education and action. Our dedicated staff and focused campaigns have achieved effective protection of threatened ecosystems for over 20 years on behalf of our approximately 12,000 supporters in the province. We use many techniques to propel issues forward including public education, advocacy, primary and secondary research, media awareness and creative peaceful activism. For more information, visit www.earthroots.org.