



Re: EBR Registry Number PF04E0002

**FRIENDS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT
(FORCE)
RESPONSE TO
"TOWARD A GOLDEN HORSESHOE GREENBELT-
GREENBELT TASK FORCE DISCUSSION PAPER"**

July 15, 2004

StopTheQuarry.ca

F O R C E - Lawson Park Ltd., Box 15, RR # 1, Freelon, ON L0R 1K0

Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt

Thank you for the opportunity to input to the Provincial Greenbelt Task Force recommendations. Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Provincial Government for moving quickly to honour an election commitment to establish and protect a Greenbelt zone in the Golden Horseshoe. We also commend the Greenbelt Task Force members for their time, commitment, and work, to date, on this important initiative.

Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE)

Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) is a citizen-based advocacy group which was formed in June 2004. We have organized in order to protect the fragile natural and built environments in our communities and to oppose the Lowndes Open Pit Mine (hereinafter referred to as the quarry) proposed on 11th Concession East in the North Flamborough portion of the City of Hamilton. We believe that the planning issues facing our communities are a microcosm of the broader issues facing the province and communities across the Greenbelt. As such, we believe we have a responsibility to participate in the formal and informal processes afforded by the City of Hamilton on relevant issues and to input to proposed changes to the provincial planning policy regime.

Greenbelt Vision and Goals

FORCE supports smart growth, the provincial growth management initiative, source water protection, proposed directions for planning reform, and Greenbelt protection, in general. Indeed, it is difficult to take exception with the vision, goals, and core elements of the Greenbelt Task Force's Discussion Paper.

The following modifications are, however, recommended:

- * Specific reference of the need to integrate the Greenbelt protection measures with the wider reforms of land use and infrastructure planning in Southern Ontario
- * Specific reference to containment of urban sprawl
- * Specific reference to source water protection
- * Improvements to the transportation and infrastructure section and approach
 - o Protection of the core Greenbelt area from major transportation and infrastructure
 - o Multi-use infrastructure corridor planning versus single proponent initiatives
 - o Full need/justification and alternative assessments
 - o Focus on Greenbelt enhancement
- * Improvements to the aggregates section and approach
 - o Protection of the core Greenbelt area from new aggregate development
 - o Protection of primary resources (surface and groundwater) and natural heritage features (ANSIs and provincially significant wetlands) from new aggregate development
 - o Implementation of corollary MNR policies

- * Explicit reference to the other corollary policies/programs that need to be developed/improved in relevant ministries to support the Greenbelt and its protection
 - o Clear priority setting within the Provincial Policy Statement
 - o Better demand/utilization management of the aggregate resource by MNR, including updated resource mapping which explicitly considers existing incompatible uses and establishes detailed context appropriate extraction and rehabilitation objectives rather than uncoordinated license-specific solutions
 - o Reform of the Aggregates Resources Act
 - o Appropriate funding for ecologically sustainable agriculture

Priority setting among the 5 layers - Critical to a "Conservation First" approach and to provide all users with certainty

FORCE believes that there is a missing piece of the work, necessary before the Greenbelt Long Term Protection Strategy is finalized and before this initiative gets to the working group stage. That work is priority setting among the 5 layers of the Greenbelt, especially when they are in conflict with one another. We recommend that the Task Force establish clear priorities for the Greenbelt in terms of its 5 layers and through the revised Provincial Policy Statement. Clear designation of areas such as core and beyond, akin to the Niagara Escarpment Plan, will be important as well with clarification of the priorities within each zone. Clear rules will permit municipalities to make local decisions locally and experience fewer appeals to provincial tribunals, like the Ontario Municipal Board, which are removed from local experience and context.

It is very clear that urban uses, principally housing development, are to be dissuaded in the greenbelt and rural areas, in favour of core redevelopment, brownfield sites, and other available lands in urban settlement areas. What is less clear is how other uses in rural areas are to be treated. The discussion paper speaks to the 5 layers of the Greenbelt - environmental protection, agricultural protection, transportation and infrastructure, natural resources, and culture, recreation & tourism - noting that no priority should be taken from their order and that their relevance/priority will vary regionally based on the geography of the Greenbelt.

We believe that is not enough.

We all know that other layers -for example, transportation & infrastructure and natural resources - let's just call it aggregates - are important to our existing and future community health and economic growth so we are not writing in as "anti-roads" nor "anti-aggregates" activists. Indeed, visit our communities and you will find some of the largest aggregate operations in the province.

What we would like you to take away from this written brief, however, are the concepts of "Conservation First" and "Certainty".

The preamble of the Greenbelt Protection Act speaks distinctly to containing further urban sprawl and protecting environmentally sensitive land and farmland for the long term. These are the 2 priorities. Now, we must answer how we protect what little is left of them. This requires provincial leadership. Local autonomy, lack of a Greenbelt strategy, and unclear rules in the current Provincial Policy Statement are what got us here. The Greenbelt Task Force work has outlined some of the answers but more direction is needed on the 2 priorities, how to ensure consistency across the Greenbelt, and how to resolve conflicts when important uses are raised which challenge the primacy of environmental protection and agricultural uses.

We can perhaps learn more about how to give those 2 priorities precedence by looking to work in the conservation community. Consider World Wildlife Fund (WWF's) Conservation First Principle: there should be no new or expanded uses until a network of protected areas is reserved which adequately represents the natural regions affected by that development". We need to ensure that protected areas are just that - look at the map of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance for areas that are currently protected and suggestions for those that need more protection in order to ensure a robust Greenbelt. Let's get busy and carve up the map. Then, sensitive development can proceed outside of protected areas using the latest technology and approaches to minimize adverse impacts on wildlife, ecosystem function, or local cultures and to enhance the Greenbelt environment.

Ensuring sensitive development on the landscape outside protected areas through advanced land-use planning provides certainty. Then - everyone knows what uses can occur, where, and can make purchase and investment decisions appropriately - that is certainty. Certainty is important for everyone - for farmers, other agricultural operators, recreation & tourist operators, aggregate producers, homeowners and others.

Further, if you do your jobs well - and if the province does its job well through establishment of the appropriate legislative enabling framework and implementation tools like the Provincial Policy Statement - then, municipalities outside the Niagara Escarpment Commission jurisdiction will reflect the Greenbelt appropriately and consistently in their Official Plans and in their planning processes. That should mean fewer use conflicts and fewer appeals to existing tribunals, like the OMB, and to any that are established in the future.

The Proposed Lowndes' Quarry

To give you an example of why priority setting, certainty and recommendations around the tools to achieve these are important, FORCE would like to raise a local case study. Our communities are very concerned and opposed to a greater than 380 acre aggregate extraction operation being proposed for 11th Concession East in the North Flamborough portion of the City of Hamilton. An application is being prepared but has not yet been officially filed since the City of Hamilton cannot legally receive one for a zoning change under the moratorium. There is the opinion that an Official Plan amendment may be required as well. No license application to MNR, under the Aggregates Act, has yet been submitted.

To give you a flavour, for those who are not familiar with it, the area is rural in the Official Plan. The specific property is zoned agricultural and conservation management. It is not zoned for aggregate extraction, although there is identification of some sand and gravel potential in the area. The specific property and/or adjacent area is in the "foothills" of the Niagara Escarpment, is home to provincially significant wetlands, Bronte Creek and its tributaries, North Carlisle #2 Forest (designated an environmentally sensitive area) and other significant terrestrial ecology, and their wildlife and habitat, including the threatened Jefferson salamander. The area concessions are home to individual residences and an active agricultural economy: beef and dairy, sheep, vegetable, and fruit farms, burgeoning organic farms of a variety of types, and horse breeding, training & stabling operations which service nearby Flamborough Downs and Mohawk Raceway, among others. Family tourism opportunities also exist on the concessions. Three subdivisions, including one that is high density and was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board over the objections of the municipality, directly abut the proposed quarry grounds. Another subdivision is a short distance down the 11th . Two schools - Balaclava Public and the recently constructed Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic schools - along with a child care centre are located one concession south of the proposed quarry on the 10th . Area students are bussed on the narrow (no shoulder) concessions. The village of Carlisle and its quaint town centre - the famous "four corners" are but a stone's throw away. Groundwater quantity and quality protection is already a significant issue in the area with the City of Hamilton studying how to address short and long term concerns related to its wellheads and recharge areas that service Carlisle and nearby Freelon, Greensville and Lynden.

The current and future battles over this matter, and many others like it, would not be needed if priorities were set amongst the uses, especially when they are in conflict with one another.

Ontario Greenbelt Alliance

Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) is a new member of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance and endorses its response to the Greenbelt Task Force Discussion Paper submitted on June 24, 2004.

Thank You

We look forward to working with the Task Force, the Province and the City of Hamilton to help establish a meaningful and sustainable protected Greenbelt.

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