

Staff Report 2021-0192

Meeting Date: May 18, 2021

Subject: Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt

Submitted By: Bailey Loverock, Community Planner, Policy, Heritage & Design Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the comments attached as Schedule A regarding consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt, outlined in Staff Report 2021-0192, be endorsed; and

That a copy of Staff Report 2021-0192 be provided to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Regional Municipality of Peel.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is seeking feedback on ways to grow the size and further enhance the quality of the Greenbelt with a priority of lands focused on the Paris Galt Moraine, and ideas for adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys.
- A large portion of Caledon is already identified in the Greenbelt Plan. Urban River Valley designations currently apply to all of the major river valleys in Caledon connecting the Greenbelt to Lake Ontario.
- Staff is of the opinion that there are no additional significant lands within Caledon which meets the criteria to be included in the Greenbelt.

DISCUSSION

Background

The purpose of this report is to summarize the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) 019-3136 post “Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt” released February 17, 2021, by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Comments on the proposal were due on April 19, 2021.

The posting is about a policy proposal requesting feedback on ways to grow the size of the Greenbelt. The proposal identifies a study area focused on the Paris Galt Moraine and ideas for adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys (URV) as priorities. The consultation is also seeking suggestions on other potential areas to grow the Greenbelt.

Six principles were identified to guide expansions to the Greenbelt. They include:

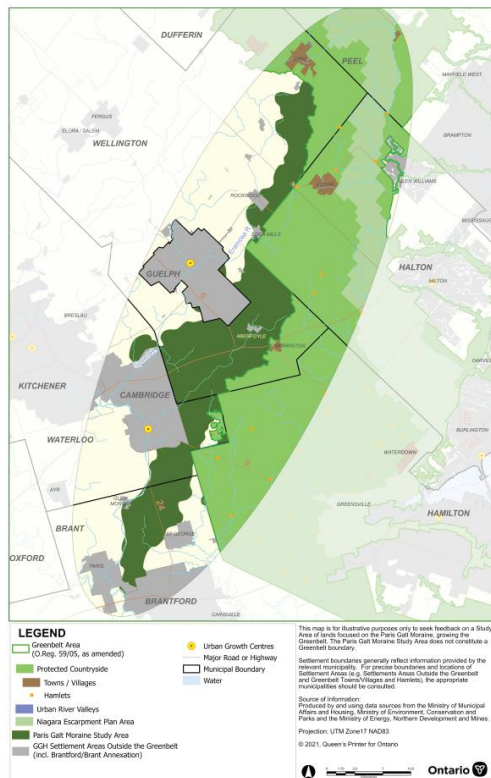
1. No consideration of removal requests or land exchanges
2. No consideration of policy changes

3. Supports Greenbelt Plan objectives, vision and goals
4. Follows Existing Amendment Process set out in Greenbelt Act, 2005
5. Connects physically and/or functionally to the current Greenbelt
6. Considers impacts on existing provincial priorities outlined in Provincial Policy Statement and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Paris Galt Moraine

The Paris Galt Moraine is a feature that runs from Caledon in the northeast to Brantford in the southwest. Like the Oak Ridges Moraine, it is an area of rolling, hilly terrain that is the headwaters for many rivers and streams flowing off of it. Comprised of sand and gravel deposits, it helps to protect and recharge the groundwater aquifers that provide the basis for a broad range of needs, including drinking water supply for many communities, sustaining local ecosystems, and growth and economic management. The map provided is considered a general study area and does not represent definite limits.

Growing the Greenbelt Study Area – Paris Galt Moraine

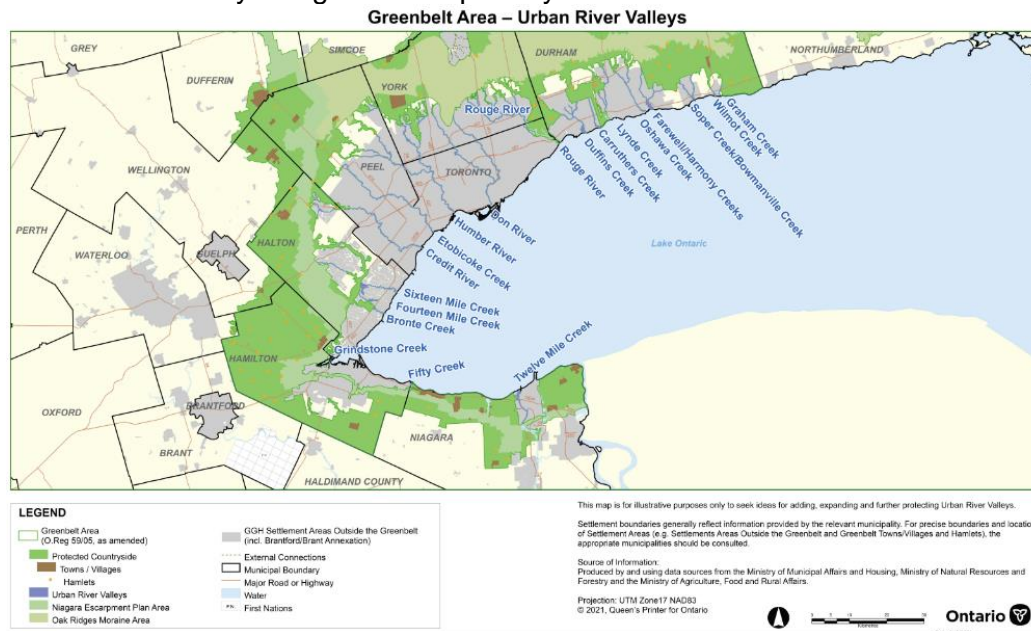


Paris Galt Moraine Study Area per ERO posting

Urban River Valleys

Urban River Valley areas were added to the Greenbelt after the Plan's initial approval in 2005. The lands in this designation comprise river valleys and associated lands and are generally characterized by being publicly owned lands containing natural and hydrologic features, including coastal wetlands, and/or lands designated in Official Plans for uses such as parks, open space, recreation, conservation and environmental protection.

The Greenbelt identifies the process for including privately owned lands under the URV designation. A municipality would have to endorse by resolution the request of a property owner for their lands to be added to the Greenbelt and be subject to the policies of the Urban River Valley designation for publicly owned lands.



Identified Urban River Valleys in the Greenbelt

Six key questions are posed by the Province to guide responses to this proposal. The response addresses the questions:

- What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of the Study Area of the Paris Galt Moraine?
- What are the considerations in moving from a Study Area to a more defined boundary of the Paris Galt Moraine?
- What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys?
- Do you have suggestions for other potential areas to grow the Greenbelt?
- How should we balance or prioritize any potential Greenbelt expansion with the other provincial priorities mentioned above?
- Are there other priorities that should be considered?

Overview of Town Comments

Town staff fully support the Ministry's efforts to protect and maintain the Greenbelt as it is home to much of Ontario's vital environmental, groundwater and agricultural resources; however, staff is of the opinion that there are no additional significant lands within Caledon which meets the criteria to be included in the Greenbelt.

The comments suggest that any features identified to be added to the Greenbelt be identified using rigorous scientific methods of evaluation. The criteria, transparency and justification of their inclusion should be highly defensible. Environmental and agricultural resources associated with large areas of rural land should continue to be viewed as fixed

or non-reclaimable resources that reduce in viability once fragmented. Prioritizing the maintenance or enhancement of restrictions on their use or division maximizes their viability and can always accommodate future change when justified. Once altered to accommodate other provincial priorities, the features intended to be protected by the Greenbelt Plan cannot be fully reclaimed.

With regards to the Province's interest in adding, expanding and further protecting URVs, the Province is requested to consider removing any policy that establishes or enacts differing protective requirements upon lands based on the status of private or public ownership. Such status should have no bearing on requirements, efforts or opportunities to protect shared or influenced features that are recognized as having environmental significance. Specific areas urban valleys have been historically developed within floodplains and in some cases are subject to Special Policy Area floodplain designations including in Downtown Bolton. An expansion of the URV designation and Greenbelt Area boundary in these locations would result in misalignment of the policy intent of the Greenbelt Plan and not provide a policy framework needed to support appropriate planning for these areas.

River systems in Caledon are anticipated to be impacted by increased stream temperatures, erosion and levels of nutrients; localized flooding, spread of invasive species and promoting favorable conditions for algae blooms. Expanding buffers, where it makes sense, will contribute to the ability of these river systems to adapt to rising temperatures and extreme weather conditions, by protecting and enhancing the natural features surrounding them.

A current challenge exists when applying Greenbelt policy at the municipal level when the boundaries of the policy area bisect existing lots of record, resulting in the potential for differing policy requirements, development pressures and protective capabilities between segments of shared land uses or facilities at individual properties. Comments suggest the Greenbelt Plan can be better applied at the municipal level by ensuring boundaries are logical.

Other Priorities

Through comments provided to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on other policy proposals, Council has advocated for amendments that better support agri-tourism operations in Caledon. This issue remains a priority and it is recommended that the Province increase permissions for agri-tourism operations within the Greenbelt Plan and Prime Agricultural Areas, which will enable agricultural operators, including smaller farms, to have more flexibility and to be able to diversify. Permitting additional uses within the Greenbelt will benefit local economies and allow for agricultural uses to be maintained.

The Town of Caledon has significant agricultural and tourism-based industries, and some residents and businesses have found it challenging to operate under the existing policy framework.

Other recommendations include examining opportunities for setting severance or lot line adjustments restrictions that best protect the standard of 40-hectare (100 acres) lot sizes. Setting minimum lot sizes of 22-hectares (55 acres) for new properties (both created and retained) in the Greenbelt Plan Area going forward could be considered. More targeted

consultation should be carried out between the Ministry and specific landowners should expansion to the Greenbelt be considered within Caledon.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report.

COUNCIL WORK PLAN

Not applicable.

NEXT STEPS

The response (Schedule A to this report) has been provided to the Ministry noting that comments are subject to Council's review and endorsement.

The letter also requests that further consultation with stakeholders/landowners should be considered if the Province pursues adding additional lands in Caledon to the Greenbelt.

ATTACHMENTS

Schedule A: Letter dated April 19, 2021 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing containing initial staff comments on the ERO posting