



REMARKS TO THE GREENBELT CONSULTATION – NOVEMBER 18, 2004

THANK YOU

- Thank you for the opportunity to input to this next stage of the Greenbelt Plan's development

INTRODUCTION

- Represent Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE)
- Federally incorporated not-for-profit - citizen-based advocacy group – hundreds of supporters in Campbellville, rural Milton, Kilbride, Mountsberg, Freelon, and Carlisle
- Formed in June 2004 to protect our natural and built environments in the face of a proposed large-scale, below the established water table, aggregate operation

FORCE APPLAUDS THE GREENBELT INITIATIVE

- FORCE supports the permanent Greenbelt initiative
- applauds the long term vision demonstrated by the province
- Greenbelt not just about preservation of agricultural lands and natural features - about our health and providing a sustainable economy
- Protecting interconnected greenspaces - an important legacy for us, our children and their children
- Greenbelt not a “slam dunk” win for our communities but still important
- Aggregate development still permitted within the Greenbelt - a recognition that aggregate is a necessary resource for our homes, roads, and public institutions - but
- Look at the “big picture” - entire Government of Ontario speaking and saying “ecology first”

- Increased protection for sensitive watersheds, provincially significant wetlands, significant woodlots, and other natural heritage features is very positive
- FORCE looks forward to working with the Province, our area municipalities, and other stakeholders to implement that vision locally

LOCAL ISSUE IS A MICROCOSM OF LARGER PROVINCIAL INTERESTS

- Communities within the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt area – part of the proposed “Natural Heritage System” in the “protected countryside”
- Groundwater quantity and quality already significant issues and our sensitive aquifers exist in the Amabel Formation
- Provincially significant wetlands, Bronte Creek and tributaries, significant woodlots/environmentally sensitive areas, and habitat and wintering areas for a number of species
- Residential subdivisions, rural concession homes, schools and community centres fragment the area
- Active agricultural economy
- Identified sand and gravel mineral potential
- Specific proposal lands zoned for agriculture and conservation management
- Active file proposal for aggregate development – OPA amendment and zoning by-law amendment requests submitted to the City of Hamilton in September 2004
- Conflicting provincial and local interests and incompatible land uses
- FORCE feels a responsibility to input to broader provincial policy development not just to address our local issue

TRANSITION ISSUES

- Want to focus main remarks today on how the Greenbelt will be applied
- Important to remember that the Minister issued a zoning order and introduced then Bill 27 – creating the Greenbelt area for protected study – in December 2003
- These 2 instruments created the development moratorium in effect until December 2004 and ideally the Greenbelt should exist as of Dec 2003
- Understandable that a “clean go forward policy” might be desirable
- Easy to apply this to “urban use” applications in rural areas, especially residential development, which are prohibited until December 16, 2004
- Transition lacks consistency and coherence, especially if significant applications made after the Greenbelt was announced are exempt from Bill 135
- Province needs to recognize that there are some “rural use” applications that will have a significant impact on the Greenbelt and should be subject to its higher standards – especially those relating to hydrological and ecological integrity – as part of the approvals process

- An example - the aggregate proposal in our area was submitted in late September 2004, just 3 months prior to December 16, 2004
- Specific land within the Greenbelt – within the proposed natural heritage system lands and there are significant hydrological and ecological issues
- FORCE’s expectation: Greenbelt legislation, plan and policies will apply to the approvals process for the first “greenfield” aggregate proposal in this area in decades – in the new permanent Greenbelt
- planning regime of the previous government is not a high enough standard for this government’s legacy policy

TRANSITION OPTIONS

- Several options to make transition work between then Bill 27 & 135 work:
 - Possible Amendments to Bill 135
 1. Amend section 24(4)(b) and (d) of Bill 135 to “raise the bar” such that the time of commencement for a request for an OPA or zoning by-law amendment is **not** simply on the day the request is received, including those requested before December 2004, but rather when a municipal council decision is made or similar
 2. Amend section 24(4)(b) and (d) of Bill 135 as per above but narrow its breadth to specify that this applies to rural use applications submitted between December 16, 2003 and December 16, 2004
 3. Amend section 24(4)(b) and (d) of Bill 135 as per above but further narrow the breadth to specify that this applies to significant rural use applications, such as for Industrial/Industrial Extractive
- Or
- Possible Prescription Regulations (may require date amendment in Bill 135 – sections 22-24 to permit retroactive application)
 1. Implement a General Prescription regulation as per section 24(3) of Bill 135 (see Oakridges Moraine prescription regulation) that applies the Greenbelt Plan provisions to applications, matters or proceedings commenced before December 16, 2004 that involve sensitive hydrogeological and natural heritage features
 2. Implement a Specific Prescription regulation as per section 24(3) with respect to a series of applications that were commenced before December 16, 2004 (i.e. Lowndes Holdings’ OPA and zoning bylaw request to City of Hamilton, on September 20, 2004) such that they shall be prescribed to conform to the policies of the Greenbelt Plan

THANK YOU

- Thank you again for opportunity to address you this evening
- FORCE will be tabling a more detailed paper prior to the consultation deadline
- Look forward to further discussions on this matter and to the government response