

## MUNICIPAL LEADERS FOR THE GREENBELT

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Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt urge Ontario to add one million acres to Ontario's Greenbelt and create Ontario's first Food Belt; *Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt also launch the 2014 Municipal Election Greenbelt Pledge*

Toronto, ON – Today, Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt (MLGB) – mayors and councillors from across the GTA – urged the Ontario government to take some bold actions and stand up for Ontario's green spaces, watersheds, farmland and natural heritage systems.

The MLGB co-Chairs – Oakville Mayor Rob Burton, Guelph Mayor Karen Farbridge, Ajax Mayor Steve Parish and Toronto Councillor Glenn DeBaeremaeker – were at Queen's Park today to urge Ontario to take the following steps: Expand the Greenbelt by an additional 1 million acres; Create Ontario's (and Canada's) first Food Belt consisting of 200,000 acres for farming; Reduce red tape for municipalities who want to grow the Greenbelt in their communities.

“The threat of urban sprawl is on the Greenbelt's doorstep. It's time for a bold plan to expand the Greenbelt and permanently protect one million more acres of sensitive environmental lands and farmland. Let's build on the success of Ontario's world renowned Greenbelt and help it grow to 3 million acres across the Greater Golden Horseshoe region,” says Toronto Councillor De Baeremaeker.

“Since the Greenbelt was established in 2005, growth pressures have impacted our communities. With even more growth expected, farmland that gives Ontarians access to healthy, high quality, local food is at risk of being paved over. Establishing a food belt would protect some of Canada's best and remaining farmlands threatened by development in the Whitebelt under the *Places to Grow Act*,” says Guelph's Mayor Farbridge.

“As the first municipality in Ontario to grow the Greenbelt, we know firsthand how challenging and slow the process can be. We need a more streamlined approach so municipal governments can respond more easily to what constituents are asking us to do – protect and expand the Greenbelt in our communities,” says Oakville's Mayor Burton.

Today, the Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt also launched their 2014 Municipal Election Greenbelt Pledge, and challenged all candidates in the 2014 election to sign on. A recent study found more than 90 per cent of Ontarians support protecting the Greenbelt's 1.8 million acres.

“In Ajax and across Ontario, it's clear voters care about protecting the Greenbelt and want to elect candidates who value the Greenbelt. Access to nature, local food, and clean water is important to Ontarians. The pledge will help voters easily identify Greenbelt-friendly candidates who care about what matters to Ontarians,” says Ajax Mayor Steve Parish.

Ontario's Greenbelt protects green space, farmland, forests, wetlands, and watersheds, and provides habitat for more than one-third of Ontario's species at risk. Each year, the Greenbelt contributes \$2.7 billion in ecosystem services to Ontario's economy.

#### About Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt

Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt (MLGB) is a network of 70 elected Mayors and Councillors from across the province who support the Greenbelt as a permanent feature of Ontario's landscape. They are committed to protecting the Greenbelt, encouraging the protection and connection of natural heritage systems in Greenbelt adjacent communities, ensuring agriculture thrives and ensuring that planning decisions adhere to the Greenbelt Plan.

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