



Office of the Chief Planner  
Corporate Services Department

## MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Paul Freeman  
Chief Planner

Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.  
Commissioner of Environmental Services

Date: March 26, 2021

Re: York Region's Comments on the Province's Consultation on Growing the Size of the Greenbelt, Environmental Registry Posting # 019-3136

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### **The Province of Ontario is inviting comments on growing the size of the Greenbelt**

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) is seeking feedback on ways to grow the size of the Greenbelt Plan area. Current opportunities for growth include the Paris Galt Moraine (located in the Guelph area) and Urban River Valleys. Through Environmental Registry (ERO) Posting #019-3136, the Province has provided interested parties 61 days to review the proposal with comments due April 19, 2021. The Province has stated removal of lands from the Greenbelt as well as policy changes will not be considered during this review.

Introduced in the 2017 Greenbelt Plan, Urban River Valleys (URV) is a Greenbelt designation that applies to major river valleys that extend through the urban area and connect the Greenbelt Area to Lake Ontario. URVs identified within York Region include the Humber, Don and Rouge Rivers (Attachment 1). The URV designation applies to publicly owned lands designated in official plans for uses such as parks, open space, recreation, conservation and environmental protection.

York Region Council previously submitted comments in [September 2016](#) and [October 2016](#) through the coordinated Provincial Plan review with respect to growing the Greenbelt and at that time proposed that URV policies apply to both public and privately owned lands.

## **Urban River Valleys in this proposal are distinct from, and have a different policy context than, areas of the Greenbelt known as ‘Green Fingers’**

Urban River Valleys contemplated in this posting are geographically distinct from the areas in York Region commonly referred to as ‘Green Fingers’ which are already part of the existing Greenbelt Plan area (See Attachment 1). The Region is in receipt of a Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) application that proposes redesignating Green Fingers located within the cities of Vaughan and Markham from agriculture to rural area in the Regional Official Plan. Information regarding the proposed ROPA will be provided to Council in a separate report within the coming months.

## **Protection of the Greenbelt should not hinder York Region’s ability to service provincially mandated growth**

York Region is forecast to grow to 2.02 million people and 990,000 jobs by 2051. Through the Official Plan Update, York Region will continue to protect Urban River Valleys in a manner consistent with the direction and objectives of the Greenbelt Plan.

Urban River Valley policies in the Greenbelt plan should continue to be sensitive to the infrastructure needs to service growth as mandated by the Growth Plan. It will be critical that the Province maintain the ability to construct infrastructure across Greenbelt Plan areas to support provincially mandated growth. The Region relies on the Duffin Creek Water Pollution Control Plant to service both existing and planned growth. Any expansion of the URV designation should not impact future expansion of the Duffin Creek Water Pollution Control Plant to accommodate the Region’s growth allocations, Growth Plan requirements and related servicing capacity needs. In allowing for growth-related infrastructure, subject to Environmental Assessment approvals, balancing environmental and health protection with the need to service growth should be a key consideration when identifying areas to grow the Greenbelt.

## **Key considerations for focus areas of growing the Greenbelt**

Key considerations on growing the size of the Greenbelt are summarized below and are further described in the proposed submission to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in Attachment 2.

1. Apply Urban River Valley policy protections to publicly and privately owned lands
2. Consider areas for expansion that would improve connectivity between existing natural heritage and water resources systems
3. Provide clarity on how infrastructure can be planned across Greenbelt areas to support growth
4. Provide clarity on what enhanced protection for Urban River Valleys means beyond the Conservation Authority Act

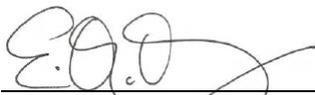
5. Recognize the importance of greenspace and flood protection benefits of green infrastructure

Staff will continue to be engaged in the Provincial consultation process and report back to Council, if necessary.



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Paul Freeman, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Planner



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Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.  
Commissioner of Environmental Services



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Bruce Macgregor  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments (2)  
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