



SMART GROWTH

Waterloo Region

Growing our cities, protecting our countryside

May 28, 2015

RE: Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review Submission

Dear Minister McMeekin,

We at Smart Growth Waterloo Region are delighted to provide comments to the Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review. The four plans under review create a crucial framework for curbing urban sprawl, protecting rural areas, and building more liveable cities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Maintaining and strengthening their provisions are a priority for communities across Ontario.

Here in Waterloo Region, we are proud to be at the forefront of efforts to implement the smart growth approaches required by the Growth Plan, through local adoption of a series of strong policies to promote intensification and density of development. Currently, the Growth Plan is the only one of the four policies under review that significantly supports our community's commitment to smart growth. Unfortunately, and despite many requests during the consultations for its initial creation, significant Waterloo Region lands were not included in the Greenbelt.

As a result of our inclusion in the Growth Plan and general exclusion from the Greenbelt, we have been slated to get all of the growth but none of the protection.

In the absence of the protections afforded by the Greenbelt, the Region of Waterloo has shown enormous leadership in innovating local solutions to protect our countryside and create liveable and intensified communities. To reinforce these local efforts, we are more than ready for inclusion in the Greenbelt.

We urge the government to strongly consider expanding the Greenbelt in Waterloo Region.

Given our strong local policies, little would change on the ground for landowners. But an **extension of the Greenbelt would add a crucial additional layer of protection for our environmentally sensitive landscapes and prime farmland**. This would provide more stability for our community as we pursue smart growth over the coming decades, and ensure that our local protections do not become a target as development pressures to leapfrog the Greenbelt intensify in the future.

The Region of Waterloo's Official Plan was most recently the subject of a dangerous 2013 decision of the Ontario Municipal Board, which the Region appealed with the gracious and crucial support of the

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Province of Ontario. A settlement agreement has just been announced this week, which must still be approved by the Ontario Municipal Board. It seems that the imminent threat posed by the OMB ruling has passed, and the growth-related appeals of Region's Official Plan will soon end so that we can move forward with our community's vision. Yet the court battle has exposed serious issues in the land use planning system, and particularly those that pertain to smart growth efforts.

This co-ordinated review is one crucial component of a broader range of changes that are needed to protect smart growth in communities like Waterloo Region. We are pleased by a number of changes proposed by *Bill 73: Smart Growth for Our Communities Act*, particularly those that restrict wanton OMB appeals of provincially-approved Official Plans built by communities. We also eagerly await the promised review of the Ontario Municipal Board itself, with collaboration between your ministry and the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Taken together, these three crucial processes will go a long way toward ensuring that no community will face what Waterloo Region has faced, and that in the future, no local government will be forced to fight so hard and so long to preserve provincial smart growth policies that are strongly supported by local communities.

We thank you for this opportunity to submit comments to the first phase of this review, and we look forward to hearing your government's proposals and participating in the next phase of consultation.

Sincerely,

Mike Boos, Kate Daley, and Kevin Thomason

Co-Founders, Smart Growth Waterloo Region

www.smartgrowthwaterloo.ca

