

Auditor General's Special Report on Changes to the Greenbelt

WHEREAS Ontario's Greenbelt was established to protect farmland, specialty crop, forests, wetlands, watersheds and communities and also preserves cultural heritage and supports recreation and tourism in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe;

WHEREAS Bill 135 The Greenbelt Act was mandated in 2005 states that it is to be reviewed every ten years, making the first review in 2015 and the next review scheduled for 2025;

WHEREAS Niagara's Official Plan, approved by the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs in 2022:

- outlines a comprehensive land use policy framework to guide growth and development within the region to the year 2051, including policies related to housing; infrastructure, natural environment, climate change, and agriculture;
- has a provision to accommodate required growth of 694,000 people and 272 jobs by the year 2051;
- and establishes a robust Natural Heritage System with stronger protections including biodiversity, linkages and connectivity of natural heritage system that exceeds provincial requirements;
- identifies an agriculture system with a strong, protected, diverse and resilient agriculture economy; and

WHEREAS when the Greenbelt was established in 2005, the province mandated that it be reviewed every ten years and the last review was completed in 2015, meaning the next review would take effect in 2025.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the Provincial government **TAKE** immediate actions on all 15 of the recommendations in the auditor general's report; and
2. That given that the Premier and the Minister of Housing have communicated to us that they were unaware that the pre-selection of lands for removal from the Greenbelt was biased, controlled and directed by the Housing Minister's Chief of Staff (a political public servant) rather than informed by environmental, agricultural and infrastructure considerations, Niagara Regional Council **RECOMMENDS** that the government request that the Housing Ministry, in conjunction with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Indigenous communities and relevant stakeholders, such as impacted municipalities, re-evaluate the 2022 decision to change the Greenbelt boundaries.