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Comment Thank you for the opportunity to comment on "Protecting Water for Future Generations: Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring."

I wish to express my arguments in support of the expansion to the Greenbelt. To achieve this I would like to first explain the reasons behind my convictions.

At least since 1996 when the province introduced its Provincial Policy Statement, all political parties in Ontario have recognized the need to protect Ontario's water sources and, even more urgently, the fertile farmlands south of the Canadian Shield, from excessive urban development. A milestone in achieving this goal was realized in 2005 with the introduction of the Places to Grow Act and the Greenbelt Act. These parcels of legislation were followed in 2006 by the internationally acclaimed Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The new regulations were intended to protect farmland by curbing urban sprawl and reducing the need for long distance commutes.

Unfortunately, in the years that followed, constant lobbying by representatives of the development industry, led to amendments being made to the Growth Plan which were favourable to developer interests. The result has been exactly the kind of urban sprawl that the Growth Plan was created to prevent. Nowhere has this been more evident than in Simcoe County which now has its own chapter in the Growth Plan specifically written for Simcoe. Even more alarming is that some of the rules applicable to Simcoe County contravene the regulations applicable to every other region.

The Growth Plan, together with other well intentioned government initiatives such as the 2005 Intergovernmental Action Plan which cost \$3m, have all failed to provide Simcoe with adequate protection for its source water, farmland and natural heritage.

The Greenbelt Plan in the areas around Toronto, provides a much stronger level of protection, so developers have been leapfrog over the Greenbelt and exploiting farmland in relatively unprotected Simcoe County. Since 2006 development pressures have encouraged local Simcoe councillors to approve what has been termed "an oversupply of land for development".

In the absence of any other effective tools, the new proposal to expand the Greenbelt into Simcoe County seems to be the only remaining protection mechanism available. Failure to curtail the spread of development across Simcoe will, if not already too late, lead to the continued loss of Canada's best farmland, pollution of the the moraines which recharge the aquifers, pollution of rivers and creeks further reducing their assimilative capacity to sustain development and further throttling intercity transportation and impeding access to the recreational areas around Georgian Bay and the Muskoka lakes.

In the opinion of environmentalists and planners alike, the province was correct when, in its 2010 Proposed Amendment 1, it introduced the concept of Interim Settlement Area Boundaries no larger than that required to satisfy provincial population needs to 2031. However, bowing to developmental pressures, the province capitulated and abandoned this proposal, thereby opening the door to so called Strategic Settlement Employment Areas, a so called Special Rule for Midhurst and other unnecessary and extravagant development proposals.

Midhurst in particular remains under threat from a proposal to build many thousands of homes, hours away from employment, in an area with a questionable water supply and where the only outlet for wastewater is tiny Willow Creek, at a point 1km upstream of the internationally recognized Minesing Wetlands. We hope that the province will see fit to expand the Greenbelt as proposed (Areas 4 and 5 of Fig. 4) and protect these class 1 and 2 farmlands in perpetuity, as was originally intended in the 2006 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and in the township's own Springwater Official Plan approved by the province in 1998.

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