



Possibility grows here.

Priorities for the Coordinated 10-Year Review and Long-Term Vision of the Greenbelt

Greenbelt Foundation

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Section 1: Introduction

Over the past 20 years, Ontario’s land use policy framework has made the Greenbelt a global success story. In 2023 and 2024, the province strengthened this legacy by entrenching the Greenbelt’s outer boundary in legislation and carrying forward critical growth management policies from the former A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 (“Growth Plan”), further underscoring the need to protect its vital agricultural and natural systems for the long-term.

A mandated provincial ten-year review (the “Review”) of the Greenbelt Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (the ‘Plans’) is scheduled for 2025. The anticipated Review is an important opportunity to consider the objectives behind the Greenbelt and strengthen and modernize the Plans to reflect new knowledge and regional pressures, community needs and emerging issues such as climate realities. This process helps ensure the Greenbelt and its critical systems and landscapes continue to serve as relevant and vital economic, environmental and agricultural assets for Ontario.

The rapidly growing Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) region increasingly depends on what the Greenbelt provides – particularly as economic challenges, growth pressures and the impacts of climate change intensify. The Greenbelt safeguards highly productive farmland and contributes to Ontario’s \$50 billion agri-food economy, filters over 6.5 trillion litres of water annually through its wetlands, forests and aquifers, mitigates flooding, reduces urban heat, provides needed greenspace, and preserves biodiversity. Its protection is essential to our water security, food sovereignty and sustainable urban growth and planning in the region.

The 2025 Review presents an opportunity to ensure the critical services only the Greenbelt can provide are valued and strengthened to benefit Ontario, including the long-term resilience of the Greenbelt’s agricultural economy, rural communities and natural resources and systems. A focused Review should advance durable policies and evidence-based land use planning decisions and build on recent actions that protect and restore the Greenbelt’s natural and agricultural systems, while enabling growth. With the loss of the Growth Plan and additional changes to Ontario’s planning landscape, the Review also needs to rebuild policy alignment and interdependencies between the Greenbelt and other provincial plans and priorities to define where and how growth should happen in the GGH.

Section 2: Defining Priorities for the 2025 Review

This report outlines priorities for the 2025 Review that are grounded in research, informed by detailed policy analysis related to [Amendment 4](#) in the Greenbelt Plan, and an assessment of key indicators measuring the effectiveness of existing Greenbelt policies and foundations of its success. In addition, a series of engagements with a broad group of stakeholders identified relevant trends, regional pressures and opportunities to strengthen the Greenbelt and its contributions to Ontario (Appendix A). Input from agricultural, environmental, and economic stakeholders, and local land use planning experts considered growth pressures, economic challenges, climate risks and community well-being, among other factors.

Greenbelt Contributions

- \$9.6 billion economic impact every year
- 177,700 full-time jobs
- \$3.2 billion in ecosystem services annually
- \$224 million per year in flood mitigation
- 750,000 acres of highly productive farmland
- 68% more revenue earned per acre
- Ontario's only two Specialty Crop Areas
- 721,000 acres of wetlands, grasslands and forests protected
- 78 species at risk
- Offsetting 71 million tonnes of carbon each year

Major Themes

There is strong evidence and recognition among stakeholders that Greenbelt policies have been effective in meeting their objectives and that the Greenbelt remains a vital and strategic asset for the GGH and Ontario's future.

Policy clarity and targeted refinements are needed to strengthen the Plans and enhance contributions to respond to present and emerging challenges facing Ontario's most populous region and largest economic centre. Major trends and pressures identified by stakeholders include:

- High growth pressures and the need to control costs.
- Food supply chain disruptions and affordability.
- Managing the sustainable use of critical resources such as groundwater.
- Advancing economic prosperity through Ontario's significant agriculture and agri-food sector.
- Increasing demands for greenspace.
- Maintaining ecological connectivity and ecosystem health.
- Addressing the risks of climate change to communities.
- Improving provincial oversight of policy implementation.

Many stakeholders view opportunities for Reconciliation with local First Nations and Indigenous Peoples as largely unrealized through the Plans. Solutions should be addressed through the Review. Coordination with other provincial plans and priorities is also needed to ensure the long-term conservation of the Greenbelt is supported.

The Foundation continues to support government efforts to prioritize housing attainability and affordability across the region and the province. With more than enough land already available in the GGH to meet housing needs ([Ontario's Housing Affordability Task Force Report](#)), solutions and incentives should focus on promoting and building sustainable patterns of growth and the right mix of housing for the future, including within Greenbelt rural communities.

The following major themes inform the Foundation's priorities for the 2025 Review:

Protecting Ontario

- **Strengthening Ontario's Food Sovereignty:** The Greenbelt strengthens Ontario's food sovereignty and rural economic resilience, contributing to a \$50 billion agriculture and agri-food industry.¹ Supply chain disruptions and unpredictable U.S. trade restrictions are challenging the province's food security and agri-food economy. With the Greenbelt adjacent to Canada's largest consumer market and food manufacturing hub, increasing the capacity of its highly productive farmlands and agri-food network can reduce reliance on, and replace some, of Ontario's \$7.3 billion in annual imports of fruits and vegetables,² and drive stable market rates for producers and affordability for consumers.

Greenbelt policies have been effective in protecting farmland. Recent efforts to strengthen regulations to protect the boundary provide greater certainty and stability for investments in agriculture. For Greenbelt agriculture to thrive and drive one of Ontario's most significant economies, policies must continue to focus on building complete rural communities and stronger infrastructure safeguards to avoid the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural system and future constraints on agricultural production. Housing solutions for farm families, farm workers and agri-businesses need to be addressed, along with investments in infrastructure and economic development tools that support agriculture.

- **Securing Ontario's Water Future:** The Greenbelt's clean and abundant water resources are integral to Ontario's success. The groundwater supplies of the Oak Ridges Moraine – Ontario's rain barrel - provide a clean source of drinking water for 7 million residents either directly through wells or replenishing municipal reservoirs and Lake Ontario. The Moraine's groundwater supplies 70% of the base flow to major rivers in the region such as the Humber and Don,³ and to the near shoreline of Lake Ontario and sustains agricultural production and local businesses.

¹ [Published plans and annual reports 2024–2025: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs](#)

² [Plant the Seeds: Opportunities to Grow Southern Ontario's Fruit & Vegetable Sector](#)

³ 2025 Oak Ridges Moraine Groundwater Program

Protecting and actively managing this resource is essential to accommodating future growth, reducing flood risks, controlling long-term infrastructure costs, and avoiding other unintended consequences.

Water abundance cannot be taken for granted. It is critical to embed former Growth Plan policies into Greenbelt Plans to ensure continued linkages between land use decisions, water and wastewater servicing capacity and limits, and stormwater management. Policy refinements are needed to enhance regulatory enforcement and protect water quality and communities. Ontario's world-class hydrological data and monitoring programs offer a strong foundation for evidence-based decision-making that can expedite approvals while ensuring the continued protection of communities, water supplies and Ontario's future prosperity.

- **Protecting Communities:** The Greenbelt's near urban nature – its forest, wetlands, grasslands, and river valleys – provides critical habitat for species and protects water quality, reduces flooding and supports climate resilience for communities across the region. These natural assets provide reliable and cost-effective services that benefit both people and businesses. Cooling effects from natural vegetation and the filtration of air pollution also helps protect public health while access to nature further supports physical and mental health. The Greenbelt's natural heritage system also includes lands of deep cultural significance to local First Nations and Indigenous Peoples, offering opportunities for connection, learning and shared stewardship. A multi-billion recreation and tourism economy is a cornerstone of many rural communities. Maintaining ecological connectivity across the Greenbelt is essential to healthy ecosystems, protecting the region's rich biodiversity and high concentration of species-at-risk, and ensuring that natural systems deliver critical community services and climate resilience over the long-term.

Stronger infrastructure policy safeguards and proactive management policies are needed to protect connectivity and external connections with ecological corridors beyond the Greenbelt. Adopting an integrated watershed management framework will help municipalities maintain healthy ecosystems and inform development, and also improve connectivity, erosion control, stormwater management, flood mitigation and other vital services. Policies and incentives for 'enhanced environmental management' in transition zones can reduce urban pressures increasing at the Greenbelt's edge, benefiting developments by working with nature and appropriately directing active parks, stormwater ponds, and other gray infrastructure within settlement areas. Expanding access to nature through a well-connected network of parks and trails can further protect biodiversity while meeting the region's growing demand for greenspace and recreation opportunities.

Essential Supports

Long-term Vision and Conservation Commitments

- The former interdependencies between the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan created a shared vision and cohesive planning framework for managing growth in the GGH while conserving the Greenbelt’s natural and agricultural systems for the long-term. This alignment must be reestablished with the PPS, 2024 and other provincial plans and priorities, including housing and transportation, by integrating a clear vision for maintaining the Greenbelt’s ecological integrity and sustainability. Explicit policy alignment will provide municipalities with clear direction on provincial priorities, reduce fragmented land use decisions and uncoordinated development as a result of greater municipal autonomy, and mitigate environmental risks that could undermine the Greenbelt.

Oversight and Implementation Strategies

- Provincial leadership is needed to uphold the intent of Greenbelt policies and prevent the loss, fragmentation or downgrading of agricultural uses and natural system protections through municipal implementation. Weakened or reduced oversight mechanisms can undermine regulatory enforcement and policy effectiveness. In alignment with the ORMCP, the other Greenbelt Plans must require that Official Plans and Zoning Bylaws be amended to support conformity. Supportive guidelines, resources and collaborative partnerships would enhance municipal capacity to ensure the consistent application of policies across the landscape, support evidence-based decision-making, and streamline approvals such as the use of economic development tools for agriculture, while maintaining the protection of Greenbelt systems.

These major themes provide direction for the 2025 Review and identify achievable outcomes that align with provincial priorities including housing, cost controls and building a resilient economy and communities for Ontarians, while reinforcing the foundations of the Greenbelt’s success and long-term conservation goals.

Key Objectives and Priorities

Based on the above themes, the following is an overview of the Foundation’s priorities for the 2025 Review. A detailed list of recommendations is outlined in Section 3.

Integrating former Growth Plan Policies into the Greenbelt Plans - Amendment 4

Further implementation of Amendment 4 requires the integration of specific Growth Plan, 2020 policies into the Greenbelt Plans, PPS or other provincial plans, as appropriate. These policies are essential to maintaining strong, coordinated land use planning in the GGH following the transition to the PPS, 2024. They provide direction for the Greenbelt on settlement area boundary expansions, water and wastewater servicing, stormwater management, co-location of infrastructure corridors, and protecting agricultural and natural systems. Specific policies are outlined in Appendix B and

integrated into recommendations in Section 3 (these policies are also found in a [Factsheet](#) we produced about Amendment 4).

Integrating these policies will:

- Avoid increasing growth pressures, land conversion and fragmentation of Greenbelt systems.
- Preserve best practices in agricultural planning and land use compatibility between agricultural and non-agricultural areas, protecting the land base and the sector's growth.
- Sustain critical groundwater systems within capacity limits to avoid unintended consequences and protect hydrological and ecological functions long-term.
- Maintain consistency and standards in identifying the agricultural system and ecological linkages beyond the Greenbelt boundary.
- Support compact growth in rural communities, aligning with provincial objectives for intensification, infrastructure optimization and efficient land use.

Provincial resources will be needed to guide municipal implementation of these policies and support conformity.

Supporting the Agri-Food Economy

Amendment 4 will maintain strong land use policies that have successfully prevented urban encroachment and scattered development in prime agricultural and rural areas. Increased policy clarity and provincial oversight are needed to address growing pressures on municipalities to downgrade or redesignate farmland for recreation or other non-agricultural purposes.

Additional policies and actions are required to strengthen agriculture viability in the Greenbelt and Ontario's agricultural economy and jobs. The Review should consider:

- Enhanced protections for high value agricultural zones through new Specialty Crop Areas (SCA) designations in the Greenbelt.
- Explicit policies requiring agricultural housing and infrastructure strategies in municipal Official Plans to address the unique needs of the sector workforce and support agri-food businesses.
- Streamlining municipal processes that improve farmers' access to key economic development tools such as On-Farm Diversified Uses (OFDU) and Additional Residential Units (ARUs), while maintaining important protections outlined in Appendix C.

Strengthening the Protection of Groundwater Resources

Clarify and reinforce policies that protect critical groundwater resources, water quality and hazard lands to enhance regulatory enforcement. Improve data collection, monitoring and management to increase understanding of the health of groundwater resources, including the status and impact of water taking across the geography and require regular updates of water budgets to reflect population changes. Planning decisions should be informed by data from the Oak Ridges Moraine

Groundwater Program (ORMGP) and other authoritative sources to avoid unintended consequences and ensure long-term protection of Greenbelt water resource and hydrological systems.

Strengthening Policy Alignment between Infrastructure Planning and Connectivity of Greenbelt Systems

Strengthen infrastructure policies in the Plans to provide safeguards and ensure new or expanded infrastructure maintains connectivity within the agricultural and natural systems. Define explicit restrictions and conditions to guide infrastructure development, preventing incremental encroachment, fragmentation and loss of protected lands.

Building Landscape and Community Resilience

Support an integrated approach to watershed planning in the Greenbelt, improving risk management and increasing resilience for communities. Consider stronger policy linkages between the natural system and watershed planning policies to more effectively manage erosion, flooding and water quality which are increasing due to climate change and development. Policies in the Plans should move beyond site-level management to consider the full drainage area and downstream impacts of land use decisions and mandate connectivity conservation in watershed plans.

Additional actions are needed to address increasing urban encroachment at the Greenbelt boundary, including transition zone policies that protect the Greenbelt's natural assets and the essential community services they provide - stormwater management, flood mitigation and low impact recreation opportunities.

Responding to Increasing Demands for Access to Nature and Greenspace

Strengthen recreation policies to clarify intent to support low-impact activities and facilities and modernize permitted uses, including cycling and wellness trails. Recognize parks and trails as essential community infrastructure directly in Greenbelt policy and adopt the Niagara Escarpment Plan's NEPOSS aggregate rehabilitation approach across the Greenbelt to ensure post-extraction lands are restored for recreation and conservation.

Develop a strategy and collaborative framework to build a system of large parks and trails across the Greenbelt that can serve a growing population while maintaining ecological connectivity.

Strengthening Provincial Oversight and Coordination of Objectives Across Priorities

Increase provincial oversight to provide clear direction, enhance predictability and promote consistency in policy interpretation and implementation. As development pressures in the region intensify, strengthened oversight is needed to prevent the redesignation and downgrading of agricultural uses, degradation of natural systems and inappropriate activities in the Greenbelt. Stronger policy alignment and integration is needed between the Greenbelt Plans, PPS and other

provincial priorities and plans to ensure complex planning objectives - ranging from housing and infrastructure to ecological, hydrological and agricultural protection, can work together rather than at cross purposes.

Collaborations with municipalities, First Nations, conservation authorities and broader community partners can support provincial objectives for affordability, intensification and infrastructure optimization, alongside the long-term conservation of the Greenbelt.

A Review that Values Ontario's Greenbelt

The Greenbelt is Ontario's strategic advantage in sustaining a healthy and prosperous GGH and is internationally recognized as a model of success. As development pressures increase, greenbelts around the world are evolving to more closely reflect Ontario's vision and promote complete communities, protect agricultural lands, and support climate mitigation and adaptation, local economies, recreation, nature conservation, and health and well-being through proximity to nature.

Future Vision and Success of the Greenbelt

The 10-Year Review is an important opportunity to ensure the Plans remain effective, relevant and responsive to Ontario's priorities and future. Essential to the Review's success is understanding the Greenbelt's success and reaffirming its role and intrinsic value within the province's larger planning framework that manages lands for residential and economic growth to meet the needs of Ontarians, contain costs, and safeguard a high quality of life (Appendix D).

The Foundation supports a Review focused on how the Greenbelt Plans can sustain a new level of growth and quality of life, help the region mitigate and adapt to climate change, and support a stronger provincial economy.

With opportunities to support Reconciliation through the Plans largely unrealized, the Foundation supports deepening the role of First Nations Rights Holders and Indigenous Peoples in shaping the future of the Greenbelt. The province must also consider a vision for the long-term conservation of the Greenbelt within other priorities including housing, transportation and controlling costs.

Focus and Outcomes for the Review

Looking ahead, the Review should build on the foundations of the Greenbelt's success, along with recent provincial consultations and decisions:

- Support a rights-based engagement stream, respecting community-defined protocols and co-development of an Indigenous Engagement Framework with participating Nations.
- Maintain the three distinct Plans and the unique goals and policies that align with these landscapes and prioritize a value and evidence-based approach to decision-making.
- Build on, and not revisit, recent provincial actions to increase the protection of the boundary through legislation.

- Maintain key protections provided by the Growth Plan by integrating these policies into the Greenbelt Plans and PPS, 2024.
- Strengthen the Greenbelt to protect Ontario.

Ontario's Greenbelt: 3 Plans, One Vision

The Greenbelt is a broad band of permanently protected land which:

- Protects against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and supports agriculture as the predominant land use;
- Gives permanent protection to the natural heritage and water resource systems that sustain ecological and human health and that form the environmental framework around which major urbanization in southcentral Ontario will be organized;
- Provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses; and
- Builds resilience to and mitigates climate change.

Section 3: Policy and Implementation Recommendations for the 2025 Review

The following recommendations expand on the priorities outlined in Section 2. Recommendations are organized under 5 key policy areas based on stakeholder engagements and include direction on administrative and implementation strategies to support the Plans.

Key Policy Areas

1. Agriculture and Agri-Food Network

Strengthening Ontario's food sovereignty and agricultural viability to sustain the agri-food sector that fuels rural economies and livable communities.

2. Water Resources and Hydrological Systems

Ensuring proper management of critical groundwater resources to maintain availability and a high standard of safety for public drinking water.

3. Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

Enhancing the resilience of infrastructure and rural Greenbelt and adjacent urban communities by valuing and enhancing ecosystem services and reducing risks to erosion, flooding and water quality.

4. Greenspace, Tourism and Recreation

Expanding access to the Greenbelt to meet current and future demands and support health, equity and tourism.

5. Coordinating Regional Growth and Conservation

Ensuring the Greenbelt's long-term viability within Ontario's evolving land use planning policies.

Key Policy Area: Agricultural System and Agri-Food Network

Strengthening Ontario’s food sovereignty and agricultural viability to sustain the agri-food sector that fuels rural economies and livable communities.

Policy recommendations	Rationale
<p>1. Maintain provincial responsibility and standards for mapping the Agricultural System.</p> <p>a) Embed Growth Plan policy 4.2.6 (Agricultural System) in the Greenbelt Plan to uphold the standard and retain provincial responsibility. The standard includes retaining lands with the Agricultural System not currently in production to enable future growth. Allow refinements during the 10-year Review to replace the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process.</p> <p>b) The province should consider opportunities to increase Specialty Crop Areas (SCA) designations for high-value fruit and vegetable lands in the Greenbelt.</p>	<p>Amid growing development pressures and the repeal of the Growth Plan, the PPS, 2024 devolves responsibility for delineating the agricultural system to municipal planning authorities, based on provincial guidance or mapping obtained by the province. Maintaining a consistent provincial standard is essential to ensure the protection of the Greenbelt Agricultural System, which includes prime agricultural areas (classes 1-7), SCAs and rural lands.</p>
<p>2. Restore key Growth Plan (2020) policies that recognize the interconnectedness of rural housing, infrastructure and agricultural viability.</p> <p>a) Embed Growth Plan policy 2.2.8.3 k) (Settlement Area Boundary Expansions) in the Greenbelt Plan to facilitate growth in rural communities within the Greenbelt’s Protected Countryside and prevent scattered or ad-hoc encroachment and fragmentation on the Agricultural System.</p> <p>b) In place of a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process, specify timing limits on boundary expansions of Greenbelt towns and villages to the mandated 10-year Review cycle and eliminate the risk of ongoing</p>	<p>Growing pressures for new homes and infrastructure, including highways and utilities across the region, must consider the need to protect Greenbelt prime agricultural and rural lands for long-term food security and rural economic viability. Policies need to provide clear direction for aligning infrastructure development with agricultural land and environmental protection goals to maintain intact, connected systems in the Greenbelt.</p>

Policy recommendations	Rationale
<p>municipal expansions. Greenbelt Hamlet policies are to remain focused on intensification.</p> <p>c) Embed Growth Plan policy 3.2.5 (Infrastructure Corridors) in the Greenbelt Plan to avoid fragmentation of prime agricultural lands and help maintain consistency in decisions as development pressures increase.</p> <p>d) Incorporate additional components of Growth Plan policy 4.2.6 (Agricultural System) into the Plans to ensure the Greenbelt remains aligned with best practices in agricultural planning and land use compatibility.</p>	
<p>3. Strengthen the use and effectiveness of Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIA) to protect the Agricultural System.</p> <p>a) Embed Growth Plan policy 4.2.6 (Agriculture System) into the Plans requiring a hierarchy of avoiding, minimizing and mitigating impacts in completing AIAs, and clarify that mitigation actions should be taken by non-agricultural uses, where appropriate.</p>	<p>AIAs evaluate the potential impacts of development on agricultural operations in the Greenbelt and the Agricultural System, as part of the planning process for settlement area expansion, infrastructure and other decisions. AIAs should function to prevent adverse impacts that harm the Agriculture System, and Agri-Food Network more broadly, with decisions being consistent with the findings and providing direction on where development should go. Form Growth Plan policies must be retained in the Greenbelt to support consistent requirements for AIAs, whereas the PPS, 2024 now enables.</p>
<p>4. Integrate agricultural housing and infrastructure needs into municipal strategies and plans.</p> <p>a) Greenbelt policies should require housing and infrastructure strategies in municipal Official Plans to address the unique needs of the agricultural sector. These strategies</p>	<p>The economies of Greenbelt municipalities are closely tied to agriculture and agri-food, however, housing needs in rural areas for farm families and agri-business workers are often not identified in municipal housing or agricultural strategies. The resulting housing shortages affect the viability and growth of the sector and impact rural economies. Similarly, rural</p>

Policy recommendations	Rationale
<p>should be further integrated into local economic development plans.</p>	<p>infrastructure investments could better serve the needs of the local agricultural economy.</p> <p>Official Plans and economic development frameworks should prioritize housing needs for agriculture. The involvement of upper-tier municipalities would benefit the development of rural infrastructure strategies that support agriculture.</p>
<p>5. Clarify policy direction on On-Farm Diversified Uses (OFDU) to support agriculture uses and areas.</p> <p>a) Update provincial guidelines on OFDUs to provide clear direction for municipalities in accordance with Appendix C and maintain the current definition and examples of OFDUs in the Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.</p>	<p>OFDUs are businesses or activities that are secondary to the principal agricultural use and contribute to farm economic viability, help with succession planning and support rural economic development. Policy challenges associated with OFDUs balance providing benefits to farmers while avoiding or minimizing the potential for negative impacts on agriculture or activities that erode the intent of OFDUs. Key policy safeguards ensure OFDUs are permitted only on active farms, definitions should avoid non-agricultural businesses, limit size and establish thresholds to ensure OFDUs are appropriately scaled for agricultural areas, and assess cumulative impacts to avoid unintended land use conflicts.</p>

Implementation Strategies: Oversight, Support, Collaboration

Strengthen provincial oversight for land use decisions that impact agriculture, promoting alignment with Greenbelt policies to avoid future requests to redesignate land within the agricultural system, which is prohibited outside of settlement area boundary expansions.

Provide training on the implementation of ARUs and OFDUs to streamline approvals for farmers and enhance municipal capacity to support agricultural planning and rural economic development.

Key Policy Area: Water Resources and Hydrological Systems

Ensuring proper management of critical groundwater resources to maintain availability and a high standard of safety for public drinking water.

Policy recommendations	Rationale
<p>6. Affirm and strengthen the Greenbelt’s role in providing critical water resources for millions of Ontarians.</p> <p>a) Maintain the distinct policies of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan to safeguard groundwater quantity and quality.</p> <p>b) Strengthen the protection of the Greenbelt’s groundwater resources and water quality by aligning key features, definitions, mapping and policies across the Greenbelt Plans and other provincial water resource protection frameworks including Drinking Water Source Protection plans and the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan. Using and clearly defining key terms such as ‘hazardous lands’ in policy text will enhance clarity, implementation and regulatory enforcement.</p>	<p>The Oak Ridges Moraine - Ontario’s “rainbarrel” – provides a source of clean drinking water to over 7 million Ontarians. Its aquifer system sustains local and regional groundwater flows, contributing significantly to Lake Ontario, Lake Simcoe and many of the region’s abundant rivers and streams. As a vital provincial asset, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan policies safeguard groundwater quantity and quality and continue to direct development, including incompatible infrastructure, away from wetlands, wellhead protection areas, groundwater recharge areas and other sensitive hydrological features and areas.</p>
<p>7. Require comprehensive monitoring of water resources and timely updates to water budgets to inform planning decisions.</p> <p>a) Include protocols around data collection and management in the Plans to improve understanding of groundwater resources, including the impact of water taking and climate change. Ensure data is accessible through the Oak Ridges Moraine Groundwater Program (ORMGP) and other authoritative sources and used consistently to inform planning decisions and protect the sustainability of Greenbelt water resources and investments in development approvals.</p>	<p>Recent changes to Ontario’s environmental policies and management systems affecting the Greenbelt’s water resources may carry unintended risks, including reduced oversight and protection of a critical public resource, increased pressure on natural infrastructure, and rising long-term costs for flood prevention and water treatment. Stronger policies are needed to secure reliable and healthy water systems that function as natural cost-effective infrastructure, directly reducing provincial expenditures on issues such as water treatment, stormwater management and flood mitigation.</p>

Policy recommendations	Rationale
<p>b) Require updates to water budgets every five years to reflect changes in population projections.</p>	
<p>8. Integrate key Growth Plan policies, specifically watershed-based servicing and stormwater policies in the Greenbelt Plan.</p> <p>a) Embed key Growth Plan policies (3.2.6 Water and Wastewater Systems and 3.2.7 Stormwater Management) to provide a critical framework for protecting highly sensitive hydrological systems and water quantity and quality in the Greenbelt.</p>	<p>Water resource system policies in the Greenbelt support watershed-based planning to protect, improve and restore the hydrological features, areas and functions that maintain water quantity and quality for the long-term. Important guidance was provided in the Growth Plan. These policies linked municipal water and wastewater servicing with environmental and resource capacity limits and considered the full drainage area to manage stormwater. These policies ensured infrastructure expansions for water and wastewater did not exceed the assimilative capacity of receiving environments and avoided increasing growth pressures in the Greenbelt. The policies further supported intensification, infrastructure optimization, municipal coordination, and solutions that consider climate resilience, including natural infrastructure.</p>

Implementation: Oversight, Support, Collaboration

Provide technical guidance for watershed planning, reflecting its importance in protecting water quality and quantity and the identification and protection of hydrological features and areas.

Provide resources to model climate change scenarios, impacts on water resources and adaptation options. Increase provincial responsibilities and oversight to support cross-boundary collaboration among municipalities to improve the monitoring, collection and sharing of data, and provide support for accessing hydrological expertise and developing targets and resources to rehabilitate watershed health.

Key Policy Area: Natural Heritage and Biodiversity

Enhance the resilience of infrastructure and rural Greenbelt and adjacent urban communities by valuing and enhancing ecosystem services and reducing risks to erosion, flooding and water quality.

Policy recommendations	Rationale
<p>9. Strengthen policy linkages in the plans to support an integrated watershed planning framework and improve risk management and community resilience.</p> <p>a) Create stronger policy linkages between the natural system and watershed planning policies in the Greenbelt plans and consider the full drainage area.</p>	<p>An integrated watershed management approach can more effectively address increasing risks such as erosion, flooding and declining water quality, driven by climate change and ongoing development in the GGH.</p>
<p>10. Strengthen habitat and connectivity protections to enhance biodiversity and climate resilience.</p> <p>a) Strengthen infrastructure policies to maintain connectivity within Greenbelt systems, requiring early integration of agricultural and ecological considerations and explicit requirements to avoid long-term impacts by applying a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and offsetting.</p> <p>b) Mandate connectivity conservation mapping in watershed plan requirements and support ongoing monitoring and data collection.</p> <p>c) Embed Growth Plan 2020 policies 4.2.2 (Natural Heritage System) in the Greenbelt Plans to maintain provincial mapping and further secure ecological connectivity across the region.</p>	<p>Maintaining ecological connectivity across the GGH is critical to supporting species diversity and healthy ecosystems and functions within the Greenbelt's natural heritage system. Planning is needed at multiple scales to ensure connectivity is maintained within the Greenbelt and with broader ecological landscapes in Southern Ontario. The repeal of the Growth Plan and recent policy changes in the PPS, 2024 and Endangered Species Act, have created significant gaps in regional-scale natural heritage planning in the GGH.</p> <p>The loss of regional planning authority adds to these challenges. While the province has committed to designating new protected areas, the goals of these efforts with respect to biodiversity and connectivity are less clear. Despite these challenges, the Greenbelt's natural heritage system and connectivity policies continue to provide a framework for protecting biodiversity. Parks Canada's guidance on ecological corridors, along with advanced mapping tools provide a valuable framework for this work.</p>

Policy recommendations	Rationale
<p>11. Establish transition zone policies to actively manage land use at the Greenbelt boundary and benefit adjacent urban areas.</p> <p>a) Adopt transition zone policies on both sides of the Greenbelt boundary to manage land use pressures, protect essential services provided by natural infrastructure and reduce climate-related risks to adjacent communities. Policies should direct or incentivize developments to identify and manage natural assets that provide stormwater management, flood protection, and other services, offering low-cost, resilient, and flexible solutions while enhancing and safeguarding Greenbelt systems.</p>	<p>Urban development pressures along the Greenbelt boundary are undermining agricultural productivity and degrading natural systems with infrastructure such as stormwater ponds, higher impact recreation facilities and other activities often inappropriately located in the Greenbelt.</p>
<p>12. Enhance the role of Greenbelt Urban River Valleys in mitigating hazards for adjacent communities.</p> <p>a) Improve understanding of these lands and enhance mapping to consider expanding the Greenbelt to include additional sensitive hydrological and hazardous lands.</p>	<p>Lands within the southern boundary of the Greenbelt that extend into its Urban River Valleys contain agricultural lands and natural systems including sensitive headwater areas and hazard lands. These lands play an important role in erosion control and flood mitigation benefiting adjacent and downstream urban communities.</p>

Implementation: Oversight, Support, Collaboration

Clearer provincial direction or frameworks for municipalities to engage local First Nations in natural heritage planning would overcome barriers and enable Indigenous-led conservation, co-management and cultural land restoration within the Greenbelt.

A provincial scale ecological connectivity strategy would enhance collaboration between municipalities, conservation authorities and First Nations, and address gaps and variations in approaches across jurisdictions. The province could start in the GGH by updating the existing maps and policies in the former Growth Plan.

Key Policy Area: Greenspace, Tourism and Recreation

Expanding access to the Greenbelt to meet current and future demands and support health, equity and tourism.

Policy recommendations	Rationale
<p>13. Modernize recreation policies.</p> <p>a) Parks and trails should be acknowledged in the Plans as essential infrastructure in complete community planning, contributing to public health and tourism and with opportunities to support equity, accessibility and social benefits.</p> <p>b) Definitions of permitted recreation types should continue to promote low-impact activities but broadened to reflect inclusive, modern uses such as cycling, wellness-focused trails, and culturally sensitive uses.</p> <p>c) Plan policies should align recreation with ecological connectivity, advancing an ecological cores and corridor approach that recognizes benefits for natural heritage, biodiversity, climate change, and active transportation.</p>	<p>Publicly accessible greenspace in the Greenbelt is increasingly in demand by residents across the region, providing physical and mental health benefits and supporting an important rural economy. Policy improvements are needed to provide a clear vision for appropriate low-impact recreation types and intensities that respond to evolving needs and continue to protect natural systems and ecological integrity.</p>
<p>14. Developing a regional framework for greenspace planning to meet current and future demand to 2051.</p> <p>a) Greenbelt policy should establish specific targets and implementation mechanisms for a system of large parks in the Greenbelt to meet need. Important components of the framework should include prioritizing ecological connectivity by supporting a cores and corridors network within the parks system, in alignment with the province’s protected areas goals, and adopting aggregate rehabilitation policies for recreation and conservation modeled on the Niagara Escarpment Plan’s NEPOSS system, to require post-extraction lands be restored for public benefit.</p>	<p>The supply of large parks (> 20 acres) in the region is trailing population increases, with an additional 32,000 hectares needing to be planned by 2051 in order to maintain current access levels.</p>

Implementation: Oversight, Support, Collaboration

Oversight of current recreation policies is needed to ensure proper use of the lands.

Effective enforcement mechanisms are needed to balance the use and maintain the ecological integrity of natural spaces, such as controlled access points, active monitoring, and restoration initiatives to address and reverse degradation in sensitive areas.

A partnership-driven approach can address the pressing need to create more greenspace, engaging municipalities, local First Nations, conservation authorities, land trusts and other partners to identify innovative opportunities to create new and connect existing greenspaces. Resources and tools can help develop inclusive models of collaboration and partnership such as roundtables, co-governance frameworks and co-design processes and support the creation of Indigenous-led spaces in the Greenbelt.

Key Policy Area: Coordinating Regional Growth and Conservation

Ensuring the Greenbelt's long-term viability within Ontario's evolving land use planning policies.

Policy recommendations	Rationale
<p>15. Increase coordination between Ontario's land use plans and key priorities.</p> <p>a) Embed all Growth Plan policies identified in Appendix B in the Greenbelt Plans or PPS to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Guide growth in Greenbelt rural settlement areas ii. Coordinate infrastructure planning to avoid the loss and fragmentation of Greenbelt systems iii. Provide measurable and enforceable benchmarks to ensure the sustainable management of water, wastewater and stormwater in the Greenbelt that fundamentally enables growth, provides a safe source of drinking water for millions and reduces flood risks iv. Prohibit the expansion of Great Lakes servicing in the Greenbelt to avoid increasing development pressures directly in the Greenbelt. v. Maintain connectivity of the Greenbelt's agricultural and natural systems throughout the GGH. <p>b) Incorporate a long-term conservation vision for the Greenbelt in the PPS and other provincial plans.</p>	<p>Historically, the Greenbelt Plan was integrated with complementary regional planning frameworks like the Growth Plan (2020) to guide where and how growth should occur in the GGH and support the vision and long-term conservation goals of the Greenbelt.</p> <p>Regional coordination was not maintained in the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024) which may foster municipal competition and uncoordinated development, increasing risks to natural and agricultural systems. The current lack of detail in Amendment No. 4 may unintentionally weaken existing protections unless the policies are made clear and interdependencies are reestablished by embedding the policies in the Greenbelt Plan or PPS. A more flexible infrastructure framework for the GGH with broader allowances for what can be sustained by water resources will replace measurable and enforceable benchmarks if the former Growth Plan policies are not embedded in the Greenbelt Plan.</p> <p>The flexible 20-30 year planning horizons in the PPS, 2024 also needs to align with the Greenbelt's long-term conservation goals and planning for housing, transportation, climate change and other pressures in the region to avoid increasing growth pressures in the Greenbelt and instead, enhance its contributions to Ontario.</p>

Implementation: Oversight, Support, Collaboration

A technical guidance document is needed to provide clear interpretation, reasoning and guidance for the application of Greenbelt policies by municipalities, conservation authorities, developers, and planners. This guidance would ensure continued alignment between the Greenbelt and other provincial plans within Ontario's new planning regime and PPS, 2024, including Amendment 4.

Section 4: Conclusion

The Greenbelt's permanence reflects the unique nature of landscapes that provide the basis for investment in a thriving agricultural sector and in critical ecosystem services. Effective Greenbelt protection is essential to our water security, food sovereignty, climate resilience, and sustainable urban growth.

Our goal for the 2025 Review is to build durable policies that continue to enable growth while protecting and restoring the natural and agricultural systems of Ontario's Greenbelt.

The Greenbelt Foundation is committed to working collaboratively with the Province, the public, and our stakeholders to enhance the Greenbelt as a critical asset that protects and sustains Ontario, now and into the future.

Appendix A: List of Stakeholders Engaged by the Foundation

Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Reserve	Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust
Bruce Trail Conservancy	Oak Ridges Trail Association
Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark	Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Caledon Farmer	Ontario Federation of Agriculture
City of Hamilton	Ontario Food and Vegetable Growers Association
City of Markham	Ontario Home Builder Association
City of Toronto	Ontario Farmland Trust
Municipality of Clarington	Ontario Headwaters Institute
Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority	Ontario Nature
Conservation Ontario	Ontario Professional Planners Institute
Credit Valley Conservation	Parks & Recreation Ontario
Durham Region	Peel Region
Environmental Defence	Plenty Canada (Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Network)
Food & Beverage Ontario	Regional and Single Tier Planning Leaders of Ontario
Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance	Rescue lake Simcoe
Grape Growers of Ontario	Rural Ontario Institute
Grand River Conservation Authority	Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition
Halton Region	Save the Oak Ridges Moraine
Holland Marsh Growers Association	Toronto Region Board of Trade
Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation	Town of Ajax
Invasive Species Centre	Township of Uxbridge
Kawartha Conservation	Toronto Region Conservation Authority
Moccasin Identifier Project	TreeFrog Environmental
Nature Conservancy Canada	University of Guelph
Niagara Escarpment Commission	University of Toronto
Niagara Escarpment Foundation	Urban Land Institute
National Farmers Union - Ontario	Wilton Consulting
Niagara on the Lake	Waterfront Regeneration Trust
Niagara Region	York University
Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation	
Oak Ridges Moraine Groundwater Program	

Appendix B: Factsheet on Greenbelt Plan Amendment 4

Protecting Ontario's Greenbelt Through Strategic Policies

What is the Greenbelt?

Established in 2005, Ontario's Greenbelt is 2 million acres of protected farmland, forests, wetlands, rivers, and lakes in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region. These lands nourish us, safeguard our water, fight climate change, and enhance our quality of life.

The Greenbelt Foundation is the only charitable organization solely dedicated to investing in the Greenbelt's interconnected natural, agricultural, economic, and cultural systems, to ensure a working, thriving Greenbelt for all.

Understanding Greenbelt-Related Policies

Greenbelt Plan

The Greenbelt Plan, together with the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan, identifies where urbanization should not occur in order to provide permanent protection to the agricultural land base and critical ecological and hydrological systems that sustain growth and rural economies in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH).

Growth Plan and Provincial Planning Statement 2020

The GGH is Ontario's most populated and fastest growing region where 70% of residents live. It is also the economic engine of the province. Historically, the Greenbelt Plan has been integrated with complementary regional planning frameworks like the Growth Plan (2020) to guide where and how growth should occur and support the long-term conservation goals of the Greenbelt, including the sustainable use of its critical resources such as groundwater.

The Growth Plan was repealed in 2024. Regional coordination was not maintained in the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024) and instead provided for through an amendment in the Greenbelt Plan.

Amendment 4

On August 20, 2024, the Ontario government approved Amendment No. 4 to the Greenbelt Plan to maintain its current protections. Find the complete Amendment No. 4 [here](#).

Amendment No. 4 seeks to maintain Greenbelt protections and address ambiguities created with the repeal of the Growth Plan. The current lack of detail in Amendment No. 4 may unintentionally weaken existing protections unless the policies are made clear and embedded in the Greenbelt Plan or PPS.

Greenbelt Foundation and Amendment No. 4 Stakeholder Engagement

To support this outcome, the Greenbelt Foundation undertook a detailed comparative policy analysis of the former and new policy frameworks for the Greenbelt, identifying thematic gaps between the plans, inter-plan references that create dependencies and relevance and impact to the Greenbelt Area and Plans. Stakeholder interviews validated and refined our results and provided additional insights on Ontario's evolving land use planning

policies and actions needed to strengthen Greenbelt protection to effectively address ongoing and emerging challenges.

Policies to Protect the Greenbelt

The Greenbelt Foundation has identified five areas that are key to maintaining policy protection standards and the long-term health of the Greenbelt and GGH. The following policy areas need to be addressed through Amendment No. 4 (see Appendix 1 for details):

1. Supporting Complete Rural Communities

Growth Plan policies guided growth in Greenbelt rural communities. These policies facilitated growth, promoting complete communities in Greenbelt towns, villages and hamlets, and protecting the region's agricultural and natural systems from fragmentation or scattered urban encroachment. Timing limits for expansions should specify the mandated 10-year Review cycle to replace the requirement for a Municipal Comprehensive Review process. See Growth Plan 2020 policy 2.2.8.3 (k) (Settlement Area Boundary Expansions) and 2.2.1.6 (Managing Growth).

2. Properly Managing Our Water Systems

The Greenbelt protects highly sensitive hydrological and groundwater systems and water quality and quantity for the region, including a safe source of drinking water for millions. Growth Plan policies ensured municipal water, sewage and stormwater servicing decisions were informed by watershed-scale planning, ensuring that services remained within capacity limits, avoided unintended consequences and costs and helped reduce flooding. By restricting Great Lakes water servicing in the Greenbelt, these policies further supported intensification and infrastructure optimization and helped avoid creating growth pressures in the Greenbelt. See Growth Plan 2020 policy 3.2.6 (Water and Wastewater Servicing and 2.3.7 (Stormwater Management).

3. Coordinate Infrastructure with Greenbelt Systems to Avoid Fragmentation

Growth Plan infrastructure policies required planning decisions align with Greenbelt agricultural and natural system protection goals, preserving connectivity and the long-term health and functions of these systems. See Growth Plan 2020 policy 3.2.5 (Infrastructure Corridors).

4. Preserve Farmland

Agriculture is a key part of Ontario's economy and food system. Growth Plan policies provided standardized tools for mapping the Agricultural System as well as the use of Agricultural Impact Assessments. These standards protected connectivity within the system, enabled growth overtime and avoided or mitigated development impacts on farming to ensure agriculture and the agri-food economy can thrive. See Growth Plan 2020 policy 2.4.6 (Agricultural System).

5. Safeguard Nature

The Greenbelt isn't an island. Connectivity with natural systems outside its boundary is essential to its long-term health. Growth Plan policies that mapped the natural heritage system and prevented fragmentation worked together with the Greenbelt to protect wildlife

across the region, including habitat for species at risk, maintain the water cycle and flow, and support community resilience to climate change. See Growth Plan 2020 policy 3.2.6 (External Connections) and 4.2.2 (Natural Heritage System).

What Are the Risks to the Ontario Without Strong Greenbelt Policies?

The Greenbelt remains a cornerstone of Ontario's commitment to sustainable land use planning. Supported by the recommendations outlined above, it can continue to serve as a model of regional conservation and sustainable development in an increasingly complex planning environment.

Additional changes to Ontario planning regime underline the importance of these policies. The loss of regional planning may challenge the need to coordinate development, including infrastructure investments and lead to inconsistent land use decisions. A more flexible infrastructure framework in Ontario may overburden water resource systems. The flexible 20-30 year planning horizons in the PPS need to align with the Greenbelt's long-term conservation goals and planning for housing and transportation in the region.

Without strong policies to protect the Greenbelt, Ontario risks:

- \$9.6 billion in economic impact every year and 177,700 full-time jobs
- 6.5 trillion litres per year of precipitation of filtering and replenishing groundwater reserves, with 7 million Ontarians depending on the Oak Ridges Moraine for clean water alone.
- 750,000 acres of highly productive farmland, including one of the biggest fruit growing regions in the world, and farms earning 68% more revenue per acre than the average Ontario farm.
- \$3.2 billion in ecosystem services each year including flood protection
- Habitat protected for 78 species at risk
- Carbon offsetting potential of 71 million tonnes each year. Farmland makes up 40% of the protected Greenbelt, including rare Specialty Crop Areas: the Holland Marsh and the Niagara Tender Fruit and Grape Area. The Greenbelt's irreplaceable natural assets help mitigate against the impacts of climate change in Southern Ontario and make the region more climate resilient.

Based on this comparative analysis, the Greenbelt Foundation is now seeking to work collaboratively with the province to explicitly identify policies to be integrated into the Greenbelt Plan and/or Provincial Planning statement, as appropriate, to ensure the health and integrity of the Greenbelt. With thoughtful planning and the right policies in place, the Greenbelt can remain a model of smart conservation and sustainable development for years to come.

Details on Specific Policies to Maintain Greenbelt Protection through Amendment 4

1. The following criteria in Growth Plan (2020) under **policy 2.2.8.3(k) (Settlement Area Boundary Expansions)** imposed important limits on any boundary changes, including:

- A cap of 5% growth in geographic size, up to 10 hectares maximum;
- A requirement that no more than 50% of added land be used for residential purposes;
- Proof that the expansion supports complete communities or the local agricultural economy;

- Evidence that the proposed use cannot be reasonably accommodated within the existing boundary;
- Use of existing municipal water and wastewater systems without impacting intensification potential; and
- A firm prohibition on expansion into the Natural Heritage System.

2. Growth Plan (2020) **sections 3.2.6 (Water and Wastewater Systems) and 3.2.7 (Stormwater Management)** required municipalities to undertake coordinated, watershed-informed infrastructure planning that protected both the quantity and quality of water. These policies filled a vital gap in land use planning by linking servicing decisions to environmental limits and inter-municipal coordination—especially important for the Greenbelt Area, which contains and relies on highly sensitive hydrologic systems:

- Mandatory watershed-informed servicing master plans for water, wastewater, and stormwater, ensuring that cumulative impacts, climate adaptation, and long-term sustainability are considered in infrastructure design.
- Requirement that municipal water and wastewater expansions be subject to watershed-informed planning and not exceed the assimilative capacity of receiving environments, protecting hydrologic integrity and limiting diffuse environmental degradation.
- Prohibition on extending Great Lakes servicing to inland municipalities unless strict public health and planning conditions are met, thereby avoiding leapfrogging development pressures into rural areas near the Greenbelt.
- Full cost recovery planning for water and stormwater infrastructure, including long-term maintenance and retrofit strategies, to ensure that financial pressures do not drive unsustainable infrastructure expansion.
- Integrated stormwater policies requiring green infrastructure, low-impact development, and naturalized solutions that align with subwatershed and master planning frameworks, particularly for large-scale development.

3. To maintain consistent protection for the Greenbelt Area’s ecological and agricultural systems, the Greenbelt Plan should be amended to **incorporate the following components of former policy 3.2.5:**

- Encouragement of linear infrastructure co-location to limit landscape disruption;
- Protection of existing and planned infrastructure corridors to align with current and projected needs, as informed by PPS transportation and corridor policies;
- Mandatory agricultural impact assessments (or equivalent) as part of environmental assessments to demonstrate that impacts on the Agricultural System are avoided or minimized and mitigated where unavoidable;
- Mandatory environmental assessments addressing impacts on key natural heritage and hydrologic features, requiring avoidance first, and mitigation if avoidance is not possible;
- Specific transportation considerations, such as supporting rail-based movement, separating modes within shared corridors, and enabling intermodal connections; and

- Land use planning along infrastructure corridors must support the overarching objective of directing growth to settlement areas, avoiding sprawl into protected countryside lands.

4. The repeal of the Growth Plan (2020) creates gap in Greenbelt protections and risks the loss of a comprehensive and regionally integrated framework for the protection and enhancement of Ontario's Agricultural System. Incorporating these policies will ensure that the Greenbelt Plan remains aligned with best practices in agricultural planning and land use compatibility, while also helping to close policy gaps created by the repeal of the Growth Plan. **Key components of former policy 4.2.6 should be embedded** into the Greenbelt Plan:

- Recognition and designation of the Agricultural System for the GGH, including the provincial mapping of the agricultural land base and agri-food network;
- Protection of prime agricultural areas and specialty crop areas for long-term agricultural use;
- Compatibility policies that require avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of impacts where agricultural and non-agricultural uses interface, supported by Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIAs) where appropriate;
- Policies to maintain and enhance the geographic continuity of agricultural lands and their economic and functional ties to the broader agri-food sector;
- Discouragement of non-agricultural uses on existing lots of record designated for agriculture;
- Integrated planning of infrastructure and growth management to support agricultural land preservation and agri-food transportation logistics;
- Encouragement for municipalities to implement regional agri-food strategies, support local food systems, and establish agricultural advisory committees or liaison officers;
- Support for infrastructure and services that sustain the agri-food network, and mitigation of negative impacts where unavoidable.

5. To prevent fragmentation of critical ecological features and corridors adjacent to or overlapping with the Greenbelt Area, the Greenbelt Plan should be amended to **incorporate key provisions from Growth Plan section 4.2.2**, including but not limited to:

- Mapped NHS overlays to support long-term biodiversity and watershed health;
- Development restrictions requiring no negative impacts on key natural heritage and hydrologic features, and that ensure at least 30% of developable area remains or is restored to natural vegetation;
- Prohibitions on exceeding 25% disturbed area and 10% impervious surface for most developments;
- Minimum 240-metre connectivity corridors between features;
- Clarity that these protections apply even before mapping is fully implemented, and flexibility for municipalities to refine provincial mapping at the time of implementation;

- Recognition that agricultural uses may be permitted but subject to related environmental policies; and
- Direction for how NHS-designated areas are treated in the event of settlement area expansions, including a requirement that ecological functions and connectivity must continue to be maintained, restored, or enhanced.

Appendix C: Key On-Farm Diversified Use (OFDU) Policies and Guidelines

On-Farm Diversified Uses (OFDU) are businesses or activities on farms that are secondary to the principle agricultural use and limited in size. OFDUs are important activities and contribute to farm economic viability, help with succession planning and support rural economic development. Policy challenges associated with OFDUs balance providing benefits to farmers while avoiding or minimizing the potential for negative impacts on agriculture. Variability in how municipalities interpret and implement OFDU guidelines can present barriers for farmers.

- **Clarify OFDU policy for active farmland**

Clearer policy direction is needed to ensure OFDUs are permitted only on active farms. Restricting OFDUs to lands that contribute to the agricultural economy helps maintain the integrity of prime agricultural areas and ensures land remains primarily in agricultural use.

- **Ensure OFDUs are related to agriculture use**

The definition for OFDUs should avoid non-agricultural businesses. Examples include battery storage facilities, trucking depots, and window sales businesses—activities that neither support nor relate to the farm operation and erode the intent of OFDU policies.

- **Establish clear thresholds for OFDUs**

There is a need to establish clear thresholds to distinguish between appropriately scaled OFDUs that remain subordinate to agricultural uses, and those that should be relocated to industrial or non-agricultural zones. Without thresholds, there is a risk of inappropriate land use within agricultural areas.

- **Assess cumulative impacts**

There is support for OFDU as-of-right permissions. Geographic and servicing limitations and cumulative impacts need to be assessed to avoid unintended land use conflicts and degradation of agricultural land. Rising demands and enforcement capacity need to be considered.

Appendix D: Foundations of the Greenbelt's Success

Essential to the Review is an understanding of the Greenbelt's success and reaffirming its role and intrinsic value within the province's larger planning framework that manages lands for residential and economic growth to meet the needs of Ontarians, contain costs, and safeguard a high quality of life.

i. Distinct Greenbelt Plans

Maintaining the unique goals and policy tools of each Plan preserves their effectiveness, clarity, and alignment with the distinct landscapes they are designed to protect. Together the plans provide food and water security, healthy ecological systems, and a strong basis for growth in Ontario.

ii. Certainty and Stability for Planning and Investments

The legislation and policies protecting the Greenbelt's outer and inner boundaries shape efficient growth patterns and provide certainty for investments in a key agri-food economy, including the province's two Specialty Crop Areas.

iii. Effective Policies and Protections that Deliver Benefits

There is tremendous public support for the Greenbelt. The statutory Review timeline ensure policies in the Greenbelt Plans remain effective and continue to deliver community and economic benefits to Ontario, including responding to emerging challenges such as reducing climate-related risks.

iv. Regional Planning Coordination

Former Growth Plan (2020) policies were fundamental to balancing and facilitating growth in the region and maintaining Greenbelt protection. Policy alignment and integration ensure complex planning objectives can complement, rather than conflict with ecological and agricultural preservation.

v. Enabling Policies to Expand the Greenbelt

Policies in the Plans ensure the Greenbelt can continue to realize its Vision as trends and pressures change. The province can expand the Greenbelt to protect additional vital resources such as water supplies and farmland to sustain growth, increase our food sovereignty, and maintain healthy ecosystems and services.

vi. Oversight and Implementation Supports

Clear provincial direction provides predictability and promotes consistency in policy interpretation and implementation, strengthening Greenbelt protections. Monitoring, technical resources and programming supported by a diverse network of sectoral stewards helps improve municipal capacity to implement policies and protections in the Greenbelt Plans.