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#403-489 College Street | Toronto, ON | M6G 1A5 | 416-960-0001

July 22, 2026

Attention: engagement@pco-bcp.gc.ca

Re: Engagement – Supporting timely-decision-making for major projects

Summary

The Greenbelt Foundation appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback through this engagement process. We recognize the importance and urgency of advancing major projects in Canada and supporting economic growth. At the same time, we urge the government to continue to recognize the connections between economic resilience, environmental protections, and community wellbeing.

In Ontario, the Greenbelt was created to protect agricultural, natural heritage, and water resource systems that support growth and development in the country's most populated and economically robust region. It is a leading sustainability policy in Canada that is globally recognized. The Government of Ontario continues to recognize the importance of the Greenbelt through recent decisions to legislate its boundaries in the *Greenbelt Act*. This reaffirms Ontario's commitment to protecting the Greenbelt in perpetuity so that it continues to play a vital role in supporting food and water security, thriving rural economies, and a vibrant agri-food industry cluster.

Federal projects typically align with provincial land use plans and policies to support good outcomes, decision-making, and public trust. Our comments are focused on confirming that a simpler and faster federal approvals process for major projects will maintain existing protections for Ontario's Greenbelt and its critical systems and landscapes.

Ontario's Greenbelt

Through legislation and regulatory policies, the Province of Ontario established land use plans related to the Greenbelt Area, including the *Greenbelt Act*, the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Today, [Ontario's Greenbelt](#) protects over 2 million acres of farmland and highly sensitive ecosystems in the Greater Golden Horseshoe including forests, wetlands, major aquifers, rivers, and lakes. It is a critical and irreplaceable asset that sustains the quality of life and resilience of communities and people in Southern Ontario.

In addition, the Greenbelt supports significant regional economic activity by providing favourable conditions for investment and employment, including agricultural production and food processing as well as recreation and tourism. Each year, the Greenbelt contributes more than \$17 billion to Ontario's GDP, supports over 247,000 full-time jobs, and provides approximately \$6 billion in federal and provincial tax revenue.¹

¹ <https://greenbelt.ca/research-report/2026-economic-impact-assessment/>



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The Greenbelt Foundation

Established in 2005, the Greenbelt Foundation is a charitable organization dedicated to supporting the integrity and success of Ontario's Greenbelt. Our work focuses on ensuring that the Greenbelt's interconnected natural and agricultural systems are protected and continue to provide clean air and water, locally grown food, and greenspace to Ontarians, while supporting thriving local, regional, and provincial economies.

Proposal to enable economic zones through regional impact assessments

The potential creation of Federal Economic Zones could undermine the spirit and intent of established policies and legal frameworks that safeguard agricultural and natural systems in the Greenbelt and across Ontario. It is critical that any potential adjacent developments avoid impacting Greenbelt systems and maintain connectivity with broader agricultural and natural systems in the GGH and beyond.

In this regard, we provide the following recommendations to ensure that economic goals are advanced in the public interest. Our recommendations are consistent with those we put forward during the Province of Ontario's consultation regarding its own [Special Economic Zones Act, 2025](#).

1. The rights of Indigenous Peoples should be substantively upheld in all policy decisions proposed and supported by the government.
2. Federal Economic Zones should not be established within, or directly adjacent to, the Greenbelt, or within broader agricultural and natural systems in Ontario. Protecting the ecological integrity and agricultural viability of the Greenbelt must remain a priority to continue to enable growth in the GGH and advance critical needs such as food sovereignty and water security.
3. Any relevant legislation arising from this proposal should explicitly maintain the applicability of key provincial statutes – including the Planning Act, Provincial Planning Statement, Environmental Assessment Act, Conservation Authorities Act, Clean Water Act, and Greenbelt Act – to all Federal Economic Zones, their designated proponents, and associated projects.
4. Any decisions affecting the Greenbelt should follow existing provincial and regional policies, plans, processes, and legal protections. Provincial planning policies and municipal by-laws must continue to apply.
5. Rigorous impact assessments and risk mitigation must still be required for all projects. Participation, engagement, and transparency throughout the impact assessment process will be critical to maintaining public trust and public good.



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6. The federal government should actively invest in the economic growth of existing Greenbelt economies including agriculture and tourism to drive a strong and secure economic future for Ontario and Canada.

The Foundation is seeking clarity that Federal Economic Zones would not apply to Ontario's Greenbelt and that current provincial protections are maintained.

Protecting Ontario's Greenbelt and natural heritage:

- Supports productive farmland that provides food and jobs.
- Supports a significant agri-food economy and tourism industry.
- Safeguards municipal natural infrastructure assets.
- Provides a refuge for Species at Risk and their habitat.
- Creates opportunities for outdoor recreation and supports physical and mental wellbeing.
- Promotes human health by providing clean air and water.
- Protects people, homes, and infrastructure from the impacts of climate change, like flooding and extreme heat.

Conclusion

For more than 20 years, the Greenbelt has been a critical resource for Ontarians, providing clean air and water, a sustainable source of locally grown food, access to greenspace, and strong rural economies.

As Ontario continues to grow, we will need more of what the Greenbelt provides. The effective implementation of provincial Greenbelt Plans will ensure the long-term protection of its benefits and contributions.

We look forward to further discussion and engagement on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward McDonnell".

Edward McDonnell
Chief Executive Officer