

Ontario regional and provincial groups launch a new program to stop sprawl and grow the greenbelt

On the heels of York Region Council's attempt to get the provincial government to open the Greenbelt to development, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance (OGA) launched a program to do the exact opposite: stop sprawl-style development and bring more lands into the protected Greenbelt as part of government COVID-19 recovery plans. "Since the COVID-19 crisis began, people have been relying more and more on natural spaces and farmland to make it through the crisis," said Lynda Lukasik, executive director, Environment Hamilton. "These lands are key to our physical and mental well-being, the source of healthy, local food and the source of thousands of jobs. It's time governments did more to better protect these lands and grow the Greenbelt." The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance includes 100+ groups and individuals from across Ontario that work together to protect the Greenbelt. "We're launching an effort to get the word out that the government's COVID-19 recovery plan should work towards stopping sprawl and growing the Greenbelt," said Tim Gray, executive director, Environmental Defence. "In these difficult times, people need hope. This campaign gives them a positive future to fight for." The effort will involve groups working in each region in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) to ensure: "Municipal councils understand the benefits of sustainable, public transit-oriented growth and protection of natural areas and farmland." Municipal council decisions are transparent, involve the public and reflect actual community needs. "MPPs of all parties commit to stopping urban sprawl and increasing protection of the Greenbelt in their COVID-19 recovery plans." The need for action on sprawl and Greenbelt protection couldn't be greater," said Debbie Gordon of Save the Maskinonge. "Last week, we saw York Region Council ask the Province for permission to develop lands in the Greenbelt. We have also witnessed ongoing erosion of planning rules that encourage more sustainable communities, making it easier to convert farmland to sprawl. It's time local and provincial politicians heard from their constituents that these lands should be protected. That's what our work together is about." To learn more, please visit www.greenbeltalliance.ca.