

GOOD THINGS ARE GROWING IN ONTARIO

Expanding Ontario's Greenbelt
Through Urban River Valleys



ontario greenbelt alliance

A PROJECT OF



environmental
defence

Acknowledgments

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The **Ontario Greenbelt Alliance** would like to thank our member groups for their input into this report and for their tireless efforts and dedication to protect and enhance Ontario's Greenbelt.

The **Ontario Greenbelt Alliance** is a diverse multi-stakeholder coalition of more than 80 organizations who share a common vision for protecting and expanding the Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt. **Environmental Defence** is the coordinator of the **Ontario Greenbelt Alliance**.

The **Ontario Greenbelt Alliance** gratefully acknowledges the support of **The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation** for making this report possible.

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Foreword

As co-chairs of Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt (MLGB), we are pleased to support this important report, *Good Things Are Growing In Ontario: Expanding Ontario's Greenbelt Through Urban River Valleys*.

In early 2013, we saw two exciting Greenbelt developments. First, we witnessed the expansion of the Greenbelt (in Oakville) for the first time since the Greenbelt's creation in 2005. Several hundred acres of magnificent river valleys and forests were brought into the protective and loving arms of the Greenbelt.

Second, the provincial government created a new urban river valley designation as part of the Greenbelt Act. This new designation will help municipalities provide additional, permanent protection for river valley systems in their jurisdictions.

The four of us have worked for many, many years protecting rivers, wetlands, forests, natural ecosystems, and important agricultural lands. We know firsthand the importance of connecting these natural areas to larger ecosystems in order to create a healthier, stronger and more vibrant Greenbelt.

Time and again, our constituents tell us they want to be connected to the larger Greenbelt, to rural communities, to a thriving agricultural sector, and to a place where they can experience nature and the countryside. Now more than ever, growing the Greenbelt will ensure these goals are achieved and upheld in the strongest possible way.

Good Things Are Growing in Ontario comes on the occasion of the Greenbelt's eighth birthday. It is an appropriate time to take stock of the Greenbelt's history and its future by imagining even better protection for our air, water, food, farmland and nature.

We are lucky to have had such a strong bi-partisan history of protecting our magnificent natural areas. Over the years, different political parties have contributed to and supported the Greenbelt's creation, recognizing what was at stake for our environment and economy if natural heritage areas were left unprotected.



Back in 1973, Premier Davis' Conservative government passed the groundbreaking Niagara Escarpment Act, and was followed by Premier Harris' Conservative government passing the monumental 2001 Oak Ridges Moraine Act. In 2005, all of the pieces were brought together by Premier McGuinty's Liberal government when it passed the world-renowned Greenbelt Act.

Looking forward, we recognize the great opportunity we have before us — to create a bigger, bolder and more beautiful Greenbelt for generations to come. We are in a new era of Greenbelt expansion, where the potential exists for thousands of acres of natural areas to be added to the Greenbelt all across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. It is our hope that this new opportunity to grow the Greenbelt prompts municipal action that will bring further permanent protection of natural areas across southern Ontario.

As you read this report, take the time to imagine that future. Picture our Greenbelt as a place where rural and urban peoples meet, where agriculture and local food production thrive, where clean water begins, where green spaces and ecosystems flourish, and where countryside and natural landscapes are given room to breathe and remain a vibrant place that all living creatures can call home. This is a legacy we can all be proud of. This is Ontario's Greenbelt: enjoy it, enhance it, and protect it. Indeed, good things are growing in Ontario!

Cheers,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn De Baeremaeker". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Co-Chair, Municipal Leaders
for the Greenbelt
*Councillor Glenn De
Baeremaeker*
The City of Toronto



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Parish". The signature is cursive and stylized.

Co-Chair, Municipal Leaders
for the Greenbelt
Mayor Steve Parish
The Town of Ajax



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Burton". The signature is cursive and stylized.

Co-Chair, Municipal Leaders
for the Greenbelt
Mayor Rob Burton
The Town of Oakville



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Farbridge". The signature is cursive and stylized.

Co-Chair, Municipal Leaders
for the Greenbelt
Mayor Karen Farbridge
The Town of Guelph

Introduction

Nature shouldn't be a long drive away. Since it was established in 2005, Ontario's Greenbelt has helped more Ontarians connect with nature without long car rides. Love to hike? Hike on trails in the Greenbelt. More of a skier? You can cross-country ski and downhill ski in the Greenbelt. If bird watching, snowshoeing or skating is your thing, Ontario's Greenbelt is the place for you.

Ontario's Greenbelt is more than a popular destination for recreational opportunities. Vegetables taste fresher when they're from a farm around the corner, rather than a farm thousands of kilometres away. Thanks to Ontario's Greenbelt, some of Canada's most productive farmland is still in the hands of farmers. The Greenbelt enables more Ontarians to enjoy fresh, delicious local produce and do their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting local farmers and foods that don't travel long distances.

Before the Greenbelt was established, Ontario's green spaces and prime agricultural lands were under tremendous development pressure all over the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Greenbelt Act defined lands for permanent protection, where development would not occur. Eight years later, it is clear that the Greenbelt is helping to prevent urban sprawl. Thanks to the Greenbelt, more Ontario municipalities are saying no to urban sprawl and its endless rows of single family homes, expensive roads and pipes, and polluting traffic. And more Ontario municipalities are planning for smart growth by creating livable, eco-friendly communities. And more municipalities are defining a firm boundary where green space and farmland must be protected.

It's an exciting and important time for Ontario's Greenbelt. For the first time since the Greenbelt's creation, the Greenbelt has grown to include new lands. And recently, the Ontario government announced a new innovative designation to include urban river valleys in the Greenbelt.

The new urban river valley designation means that municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe can request to include public spaces along their waterways into the Greenbelt, while allowing their own environmental protection policies to apply, in cases where municipal protections may be stronger than the Greenbelt's. This will provide a further layer of protection for urban river valleys. The new urban river valley designation will also help connect millions more Ontarians to the Greenbelt.

This report will explore how the new urban river valley designation could expand the Greenbelt in communities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe area. In particular, it will focus on Toronto, Mississauga and Brampton, Oakville, Markham, Guelph and Hamilton — many of which have indicated they're interested in expanding the Greenbelt locally. The report will discuss the impact of including major waterways in the Greenbelt. Maps will illustrate how this new designation could have a profound impact on growing Ontario's Greenbelt. And the report will discuss what growing the Greenbelt could mean both to municipalities and to Ontario residents.



This report in no way intends to limit the number of municipalities requesting urban river valley protection under the Greenbelt. The municipalities highlighted here have expressed in some form — council resolution, environmental advisory council resolution, or through the interest of a local community groups — interest in growing the Greenbelt through public lands along their respective urban river valleys.

This report is not an exhaustive list of places where the Greenbelt should expand. We recognize that despite the successes of the Greenbelt there are a number of environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands that should come under broader Greenbelt protection. While the focus of this report is to consider lands that would fit under the new urban river valley designation, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance will continue to work with municipalities and the province to grow the Greenbelt where it is important to do so.

It should be noted that the inclusion of public lands into the Greenbelt is a first step towards creating a more broadly connected ecosystem. The inclusion of private lands, while not the subject of this report, would be considered a future step for consideration in order to create an even more enhanced connected system throughout the watersheds of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

About the Greenbelt

Established in 2005, Ontario's Greenbelt protects environmentally sensitive areas and prime agricultural land from urban sprawl and development. Spanning 1.8 million acres in southern Ontario, the Greenbelt also protects the headwaters (sources) of the major watersheds that supply the Greater Toronto Area with much of its drinking water.

Ontario's Greenbelt has been globally recognized as one of the world's leading greenbelt systems because of its innovative approach to planning that seeks to balance growth with protection of environmental and agricultural assets. The Greenbelt Act and Places to Grow Act work together to direct the future location of urban development while protecting prime agricultural lands and areas of ecological significance across the province.

Along with the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges Moraine and Toronto's Rouge Park, the Greenbelt encompasses rural towns and villages, 7,100 farms and about 100,000 acres of specialty crop agricultural areas. Through agriculture, tourism and ecosystem services, the Greenbelt's value to Ontarians is estimated at \$2.6 billion annually.¹ Ontario's Greenbelt is the largest permanently protected greenbelt in the world.

Growing the Greenbelt

Ontario's Greenbelt is getting bigger. In 2013, Oakville's Glenorchy Conservation Area was added to the Greenbelt, the first expansion since the Greenbelt's creation in 2005. Located in northern Oakville, Glenorchy's 400-hectares of environmentally sensitive area includes hills, forests, creeks, wetlands and the Sixteen Mile Creek valley and gorge.

New Urban River Valley Designation: Opportunity for Growth

In November, the provincial government announced the creation of a new designation that will allow urban river valleys to be added to the Greenbelt. Including urban rivers and creeks in the Greenbelt will:

- Connect millions of Ontarians to the important watersheds and natural corridors, which clean our air and water, free of charge.
- Connect millions of Ontarians to the neighbouring rural communities that grow and produce local foods.
- Complement natural heritage protection policies while allowing environmentally-focused municipal plans to remain in effect.

By connecting millions of Ontarians to the Greenbelt, the new urban river valley designation offers an unprecedented opportunity for education and greater understanding of the Greenbelt. Connecting urban river valleys to the Greenbelt will create new ways for residents to get to know the complex landscapes of the Greenbelt. From working countryside to forests, wetlands, river valleys and large-scale ecosystems, exploring the Greenbelt will allow residents to interact with regions that grow our food, the forests that clean our air and the source waters that we, and our green spaces, rely on for water.

Several municipalities, including Toronto, Mississauga and Guelph, have expressed interest in growing the Greenbelt along their urban river valley areas. In these regions, municipal councils have passed motions declaring their intent to grow the Greenbelt into publicly-held lands along their river valleys.



Recommendation

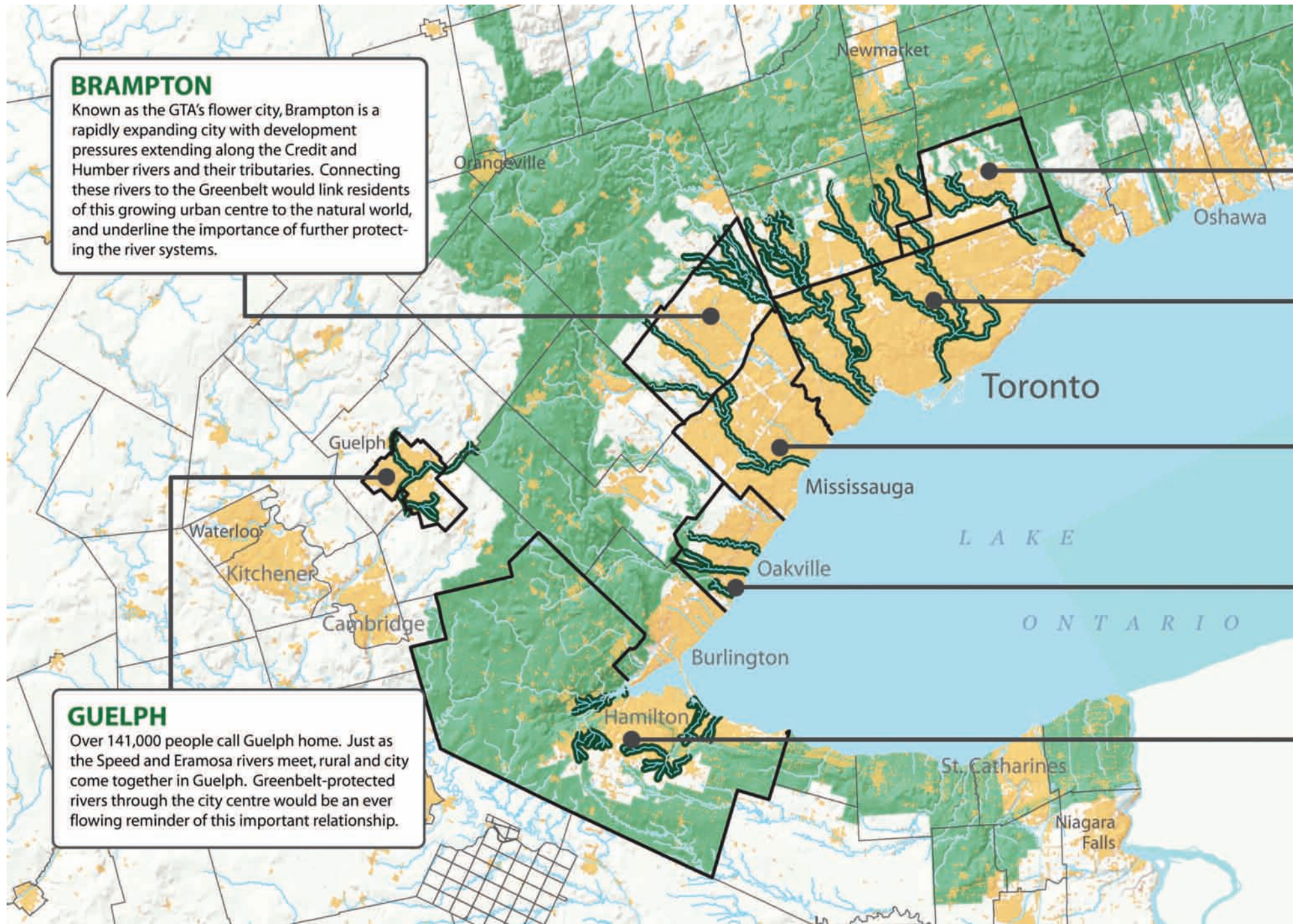
The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance recommends that the province and municipalities move to apply the new designation to public lands in the following areas:

- Toronto: The Humber and Don rivers
- Mississauga and Brampton: The Credit and West Humber rivers
- Oakville: Bronte, Fourteen Mile, and Sixteen Mile Creeks
- Markham: The Don and Rouge rivers
- Guelph: The Speed and Eramosa rivers
- Hamilton: Spencer Creek, Red Hill Creek, Stoney Creek, and their tributaries

For municipalities, protecting river valleys has been and continues to be a challenge. While these areas are generally protected by municipal policies, many urban and urbanizing river areas continue to face significant challenges from development, encroachment, pollution and lack of awareness around the impacts of historical and current day development patterns.

The Greenbelt offers a safeguard: a double layer of protection that provides permanency, while allowing strong municipal policies to remain in effect. The Greenbelt blanket can be wrapped around these areas, protecting them for generations to come.

By joining the Greenbelt, urban river valleys also connect with a larger ecological system, which transcends human-made boundary lines. This interconnectivity can mean service improvements for residents in the form of improved trails as well as guided maps that link municipalities through their watershed areas. And for Ontarians, it could lead to greater awareness about how local rivers and streams connect to the larger Greenbelt system, which encompasses forests, sustaining waters and prime agricultural lands.



BRAMPTON
 Known as the GTA's flower city, Brampton is a rapidly expanding city with development pressures extending along the Credit and Humber rivers and their tributaries. Connecting these rivers to the Greenbelt would link residents of this growing urban centre to the natural world, and underline the importance of further protecting the river systems.

GUELPH
 Over 141,000 people call Guelph home. Just as the Speed and Eramosa rivers meet, rural and city come together in Guelph. Greenbelt-protected rivers through the city centre would be an ever flowing reminder of this important relationship.

MARKHAM

Markham has a population of 310,000. Though today Markham is considered Canada's high-tech capital, Markham's roots are in farming. Further connection to the Greenbelt through the Rouge and Don rivers would speak to the importance of the community's agricultural heritage and highlight natural spaces within this growing city.

MISSISSAUGA

With 700,000 residents, Mississauga is Canada's sixth largest city and it's still growing. The Credit River flows through the city for over 25 kilometres, with development posing great challenges to the river's health. Expanding the Greenbelt down the Credit River would connect residents to neighboring farming communities and green spaces.

HAMILTON

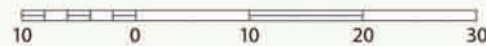
Bordered by Lake Ontario to the east and the Niagara Escarpment to the west, Hamilton's urban core links these two important pieces of our natural heritage. With close proximity to many Ontario fruit growers, the city's 720,000 residents are "ripe" to be connected to the Greenbelt.

TORONTO

With a population of 2.6 million, Toronto is Canada's largest city. Greenbelt designation along the Humber and Don rivers would provide unprecedented educational opportunities to connect Torontonians to the farming communities and green spaces of the larger Greenbelt.

OAKVILLE

Lying on the shores of Lake Ontario, Oakville is home to over 182,000 people. Oakville includes over 1,420 hectares of parkland and trails. It was the first municipality to grow the Greenbelt since the Greenbelt's creation in 2005. Further expansion along Oakville's creeks will bring the Greenbelt through the centre of town and connect rivers from their source areas to Lake Ontario.






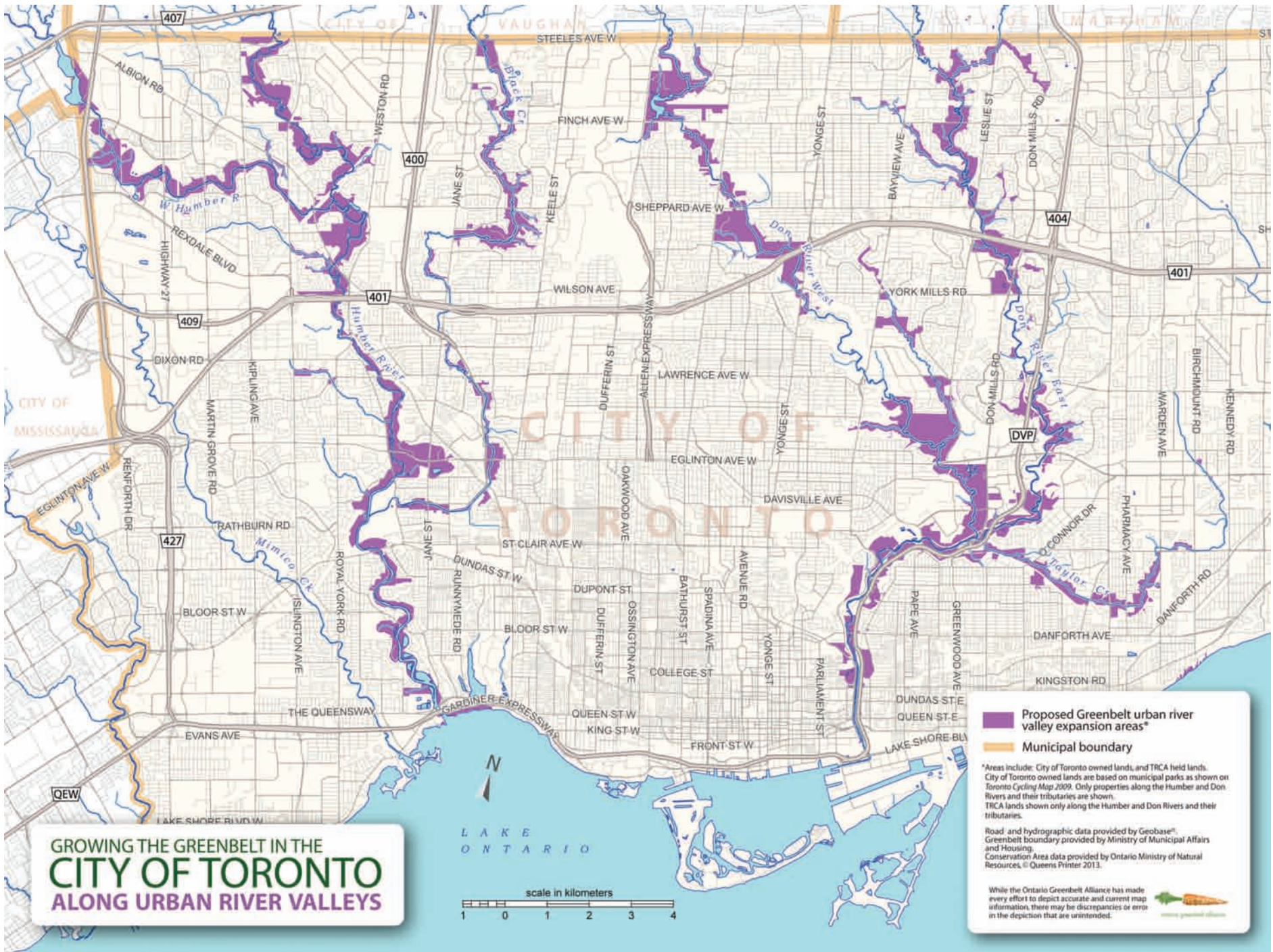
Road network from Digital Cartographic Reference Base of Ontario, Geomatics Office, Ministry of Transportation, Ontario, 2009. Built Boundary for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006 © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2013. Reproduced with permission of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Greenbelt boundaries © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2013. Reproduced with permission. Map design by As the Crow Flies cARTography.

GREENBELT GROWTH ALONG URBAN RIVER VALLEYS

Mapping in this report is based on the best available data at the time of print. The maps are based largely, but not exclusively, on municipal and conservation authority mapping. Legends indicate data sources used. The report aims to depict public lands in urban river valley areas for possible inclusion in the Greenbelt. The natural heritage system layer shows public and private lands in order to illustrate connectivity to the broader natural heritage systems across the Greater Golden Horseshoe and provide a snapshot of ecosystem planning both provincially and municipally.

Please note this report focuses on a selection of key municipal areas. Municipalities not featured may wish to expand the Greenbelt through their respective urban river valleys. This report in no way attempts to limit scope or municipal interest in this important initiative for expanding the Greenbelt. The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance looks forward to working with any municipality interested in growing the Greenbelt.

-  Current Greenbelt
-  Greenbelt expansion areas along urban river valleys
-  Built Boundary



Toronto: Don and Humber Rivers

▶ NUMBER OF ONTARIANS WHO WOULD CONNECT TO THE GREENBELT: **2.6 million**

TORONTO: DON RIVER

- ▶ LENGTH: **38 kilometres**
- ▶ SOURCE: **Oak Ridges Moraine**

ABOUT THE DON RIVER

The Don River originates north of Toronto in the Oak Ridges Moraine. From there, it flows south, entering the City of Toronto in two separate rivers, the East and West Don rivers. The two rivers meet seven kilometres north of Lake Ontario.

Once a popular swimming destination, more than 100 years of industry and development have taken their toll on the Don. Uncontrolled urban sprawl and industrial factories along the Don's banks have polluted the river.

Certain stretches through Toronto have combined sewer outflows that overflow during storms, discharging raw sewage into the river. Heavy siltation (sand) and disturbance from developments upstream in York Region muddy and cloud the water, making it difficult for aquatic species to survive.

Although this sounds bleak, attempts are being made to revive this important river. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of a coalition of government and citizens groups, the Don is showing some signs of recovery, including fish spawning in its waters once again. But more work is needed to revive this river so central to the city's history.



TORONTO: HUMBER RIVER

- ▶ **LENGTH: 100 KILOMETRES**
- ▶ **SOURCE: HUMBER SPRINGS PONDS - NIAGARA ESCARPMENT AND THE OAK RIDGES MORaine**

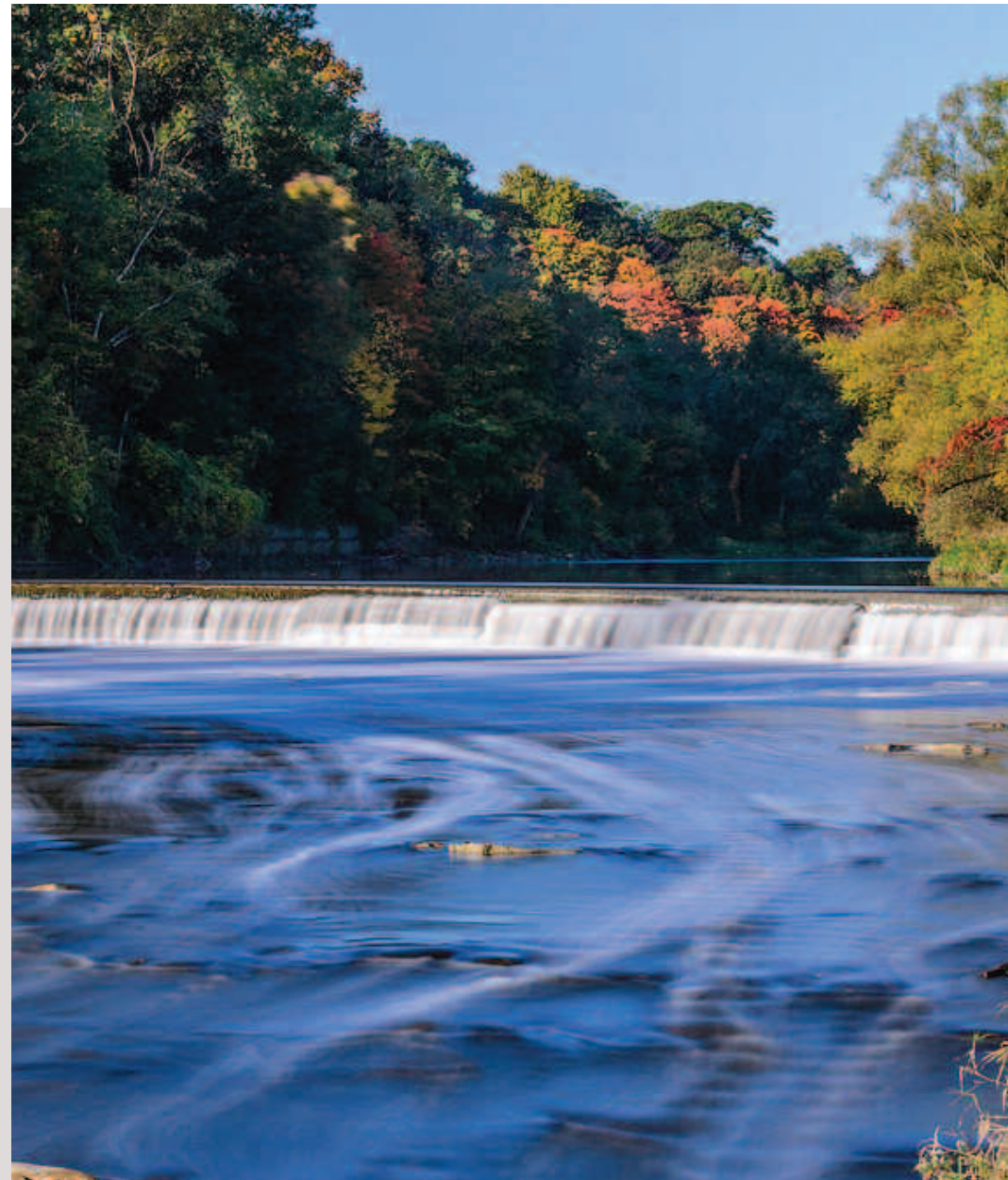
ABOUT THE HUMBER RIVER

Collecting from nearly 750 creeks, the Humber River originates from the Niagara Escarpment to the northwest and the Oak Ridges Moraine, down through the City of Vaughan on the northeast. The Humber River flows in a southeasterly direction down the west side of the City of Toronto.

The river has a long history of ecological and cultural importance. First Nations peoples used the river for centuries, as trail and main settlement areas along its banks.² Later, mills lined the river.³

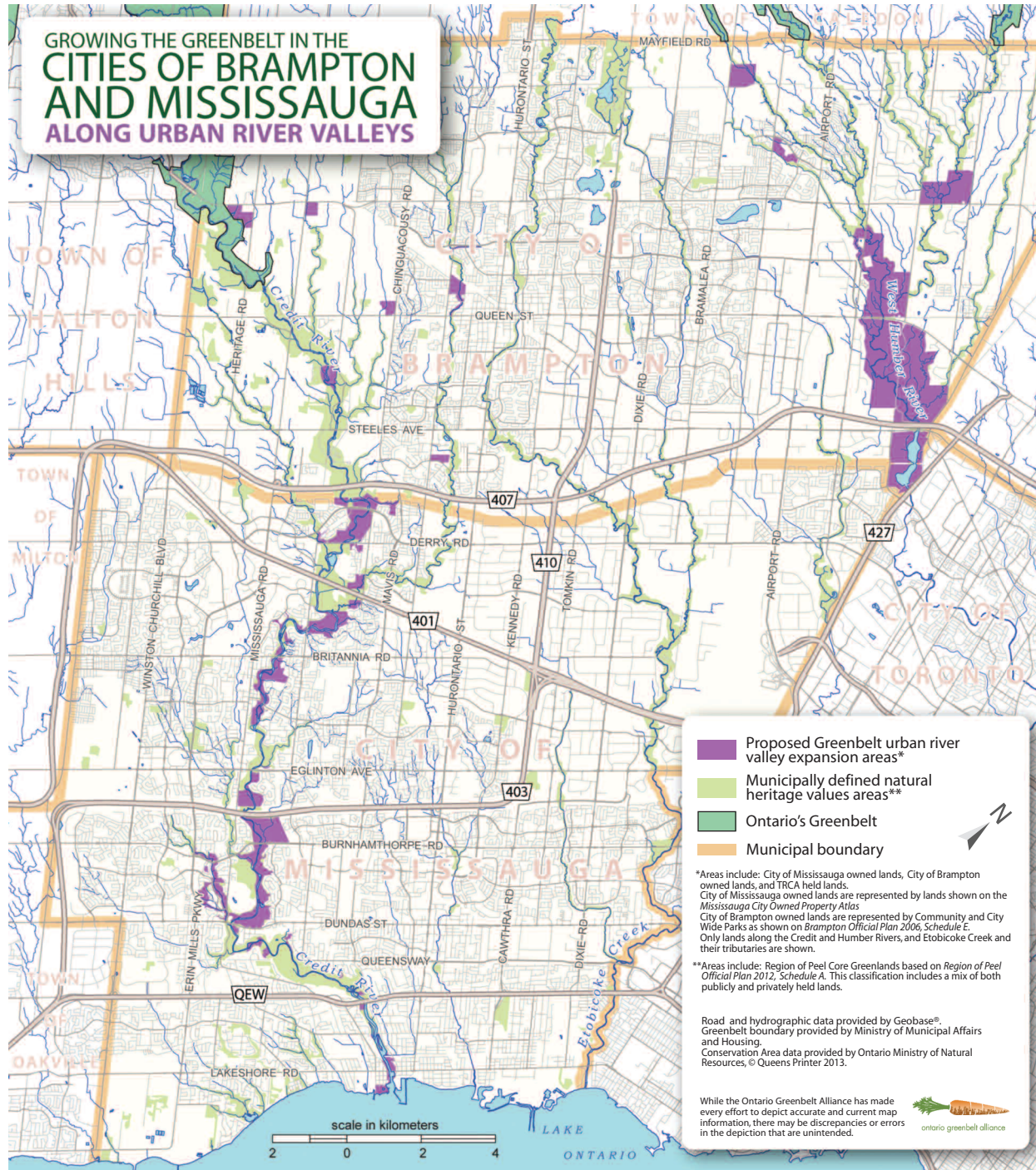
Today, Torontonians continue to value green spaces and creeks within their midst. The city's ravines are popular corridors for walks and cycling. Toronto residents also value foods produced locally. More and more Toronto farmers' markets sell Greenbelt products.

By connecting the Don and the Humber to the Greenbelt, Canada's most populated city would gain a direct connection to the rural lands that provide local food and the source waters that supply drinking water for millions in southern Ontario.





GROWING THE GREENBELT IN THE CITIES OF BRAMPTON AND MISSISSAUGA ALONG URBAN RIVER VALLEYS



Mississauga and Brampton: The Credit and West Humber Rivers

► NUMBER OF ONTARIANS WHO WOULD CONNECT TO THE GREENBELT: **1.2 million**

MISSISSAUGA: THE CREDIT RIVER

► LENGTH: **90 KILOMETRES**

► SOURCE: **ORIGINATES ABOVE THE NIAGARA ESCARPMENT**

ABOUT THE CREDIT RIVER

The Credit River flows 99 kilometres south from headwaters above the Niagara Escarpment, through the Oak Ridges Moraine, eventually draining into Lake Ontario after passing through Brampton and Mississauga. The Credit River contains the most diverse coldwater fisheries in Ontario and provides spawning areas for salmon and trout.⁴

The greatest challenge to the Credit River is the rampant population growth on the river's shores. With 700,000 residents, Mississauga is Canada's sixth largest city and it's still growing. Brampton is also experiencing an increase in development patterns that favour low-density sprawl.

The rise in sprawl has hurt the watershed. Paved impermeable surfaces in subdivisions cause large amounts of dirty water to run off and enter the river system too quickly for the river and its aquatic inhabitants to process. The resulting erosion and water pollution can be catastrophic for the river's health. It can also be expensive. Attempts to repair the damage — such as expensive infrastructure projects in river valleys — can and do cost taxpayers millions.

Rapid population growth also provides challenges to urban planning for the regions around the Credit River. But the growing population also provides a prime opportunity to connect more Ontarians to our Greenbelt.

Designating the Credit River as part of Ontario's Greenbelt would bridge a connection between southern Ontario's green space and agricultural lands and one of Canada's fastest growing and most diverse populations. And it would encourage residents to see their city in a new light, not just as a growing urban centre but one that is connected to the natural world through a river in need of protection.

Ultimately, Ontarians would be best served if the whole of the Credit River was added to the Greenbelt. While this study looks at Mississauga and Brampton, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance would be happy to continue to work with and support the municipalities of Caledon and Halton Hills to have public lands along all of the Credit River added to the Greenbelt.

BRAMPTON: THE WEST HUMBER RIVER

- ▶ **LENGTH: MAIN BRANCH 100 KILOMETRES**
- ▶ **SOURCE: NIAGARA ESCARPMENT AND OAK RIDGES MORaine**

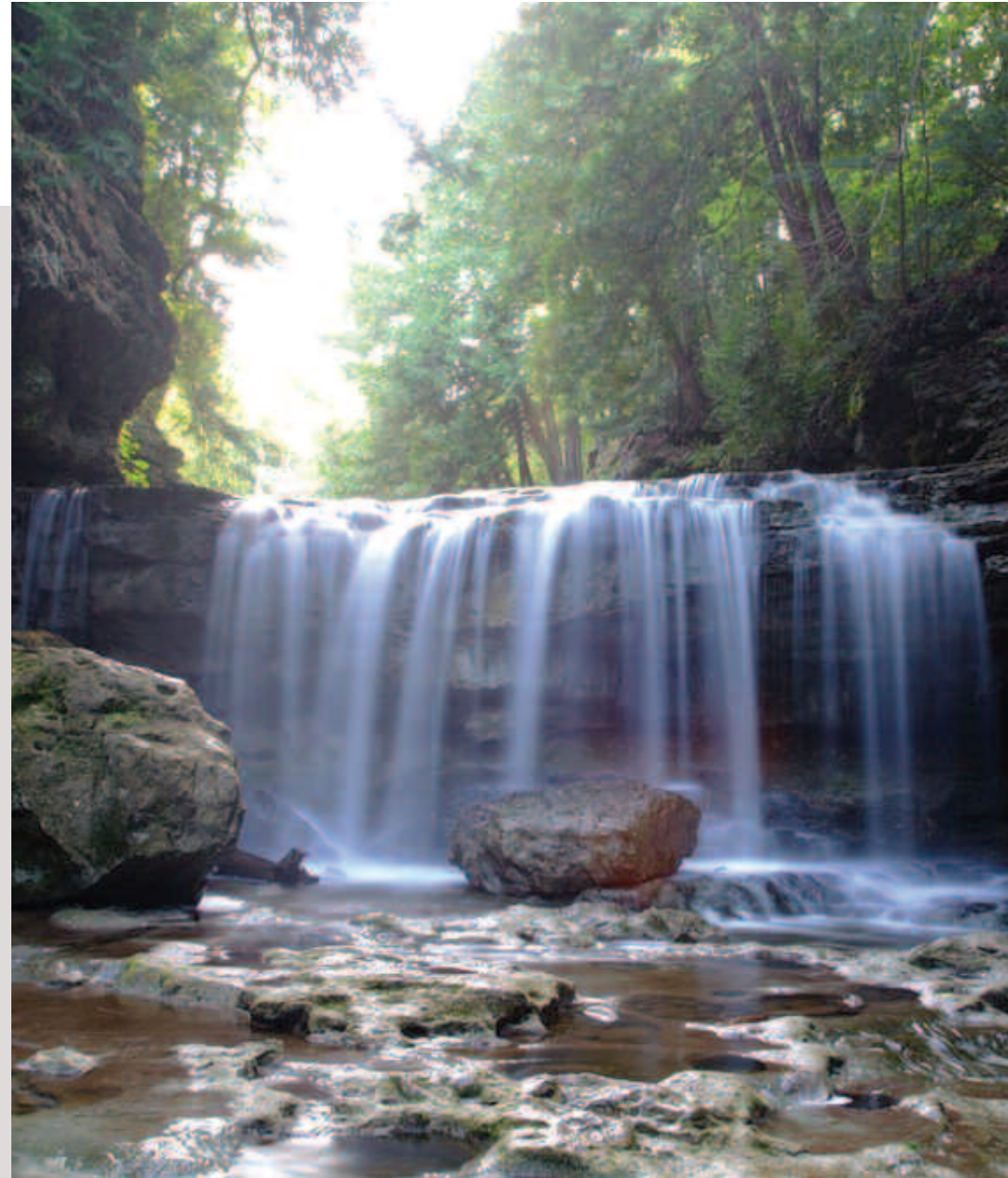
ABOUT THE WEST HUMBER RIVER

The West Humber River begins at Humber Springs Ponds on the Niagara Escarpment in Mono, Dufferin County.⁵ Collecting from 750 creeks and tributaries, the river's two major branches pass through several municipalities including Brampton, Caledon, King, Mono, Vaughan and Toronto.

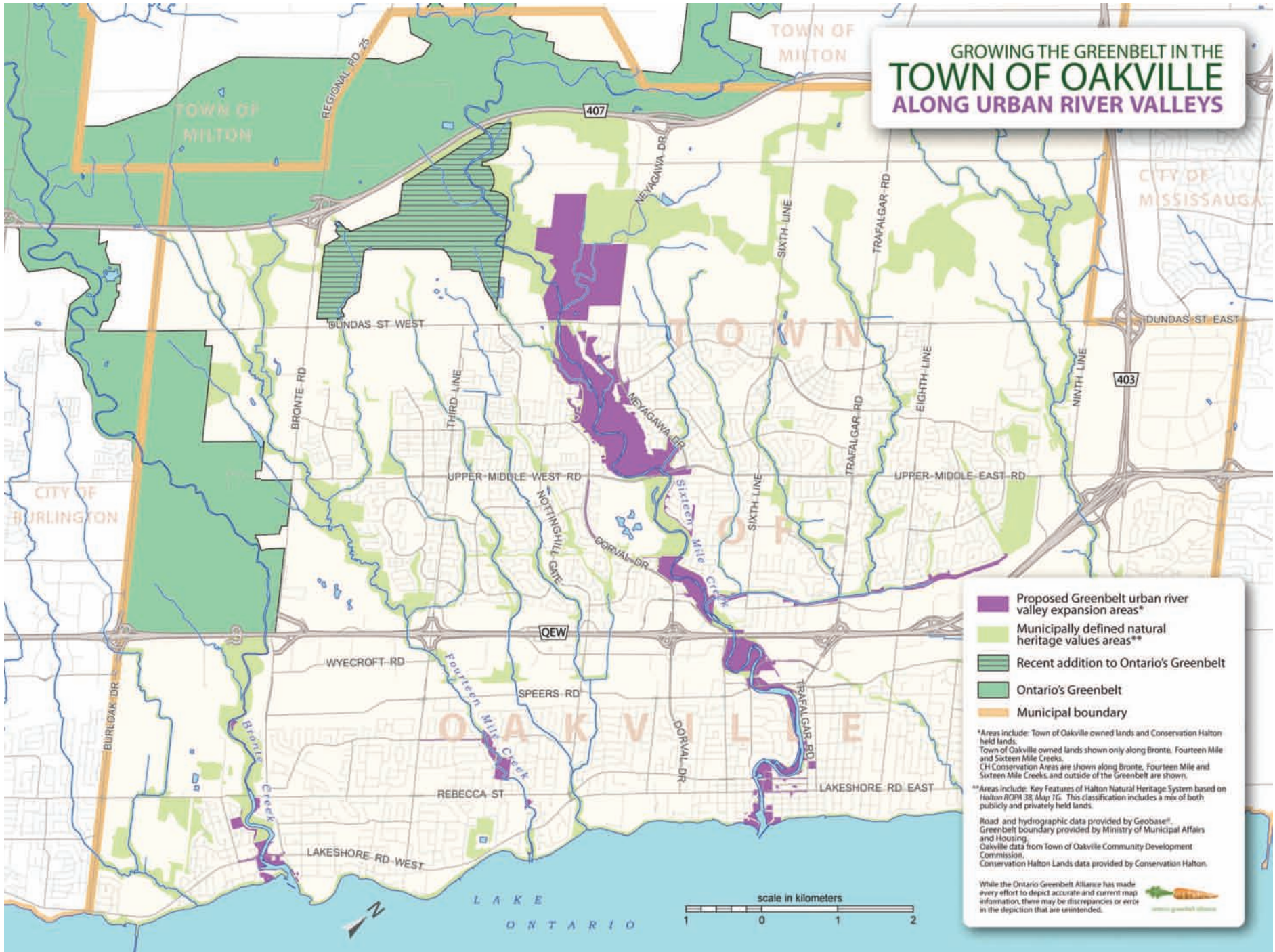
The Humber was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1999.⁶ This designation recognizes the Humber's contribution to the development of the country and its importance in the history of First Nations peoples and the early Euro-Canadian settlers of Upper Canada.

The West Humber runs through Claireville Conservation Area, an amazing natural corridor within an urban setting.

About 45 per cent of the Humber River's watershed is either urban or urbanizing.⁷ The upper reaches of the Humber are increasingly under pressure from new development primarily in Brampton and more recently, Vaughan.







Oakville: Bronte, Sixteen Mile and Fourteen Mile Creeks

- ▶ NUMBER OF ONTARIANS WHO WOULD CONNECT TO THE GREENBELT: **182,500**
- ▶ LENGTH: **50 KILOMETRES; 35 KILOMETRES; 12 KILOMETRES**
- ▶ SOURCE: **ABOVE THE NIAGARA ESCARPMENT; TRAFALGAR MORaine**

ABOUT THE BRONTE, FOURTEEN, AND SIXTEEN MILE CREEKS

Bronte Creek is part of the Bronte Creek watershed, which encompasses over 300 square kilometres and covers portions of Wellington County, Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville and Milton. Bronte Creek flows for nearly 50 kilometres, travelling through the Niagara Escarpment. The creek is an important fish habitat and a nursery for migratory rainbow trout, which travel up the creek from Lake Ontario.⁸

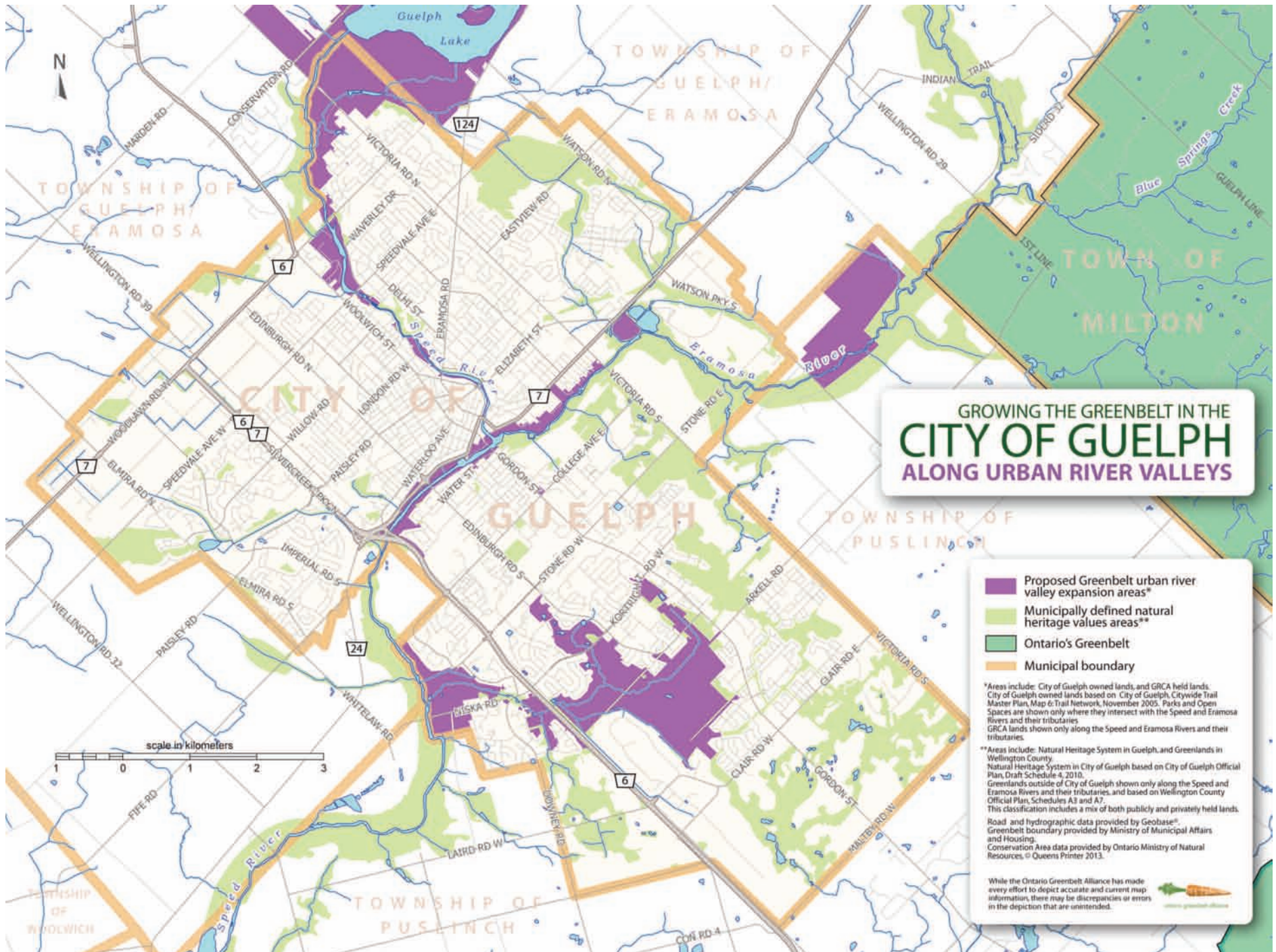
Fourteen Mile Creek begins in Milton and runs in a southeasterly direction through Oakville to Lake Ontario. The creek traverses urbanized areas. Significant rehabilitation of the river is needed to restore and enhance it.⁹ After years of disruptive development, Fourteen Mile Creek is in need of strong protection and revitalization.

The main branches of Sixteen Mile Creek are formed in wetlands and forested swamps of the Niagara Escarpment. From there, the branches flow south forming an important fish and wildlife corridor, which provides habitat for provincially, and regionally rare species.¹⁰









Guelph: Speed and Eramosa Rivers

- ▶ NUMBER OF ONTARIANS WHO WOULD CONNECT TO THE GREENBELT: **120,000**
- ▶ LENGTH: **65.3 KILOMETRES; 29.3 KILOMETRES**
- ▶ SOURCE: **PARIS/GALT MORaine AND THE ORANGEVILLE MORaine; PARIS/GALT MORaine**

ABOUT THE SPEED AND ERAMOSIA RIVERS

The Speed River flows from the Paris/Galt Moraine, through a largely forested watershed, into Wellington County and into the Region of Waterloo. The Eramosa River is a tributary of the Speed River.

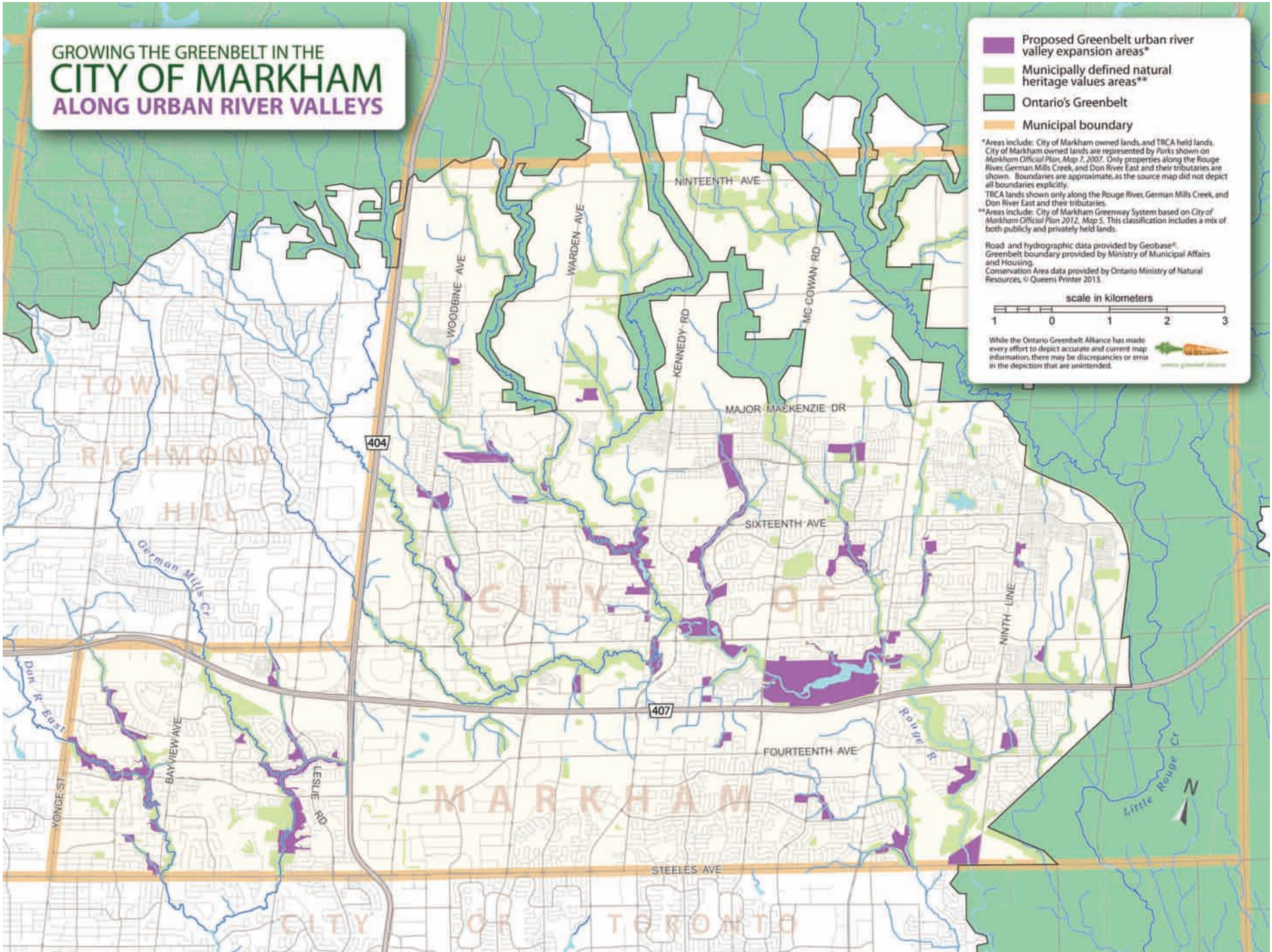
Given the city's proximity to the Guelph Lake Conservation Area, a popular spot for camping, it's no surprise that Guelph residents are passionate about nature. In the past, the City of Guelph has requested that the province expand the Greenbelt to include protection for the Paris/Galt Moraine, the source waters of this watershed. Including the Speed and Eramosa rivers in the Greenbelt would further strengthen protection for the watershed and create even greater links between the city, its rural areas and the vital green spaces around Guelph.







GROWING THE GREENBELT IN THE CITY OF MARKHAM ALONG URBAN RIVER VALLEYS



- Proposed Greenbelt urban river valley expansion areas*
- Municipally defined natural heritage values areas**
- Ontario's Greenbelt
- Municipal boundary

*Areas include: City of Markham owned lands, and TRCA held lands. City of Markham owned lands are represented by Parks shown on Markham Official Plan, Map 7, 2007. Only properties along the Rouge River, German Mills Creek, and Don River East and their tributaries are shown. Boundaries are approximate, as the source map did not depict all boundaries explicitly.

TRCA lands shown only along the Rouge River, German Mills Creek, and Don River East and their tributaries.

**Areas include: City of Markham Greenway System based on City of Markham Official Plan 2012, Map 5. This classification includes a mix of both publicly and privately held lands.

Road and hydrographic data provided by Geobase®
Greenbelt boundary provided by Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.
Conservation Area data provided by Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, © Queens Printer 2013.

scale in kilometers

While the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance has made every effort to depict accurate and current map information, there may be discrepancies or errors in the depiction that are unintended.

Markham: Don and Rouge Rivers

- ▶ NUMBER OF ONTARIANS WHO WOULD CONNECT TO THE GREENBELT: **310,000**
- ▶ LENGTH: **38 KILOMETRES; 250 KILOMETRES**
- ▶ SOURCE: **OAK RIDGES MORaine**

ABOUT MARKHAM'S DON AND ROUGE RIVERS

THE DON RIVER

The majority of the middle and lower reaches of the watershed within Markham have been altered through urbanization. German Mills Creek, the main tributary of the Don, has seen its streams piped, buried and polluted. Large sewer pipes have even been placed within its delicate riverbeds. Pressure on this ecosystem continues from upstream urban development.

Many organizations are helping to bring the Don back to life. Revitalization is bringing species back to this beleaguered watershed. Recently, salmon made their way from Lake Ontario up the river and spawned in the waters north of Steeles Avenue, showing that life is moving back into the Don. But further development near its upper reaches still threatens the survival of this important river.



ABOUT THE ROUGE RIVER

The headwaters of the mighty Rouge River and its tributaries are found in the Oak Ridges Moraine, where the 250 kilometre-long Rouge River begins its journey. Water flows down from the elevated moraine through York Region, passing through Richmond Hill, Markham, Pickering and Durham, with its final destination into Lake Ontario. The total area of the watershed is 336 square kilometres.

The Rouge is one of few wildernesses left in South-Central Ontario, which contain Carolinian species.¹¹ The Carolinian region is a continuation of the deciduous forest region of the eastern United States which extends south to the Carolinas. Characterized by a warmer climate influenced by the Great Lakes, it is able to support animal and plant species not usually found in other parts of Canada.

The Rouge watershed has a rich farming history and continues to be home to many farms today. Many organizations have worked to protect this river. Considered the jewel of the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Rouge is one of the last remaining rivers in the Greater Toronto Area that is still directly connected from its source waters to Lake Ontario.

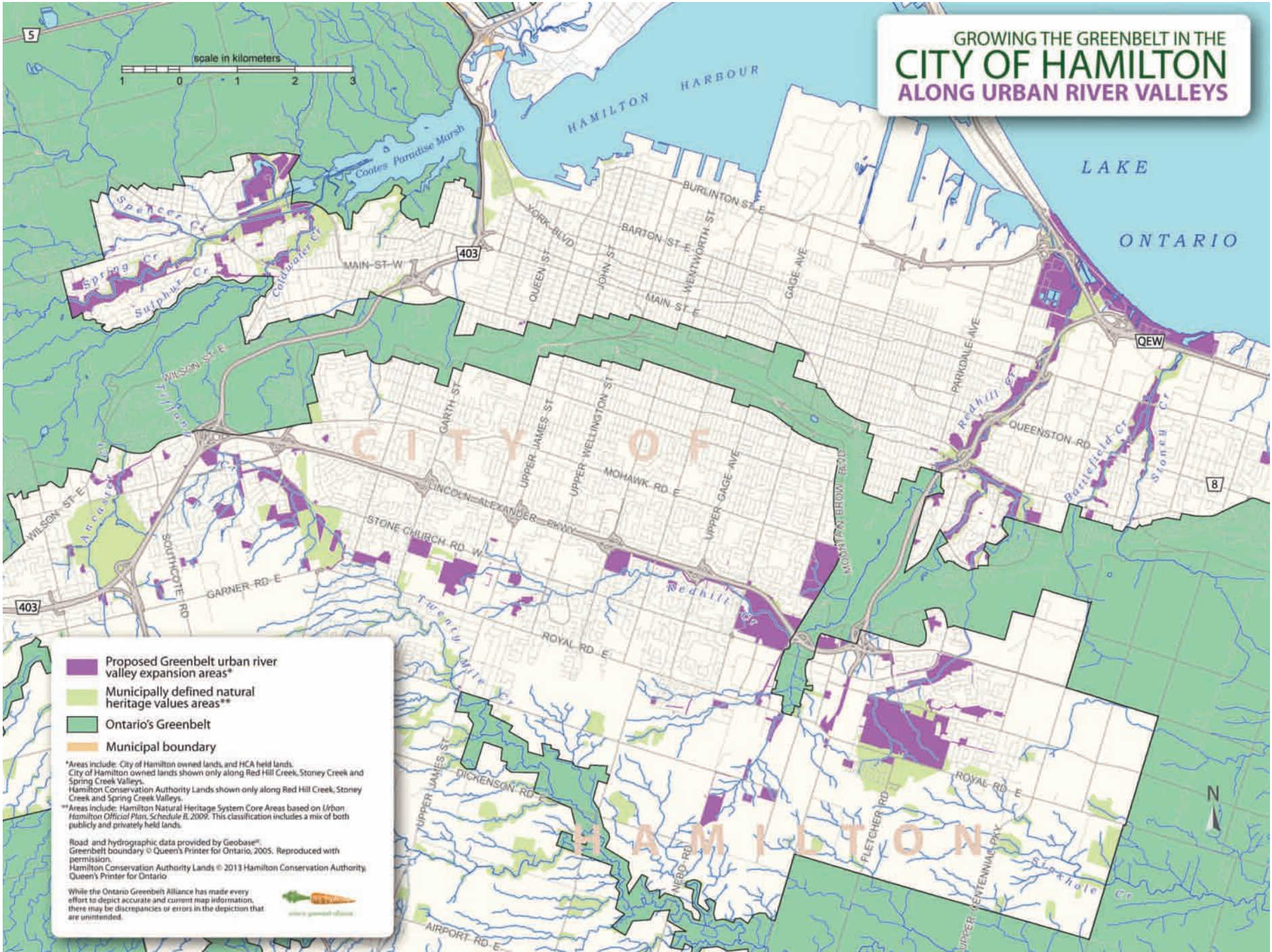
Including outstanding areas in the middle and upper reaches of the Rouge watershed in the Greenbelt would help protect important water resources that service agriculture along the Rouge and would enable more Ontarians to discover the unique Carolinian forest landscape along the banks of this watershed.

Right: The Northern Mockingbird and Staghorn Sumac are both Carolinian species.





GROWING THE GREENBELT IN THE
CITY OF HAMILTON
 ALONG URBAN RIVER VALLEYS



- Proposed Greenbelt urban river valley expansion areas*
- Municipally defined natural heritage values areas**
- Ontario's Greenbelt
- Municipal boundary

*Areas include: City of Hamilton owned lands, and HCA held lands. City of Hamilton owned lands shown only along Red Hill Creek, Stony Creek and Spring Creek Valleys. Hamilton Conservation Authority Lands shown only along Red Hill Creek, Stony Creek and Spring Creek Valleys.

**Areas include: Hamilton Natural Heritage System Core Areas based on *Urban Hamilton Official Plan, Schedule B, 2009*. This classification includes a mix of both publicly and privately held lands.

Road and hydrographic data provided by Geobase®. Greenbelt boundary © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2005. Reproduced with permission. Hamilton Conservation Authority Lands © 2013 Hamilton Conservation Authority. Queen's Printer for Ontario.

While the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance has made every effort to depict accurate and current map information, there may be discrepancies or errors in the depiction that are unintended.



Hamilton: Spencer Creek, Red Hill Creek, Stoney Creek, and their tributaries

- ▶ NUMBER OF ONTARIANS WHO WOULD CONNECT TO THE GREENBELT: **720,000**
- ▶ LENGTH: **34 KILOMETRES; 10 KILOMETRES; 13 KILOMETRES**
- ▶ SOURCE: **SPENCER, RED HILL AND STONEY CREEKS ALL ORIGINATE ABOVE THE NIAGARA ESCARPMENT**

ABOUT HAMILTON'S CREEKS

Most of Hamilton's creeks originate above the Niagara Escarpment and run into Hamilton Harbour, with the exception of Stoney Creek and its tributaries, which flow directly into Lake Ontario. Unfortunately, many of the watersheds that feed these creeks are suffering under the strain of rural activities and urban development.¹²

A number of the watersheds in Hamilton, like Spencer Creek, and Stoney Creek, contain a significant amount of provincially significant wetlands and environmentally significant areas. Of special note is the Red Hill Creek Watershed, which includes the Eramosa Karst — a provincially designated Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) that includes geological features such as caves and sinkholes.¹³

The people of Hamilton enjoy a close proximity to many Ontario fruit growers and wine producers. Providing a tangible Greenbelt connection through the urban creeks of Hamilton will strengthen this connection.

Hamiltonians also value their urban natural areas. Protection of the urban river valley components of these major watersheds will ensure that these areas can be enjoyed by both current and future generations of Hamiltonians.





Conclusions and Recommendation

Ontario's Greenbelt serves many different needs, including preventing urban sprawl, protecting productive farmland, enabling more Ontarians to enjoy fresh local produce, and protecting and cleaning drinking water and air for Ontarians.

It's clear that Ontarians value the Greenbelt. Farmers' markets selling Greenbelt fruits, vegetables, ciders, meats and cheeses are busy every weekend. Greenbelt wines continue to win awards. Greenbelt ski trails see a steady stream of visitors. And more Ontario municipalities are moving away from urban sprawl to plan more livable, efficient and eco-friendly communities.

Thanks to the new urban river valley designation, Ontario municipalities have a new tool to protect their urban river valleys in an even more permanent way, something lacking until now. The new urban river valley designation presents an unprecedented opportunity to grow the Greenbelt and protect more of our green spaces, rivers and ecosystems.

Recommendation

The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance recommends that the municipalities of Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Oakville, Guelph, Markham, and Hamilton begin working with the province to include the public lands around their urban river valleys in Ontario's Greenbelt.

The new designation offers an unprecedented opportunity to connect millions of people with Ontario's Greenbelt. This will enable many more Ontarians to connect to the natural spaces and working farmland that are essential to the environmental, social and cultural health of communities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Endnotes

- ¹ David Suzuki Foundation (2008) Ontario's Wealth, Canada's Future: Appreciating the value of the Greenbelt's Eco-Services, p. 4.
- ² Merringer, Ian (July 22, 2011). History runs deep in Toronto's Humber River. The Globe and Mail. Retrieved from <http://theglobeandmail.com>.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Credit Valley Conservation (2009) Credit Valley Conservation: Rising to the Challenge p. 17
- ⁵ The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (2011). Retrieved December 5, 2011. Retrieved from http://www.chrs.ca/Rivers/Humber/Humber_e.php
- ⁶ "Humber River" Atlas of Canada. (2010) Natural Resources Canada.
- ⁷ The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (2011). Retrieved December 5, 2011. Retrieved from http://www.chrs.ca/Rivers/Humber/Humber_e.php
- ⁸ Trout Unlimited Canada (2008) Technical Report No. ON-041 2008, Temperature Report for the Bronte Creek Watershed p.4. Retrieved from www.tucanada.org
- ⁹ Town of Oakville (2011) Fourteen Mile Creek Reach 2 Stabilization and Rehabilitation. Draft Report January 13, 2011 Town of Oakville. Retrieved from <http://www.oakville.ca/>
- ¹⁰ Trout Unlimited Canada (2008) Technical Report No. ON-041 2008, Temperature Report for the Bronte Creek Watershed p.4. Retrieved from www.tucanada.org
- ¹¹ Carolinian Canada. (2011) Retrieved from http://www.carolinian.org/CarolinianSites_1984 CarolinianCanadaSites.htm
- ¹² City of Hamilton. (2011) Learn About Your Watershed. Retrieved Feb 11, 2013 from http://www.hamilton.ca/CityDepartments/PublicWorks/Environment_Sustainable_Infrastructure/StrategicPlanning/StrategicEnvironmentalPlanningProjects/FloodProgram/WhatCanIDo.htm
- ¹³ Infrastructure/StrategicPlanning/StrategicEnvironmentalPlanningProjects/FloodProgram/WhatCanIDo.htm



Photo credits

Front cover..... Bronte Marsh/N. Finney

Pg 3 FROM TOP: Credit Valley/Credit Valley Conservation; Tiger Lily/E. Shapero; Little Rouge River/J. Robb

Pg 6 Greenbelt apples and tomatoes/H. Harding

Pg 8 FROM TOP: Child with paddle/H. Harding; Winter Hike Oak Ridges Moraine/H. Harding; Rouge Valley at Finch Meander/J. Robb

Pg 12 Don River Toronto/iStock photo

Pg 13 Humber River/R. Hyndman

Pg 14 CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT: Greenbelt Hike/H.Harding; Don River Pathway/E.Shapero; Great White Egret, Humber River/Grant Hickey

Pg 17 Waterfall/Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

Pg 18 CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT: Deer in Rouge Park/J. Robb; Exploring Nature/H. Harding; Chinook Salmon, Credit River/Dave Taylor,
The Riverwood Conservancy

Pg 20 Glenorchy Conservation Area/N. Finney

Pg 21 River and Bridge/Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

Pg 22 CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT: Fourteen Mile Creek/N. Finney; John Gorzo and tractor/Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation; Halton view/
N. Finney

Pg 24 Speed River

Pg 25 River and Bridge, Credit Valley Conservation/Jon Clayton

Pg 26 CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT: Eramosa riverbank; White tail deer faun Rouge Park/J. Robb; Greenbelt produce/H. Harding

Pg 28 Don River/V. Burke

Pg 29 Northern Mockingbird on Sumac/J. Robb

Pg 30 CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: Rouge River, Markham/J. Robb; Asters/E. Shapero; Markham farmland/J. Robb

Pg 32 Hamilton, Tews Falls/L. Emberton

Pg 33..... CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: Spencer Creek Forest/L. Emberton; Red Hill Creek Watershed/J. Minor; Red Hill Creek /L. Lukasic

Pg 36 Glenorchy Conservation Area/B. Van Ryswyk

Back cover CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: River and Bridge, Credit Valley Conservation/Jon Clayton; Ontario Plums/Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation;
Chinook Salmon, Credit River/Dave Taylor, The Riverwood Conservancy; Blue Flag Iris/J. Robb; Glenorchy Conservation Area/N. Finney;
Credit River/Credit Valley Conservation; Spencer Creek forest/L. Emberton



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