

# Ontario's Greenbelt UNDER THREAT


Your nature,  
farmland,  
drinking water  
and climate  
at risk



environmental  
defence



# Ontario's Greenbelt is at risk



In 2015, the award-winning Greenbelt and *Places to Grow* Plans will be reviewed by the Ontario government. These plans work together to direct affordable growth to existing cities and towns while permanently protecting nature, farmland and our water from sprawl. But some developers and municipalities want to remove lands from the Greenbelt and weaken the rules that keep it whole. At the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, our vision is for a bigger, stronger Greenbelt that protects our communities, water, forests, wildlife, and farmland and where subdivision sprawl and unnecessary development are not allowed.

## About Ontario's Greenbelt

At almost 2 million acres and growing, the Greenbelt hugs southern Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe region. The Greenbelt Plan protects land for farming, natural spaces for plants, animals and recreation, and is the source of the major watersheds that supply many of us with drinking water. The Greenbelt includes the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and Toronto's Rouge Park, as well as towns, villages and farms that produce food like grapes, carrots, corn and peaches.

## Threats facing the Greenbelt include:

- Infrastructure like new highways that encourage urban sprawl
- Contaminated soil from construction sites that may be polluting the drinking water of families in the Greenbelt
- Destruction of natural areas and farmland by poorly planned development
- A new, unnecessary mega-airport on prime farmland
- Loss of natural areas and farmland that accelerate the impacts of climate change

The Greenbelt Plan's 2015 review is an opportunity to reduce these threats and strengthen Ontario's Greenbelt.



# THREATS TO THE GREENBELT

## Pavement, pipes and power lines

1

### THREAT:

Infrastructure, including new mega-highways (such as GTA West and Mid-Peninsula) and the expansion of existing highways (such as 407, 427, and 404), sewers, water and energy pipes, as well as industrial infrastructure cut through the Greenbelt and facilitate sprawl.

### IMPACT:

- The construction of the mega-highways alone would pave over 3,400 hectares of farmland
- At least \$4 billion less money for public transit like subways and buses
- Wildlife movement blocked and thousands of animals killed
- Poorer air quality and more greenhouse gases which contribute to climate change

### SOLUTION:

Stop new highway development to reduce climate change impacts, and keep large industrial infrastructure out of farmland and forests. Invest in regional rapid transit to help communities develop smarter, denser housing and businesses.



2

## Sprawl, inappropriate development in the Greenbelt



### THREAT:

Sprawl development proposals are threatening to eat up productive farmland and destroy forests and wetlands. The Greenbelt Plan permanently protects agricultural and natural land from development. Some municipalities and developers are pushing to shrink the boundaries, take land out of the Greenbelt or allow outdated development plans to go ahead which will erode the plan.

### IMPACT:

- Inappropriate development results in a loss of farmland, forests, and wetlands
- Leapfrog development beyond the Greenbelt. We can't afford more sprawl. It is 50 per cent more costly to build on greenfield sites compared to intensifying an already urban area

### SOLUTION:

Support healthy compact communities, plug loopholes and ensure municipalities comply with the Greenbelt Plan.

3

## Dumping contaminated fill/soil on agricultural lands and in natural areas

### THREAT:

Massive amounts of excess soil excavated from industrial brownfield sites and construction projects, some of it contaminated, is being dumped on Greenbelt land. In one case alone, the equivalent of 200 Olympic-size swimming pools of fill was dumped at a rural site.



### IMPACT:

- Contaminated soil can pollute rivers, drinking water and productive agricultural land
- Toxins like cyanide, oil and carcinogenic dry cleaning fluid have been found in soil dumps

### SOLUTION:

Ban contaminated soil from being dumped in Ontario. We need to ensure that contaminated soil is cleaned before being dumped in the Greenbelt. Track it from construction sites and clean it.

4

## Pickering airport

### THREAT:

The federal government wants to build a new and unnecessary airport on Greenbelt land. The scheme includes building new factories on the rest of the farmland and forests, valleys and natural areas that the federal government owns.

### IMPACT:

- Loss of 7,530 hectares (75.3km<sup>2</sup>) of prime farmland and valley lands
- Local health effects from air and noise pollution from planes
- 3,250 hectares of land and billions of dollars will go towards building an unnecessary airport like Montreal's Mirabel Airport, which has been closed to passenger flights for 10 years.



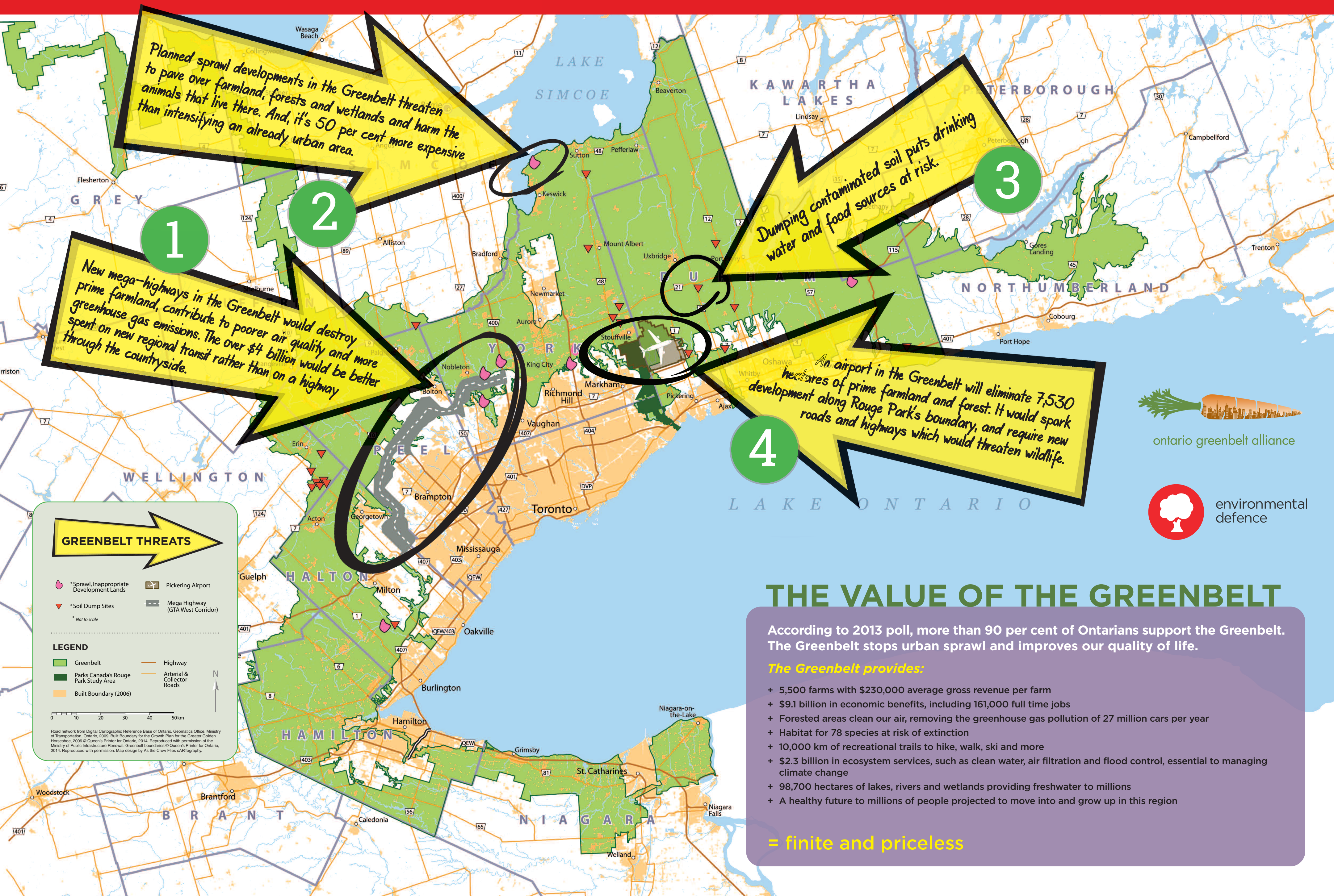
### SOLUTION:

Stop the Pickering airport, expand Rouge Park, support agriculture near urban areas on the federal lands and the establishment of businesses close to where people live.

Photo: NO FLY ZONE 2013 (90 metres) - Design: Heather Rigby (artist), assisted by Ron Tapscott (farmer) and friends of Land Over Landings



# WHAT'S AT RISK IN THE GREENBELT



## THE VALUE OF THE GREENBELT

According to 2013 poll, more than 90 per cent of Ontarians support the Greenbelt. The Greenbelt stops urban sprawl and improves our quality of life.

### The Greenbelt provides:

- + 5,500 farms with \$230,000 average gross revenue per farm
- + \$9.1 billion in economic benefits, including 161,000 full time jobs
- + Forested areas clean our air, removing the greenhouse gas pollution of 27 million cars per year
- + Habitat for 78 species at risk of extinction
- + 10,000 km of recreational trails to hike, walk, ski and more
- + \$2.3 billion in ecosystem services, such as clean water, air filtration and flood control, essential to managing climate change
- + 98,700 hectares of lakes, rivers and wetlands providing freshwater to millions
- + A healthy future to millions of people projected to move into and grow up in this region

= finite and priceless



# What Can I Do?

## TAKE ACTION

The province is reviewing the Greenbelt Plan in 2015 and wants to hear your views. Make your voice heard to counter threats to the Greenbelt.

- *Keep new highways and infrastructure out of the Greenbelt*
- *Stop sprawl from eating up nature and farms in the Greenbelt*
- *Support farmers and access to local food; say no to the Pickering airport*
- *Protect clean water resources; ban the dumping of contaminated soil*

Have your say at [StrengthentheGreenbelt.ca](http://StrengthentheGreenbelt.ca)

[Greenbeltalliance.ca](http://Greenbeltalliance.ca)  
[Environmentaldefence.ca](http://Environmentaldefence.ca)

FRONT COVER: Nathan and his family, who own a farm business near Uxbridge in Durham Region, are concerned about their future and the future of the Greenbelt.

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Photos of Nathan & Farmers Market: *Laura Berman/GreenFuse Photos*

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