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May 27, 2015

Dear Minister McMeekin, Minister Murray, Mr. Crombie, and Review Panel Advisors,

We are very pleased to be able to participate in this 2015 Co-ordinated Review of the Growth and Greenbelt Plans. Land Over Landings is the successor of People or Planes, the grassroots movement that helped stop construction of the Pickering Airport on farmland in 1975. Our own organization was formed in 2005 – not just to ensure that the never-ending threat of a Pickering Airport comes to nothing, but also to advocate for the permanent preservation of the farmland and natural habitat that were expropriated 43 years ago for an airport that was never built and that were consequently – if inadvertently – saved from destruction.

As it happens, most of the Federal Lands, as they are known today, are now within the Provincial Greenbelt. And a wide band across the northernmost part of the expropriated site is on the Moraine. Even the section still zoned for future airport purposes, and therefore not within the Greenbelt, *should* be. Like the rest of the land around it, most is Class 1 farmland, designated as such by the Canada Land Inventory.

Needless to say, this portion of the Greenbelt is always in our sights. Securing its permanent protection is the core of our mission. But our submission to the Co-ordinated Review takes a broader look at the Greenbelt and Moraine plans, both of which – it bears saying in capitals – WE STRONGLY SUPPORT. We want to concentrate here on two issues that we feel would make these Plans even better.

The Agriculture Aspect

Since the Greenbelt's creation, it has become clear that this visionary Plan harbours a fatal flaw. The idea itself was far-sighted: "Father of the Greenbelt" Patrick Robson had called for permanent protection of Niagara's best farmland. When the Greenbelt went into effect, it protected nearly 2 million acres of agricultural and environmentally sensitive land from urban development and sprawl – and for doing this, the Province deserves all the praise that has come its way. But the Greenbelt penalized, without warning, all those farmers whose land fell within its boundaries. It neither compensated them for having taken away their right to sell their land to the highest bidder, nor allowed them sufficient leeway to make their farms more productive and prosperous. The unsurprising consequence is that farmers, who should be hugely supportive of the Greenbelt, are in fact extremely unhappy with it. This is not good news.

Compare Ontario's actions with Pennsylvania's. There, farmland is being permanently protected by the State, which compensates the current owner by way of a one-time purchase of "development rights." Farmers are lining up to apply for the plan. This past March, we heard that some 2,000 farmers were currently on the waiting list – a prospect Ontario can only dream of. The difference? A matter of fair treatment.

Here's a fundamental truth: Farmers and the land they farm keep the global population from starvation. Almost all the food we eat comes from cropland. Our lives depend on our arable land, yet our planet has a limited amount of it (just 15 per cent of the globe, and dwindling). Any farmland loss is disastrous in a world whose human population is increasing by 80 million annually. A recent UN report states that "by 2050, agriculture will need to produce 60 percent more food globally, and 100 percent more in developing countries ..." – sobering statistics that underline why Ontario's Greenbelt must not be tampered with or reduced in size. If anything, it needs to grow, and its farmers need to be given the necessary help to carry on their vital work on everyone's behalf. Their contribution to our economy – and to our very survival – cannot be overstated. We respectfully suggest that, in this Review year, the Province has a duty to take a principled, farsighted stand on farming and farmland preservation.

Climate Change

Armed conflicts and refugee crises almost invariably occur in areas experiencing food shortages and/or water shortages. A 1999 paper from Cornell University – "Will Limits of the Earth's Resources Control Human Numbers?" – has reported that, in the final four decades of the 20th century, the amount of fresh water available for each human being worldwide shrank by nearly two-thirds and was expected to be halved again by 2025. Again, this is dire news. Water and farming are inextricable. Agriculture keeps us fed but also uses some 90 per cent of the world's accessible fresh water to do so. As the world heads into an uncertain future, Ontario's Greenbelt and Moraine will come into their own as the vital resources they are.

The effects of climate change are already upon us. One fundamental message to come out of countless scientific studies of recent years is how imperative it is that we preserve fresh water and food sources everywhere, if we're to sustain the world's ever-growing human population. The droughts that are afflicting California's Central Valley, Colorado's Grand Valley, and many other food-producing areas of the world are highlighting the dangers of relying on irrigated land (that once was desert) for our food supply. The droughts are turning productive valleys into dustbowls, where the topsoil is being blown away. Elsewhere, topsoil is being washed away by floods or, as in Bangladesh, by rising sea levels.

It would be foolish and irresponsible to assume that we in Ontario will be isolated from the world's food and water crises, or spared their consequences. Continuing strong protection of the miraculous Moraine, a vital provider of fresh water, is imperative. And as the planet warms, the geography of food production will move northwards. Southern Ontario, with its fertile soil, temperate climate, and reliable precipitation (sufficient to obviate the need for regular crop irrigation) will be well placed to

help fill a looming fresh-produce shortage – a further argument for growing the Greenbelt *now*: to provide food security to the GTHA and to sustainably capitalize on our natural assets, not squander them.

Recommendations

The rich farm soils and natural watersheds of Ontario's Greenbelt and Moraine are priceless, irreplaceable natural assets. The importance of preserving them trumps all else. Postponing the strengthening of farmland and watershed protections to the next Review cycle would be folly. With Ontario already losing upwards of 350 acres of farmland from production every day, the next Review would unquestionably be too late. The time to act is now.

We recommend:

- **that the Greenbelt be grown to incorporate as much farmland as possible (including the Class 1 farmland of the Federal Lands that will never be used for a Pickering airport but is still zoned as whitebelt and is consequently excluded from the Provincial Greenbelt);**
- **that farmers on the Greenbelt be compensated for their loss of freedom of action and be given the tools and leeway to be more productive, thus turning a difficult situation into a positive result, both for farmers and the population they feed;**
- **that farming be valued and treated as the major economic driver it is;**
- **that Greenbelt legislation be reframed to ensure that the core essentials of food and water security are given precedence;**
- **that watersheds (such as the headwaters of Carruthers Creek and urban river valleys) be protected within the Greenbelt;**
- **that the watersheds and rich farm soil of the Moraine and Greenbelt, as irreplaceable assets, be protected for at least the next 10 years by a freeze on urban expansion; ideally, the Moraine, a distinct geological formation, should be protected from urban expansion permanently;**
- **that Greenbelt legislation refer to SOILS, based on Canada Land Inventory classifications.**

We thank you for this opportunity to provide input into the Co-ordinated Review. We wish you well in your deliberations and sincerely hope that the outcome will be one that Ontarians will not only be proud of but will benefit from for generations to come.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Delaney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct loop at the end of the last name.

Mary Delaney
Chair, Land Over Landings

**No one is going to look back 50 years from now and say,
“we protected too much green space and farm land”.**

~ Jennifer Keesmaat, Chief Planner for the City of Toronto, April 7, 2015