

Proceedings: A compilation of comments received at six meetings, February 6–22, 2018
Peel/Dufferin, Durham, Simcoe, Brant, Niagara, & Peterborough

WaterScape was a collaborative effort of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Ontario Environment Network, and the Ontario Headwaters Institute. From January through March, 2018, we held 6 public meetings, with 11 local partners, and one webinar on an Ontario initiative called Protecting Water for Future Generations (PWFG).

The goals of WaterScape were:

- To educate and engage interested individuals and organizations about Ontario’s water protection policies, particularly in response to an Ontario government current proposal “Protecting Water for Future Generations: Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring”; and,
- To listen to the community, whose observations helped inform a joint submission.

These Proceedings constitute the meeting notes and are hyperlinked from the joint submission in order to share the messages we heard with the Ontario government in that submission, which can be found at <https://www.cela.ca/ProtectingWaterforFutureGenerations>.

Following an executive summary, the detailed proceedings from each session begin with thematic observations provided by the partners and include all questions and oral comments raised during the community discussions. Comments from the one-word round-the-room exercise are shown for meetings where time allowed that exercise. Written comments provided by participants at the end of each meeting are added when they had not been articulated orally.

Please note that these proceedings seek to capture comments made by participants in WaterScape sessions and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the collaborating partner organizations.

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Executive Summary

More than 160 people attended public meetings held by WaterScape, in conjunction with 11 local partners, in Peel, Durham, Simcoe, Brant, Niagara, and Peterborough, and another dozen participated in a webinar. Overarching observations include that:

Protecting Water

- There was unanimous agreement at all meetings that the Province is not doing enough to protect water in the Greenbelt and indeed across Ontario.
- While it is clear that the Greenbelt provides some additional protection to water, participants noted that:
 - The added protective measures in the Greenbelt do not go far enough;
 - Water should be better protected in a comprehensive manner that includes natural heritage across the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and not just in the Greenbelt;
 - Water must be better protected in many areas outside of the GGH, such as the Ring of Fire;
 - Water conservation must be more aggressively pursued; and
 - Protecting Water for Future Generations (PWFG) needs to embrace an over-arching government commitment to end the conditions causing boil water advisories.

Expanding the Greenbelt

- In spite of significant concerns related to mapping data and consultation efforts, there was consensus at all meetings that the proposed study areas should be considered for addition to the Greenbelt.
- There was also consensus for further expansion of the study areas under consideration to include significant lands in Brant, Niagara, Simcoe, and Peterborough, not all of which should have to be contiguous to the existing Greenbelt, as well as in areas identified by the Bluebelt proposal from the Oak Ridges Moraine Partnership.

Agriculture

- There was unanimous support for agriculture at the meetings, as well as concerns that agricultural impacts on water are not being recognized. Expanded seasons, alterations from historic water budgets, industrial farming, under-regulated use of fertilizers and pesticides, and the use sewage sludge were cited as concerns, as was needed support for organic farming and more sustainable practices.

Implementation

- The Province needs to support regional planning and provide oversight when municipalities fail to give due consideration to the protection of natural heritage and water.
- Conservation authorities need greater regulatory authority and there must be better inter-agency collaboration on implementation, monitoring, and enforcement.

Prime Regional Concerns

Peel/ Dufferin: Aggregates trump water and producers have uneven access to decision-makers. Better integrated planning, with more support for natural heritage and sustainable agriculture, is needed.

Durham: Fill must be regulated and tested and agricultural lands preserved. Better integration for planning and enforcement, and more supervisory bodies similar to the Niagara Escarpment Commission, are needed.

Simcoe: PWFG takes too narrow a geographic and policy focus with problematic mapping. Greenbelt lands are needed in Simcoe. Municipalities need financial support. Boil water advisories must be addressed.

Brant: Poor planning, industrial farming, aggregates, and biosolid applications to land are impacting natural heritage and water. Greenbelting the Grand River watershed in Brant County held strong support.

Niagara: The study areas excluded moraines in Niagara that should be added, as well as connecting areas from a recent study. In addition to greenbelting, Niagara needs strong provincial policies and oversight.

Peterborough: PWFG talks systems but does not walk the talk. Local greenbelting to counter development targets in the Growth Plan is needed. Provincial oversight is needed. End boil water advisories.

1. February 6: Peel / Dufferin, in partnership with Whole Village and Food & Water FirstThematic Observations

- Aggregates held primacy at the meeting, with participants expressing concerns that aggregates trump water protection locally, that aggregate producers have access to decision-makers unequaled by community groups, that the financial clout of producers may represent a conflict of interest for elected officials and agency staff, that professionals don't criticize one another, and that professional bodies do nothing in the light of questionable practices or conclusion by their members.
- Attendees were also concerned with poor mapping, the lack of integrating the maps to issues such as source water protection, the need to embrace organic and more sustainable agriculture, and the need to identify and protect forest blocks as well other important aquatic features such as groundwater.
- Planning concerns touched on a lack of orientation to sustainability and training for agency staff, the need for better monitoring and enforcement, and commitments in the Greenbelt legislation and planning framework to high principles that are vague and/or which no one knows how to implement.
- Participants were unanimous in their observations that the Province is not doing enough to protect water in the Greenbelt and indeed across Ontario.

Requested clarifications on legal or policy aspects of CELA's keynote

- Is there better water protection in any new Greenbelt expansion, and if so would it be the same as in the existing Greenbelt areas?

Comments

- The current framework for protecting water is inadequate with respect to aggregates
- The overall approach of the Greenbelt is problematic. While it addresses land use planning, it is not adequate for nitrates and phosphorus; there is a lack of regulation for fill from outside areas; this is particularly an issue for pits accepting materials for recycling and/or just fill; there is too much deference to municipal requests for Permits to Take Water (PTTW); and no Provincial oversight for the Greenbelt
- There is not enough inclusion of the need to protect forests as a key to protecting water, from municipalities, conservation authorities (CAs), nor Protecting Water for Future Generations (PWFG)
- I'd like to see any planned fracking sites included in the mapping for PWFG
- There is some good work being done on Integrated Pest Management in agriculture, but the Province should support organic agriculture to protect water. This should be complemented with greater vigilance to reduce leachates.
- The discussion is one sided. No developers came here tonight, as they can ignore community interest as they have access to ministers and staff. Their financial clout and access to agencies represents a conflict of interest for those agencies.
- In Caledon, aggregates trump water
- The mapping based on moraines, coldwater streams, and wetlands is nice, but development needs to be based on natural capital assessments and include green infrastructure
- We need to prevent aggregate extraction below the water table
- We wouldn't need to mine as much aggregate as we do if we established recycling targets for aggregate supply, even if it increased the price a bit

- Yes, but, they are us, and 54% of our aggregate is used by governments for roads, bridges and building such as hospitals. So we would end up paying more taxes
- Yes, and more for our houses as well
- We need to also adjust our sense of what's in the white belt to increase respect for nature.
- Development should do a better job to safeguard natural heritage, protect water, and include agriculture.
- Planning staff needs better guidelines and more expertise to address sustainable communities
- Civic debate needs to have more opportunity for input, and not be restricted to talking about building height at the last stage of approvals
- Ontario should consider things such as the New Zealand declaration that a river has rights
- Ontario needs to do more on bottled water
- And plastics
- And fracking
- And pharmaceuticals in our drinking water
- It's just obvious that some areas get better protection than others, through both regulation such as the Greenbelt and uneven implementation in different areas
- There are no triggers for action for exceedances to the Provincial Water Quality Objectives
- We also need to consider full cost accounting. Short term perspectives show a nice return on a balance sheet that don't pan out in the long term
- A discussion on a local pit led to an observation that large initiatives may be influencing professional service companies, whose environmental work gets clouded by economic interests. Yet regulated professionals such as engineers don't get challenged by others in their field and no one ever challenges credentials
- Groundwater considerations seem largely lacking in PWFG
- There is no integration of PWFG with Source Protection. Maybe there is a role in PWFG for Source Protection mapping and, certainly, SP regional bodies
- There is questionable fill going in to the Tottenham airfield, which appears shielded from oversight as airports are regulated federally
- Piped water is an issue from several perspectives: it may be a dis-incentive to embrace local water conservation; the energy required to pump the water; and where surpluses of both clean water and sewage get introduced to receiving waters
- More severe weather means more water volumes at some times. We need to plan for that for nature, development, and agriculture. A specific concern was cited for the recent deepening of the Holland canal, but which may not have taken future severe weather water volume into account. If it floods, the water could pick up contaminants and put them in drinking water
- It was shared that planners need direction and that the Greenbelt Plan contained many high principles that no one knows how to implement them. Section 3.2.3 was cited, as noted below.

Editor's note – For example, s 3.2.3 (1) reads - All planning authorities shall provide for a comprehensive, integrated and long-term approach for the protection, improvement or restoration of the quality and quantity of water. Such an approach shall consider all hydrologic features, areas and functions and include a systems approach to the inter-relationships between and/or among *key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas*.

- Additional written comments left by participants
- MNRF needs to do a better job with respect to aggregates
- We do not seem to have a solid grasp of water quality, which needs to be better protected
- We need more aggregate recycling but also better guidelines for recycling and filling in quarries
- We need better mapping: aquifers, groundwater, small creeks, vernal pools, etc
- We need better protection for source water
- The Greenbelt needs to provide better protection for water: expansion without legal teeth will not achieve the Greenbelt's potential.
- We must address bottled water. We treat it as a commodity for sale to business but don't charge enough
- Water must be protected everywhere, not just in the Greenbelt.
- Northern Ontario in particular must be protected from mercury and other pollutants
- And Chalk River
- We need to encourage sustainable development, including allowing tiny houses, use fewer resources, and live within our means
- We need to embrace full-cost accounting

2. February 8: Durham, Partners with Green Association & Ontario Soil Regulation Taskforce

Thematic Observations

- The import of fill, the lack of knowing its content, and its dumping in general but in particular on infiltration areas held primacy at the meeting, followed closely by concerns for agricultural land preservation, with such lands still disappearing at 175 acres per day, as before the Greenbelt approach.
- Attendees were also concerned with poor mapping, not capturing data from the Ontario Water Resources Commission, weak policies, and disconnects between policies, site plans, and enforcement.
- In particular, there were high-level concerns for better implementation, inspectors, and enforcement, and that the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) and the whole of the Greenbelt need a supervisory body similar to the Niagara Escarpment Commission.
- There was broad support that the Province "flip" its approach, to better protect water everywhere and have clear guidelines on where and how development could be allowed.
- There was specific support that the study areas should be expanded to include the proposed Bluebelt, including Northumberland County and areas south of the historic Lake Iroquois shoreline, Carrothers Creek, and areas classified by the Province as high in conservation value.
- Participants were unanimous in their observations that the Province is not doing enough to protect water in the Greenbelt and indeed across Ontario.

Requested clarifications on legal or policy aspects of CELA's keynote

- What are some of the increased protections under the Greenbelt Plan?
- How is water better protected in the Greenbelt than outside of it?
- What safeguards are there for groundwater?

Comments

- Given the answers, the whole GGH should be upgraded to the water protections in the Greenbelt
- There is little incentive under the municipal tax structure to both protect existing soil and safeguard against the import of fill
- The import of fill – and any not tested and which could contain contaminants – should not be allowed to be placed in recharge areas
- Existing soil, and imported fill, are not addressed adequately in municipal planning
- There is still too much fill being shipped around, and in to Durham
- There are disconnects between policies, site plans, and enforcement
- There was a short discussion on a site which was approved for a septic system where an adjacent landowner had to prove there was a lot of surface water, where agency staff had inadequate mapping and denied there was any water present
- We need to conserve other features where water is important, for infiltration and flow, such as forest blocks and agricultural lands
- We need better data and to understand it, as the Greenbelt has apparently made no difference in the rate of disappearance of agricultural land – which is still at 175 A per day
- There is a lack of staff to adequately implement local plans
- The whole of the Greenbelt, and the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM), needs a supervisory body like the Niagara Escarpment Commission
- Why does the study area have such squiggly boundaries? What about the pressure this will put on nearby and adjacent areas?
- Why isn't the Province protecting water in more areas?
- We need to protect all of southern Ontario, and areas such as Muskoka
- And Dryden and Grassy Narrows
- Expand the study areas to embrace the Bluebelt, as per the ORM Coalition, including:
 - Northumberland County
 - Areas south of the Lake Iroquois shoreline
 - Areas classified by the Province as having high conservation value, such as the Iroquois Plain
- We need to flip the policy focus: we need better protection for water everywhere and to establish areas for development
- Regardless, we need better implementation, inspectors, and enforcement
- Consider using longer-term perspectives for planning, with positive language for the creation of green jobs
- Two First Nations areas in the Greenbelt were noted that have boil water advisories. This is unacceptable and must be addressed in protecting water for all future generations
- The ORM was described so many years ago as one of the most significant geographic features in Ontario, and yet poor policies, agency integration, and enforcement has led to obvious outcomes
- The detail on the study area map is lacking, and in particular does not appear to capture hydrological information from agencies such as the Ontario Water Resources Commission. That info must be updated and shared with Municipal Affairs, MNRF, and municipalities
- Add the Carruthers watershed as another area that should be studied for inclusion in the proposed expansion
- We need to both prevent sewage bypasses with better technology and to ensure notices on bypass events are widely distributed
- We cannot protect water without serious consideration of pipes for water - their impact on source water, as a disincentive for conservation, and their impacts on receiving waters

Additional written comments left by participants

- We are facing global water shortages, and need efforts to encourage conservation and raise awareness about the vulnerabilities of our watersheds and associated issues
- Water protection needs a multi-stakeholder approach
- It's not enough, but it's a good start

3. February 13: Simcoe, in partnership with the Simcoe County Greenbelt CoalitionThematic Observations

- Accurate mapping was a primary concern, and as provided was felt to be highly suspect, in that as it does not include needed layers from the Ontario Geological Survey and the Ontario Water Resources Commission, including those on agriculture, natural heritage, white belt lands, groundwater, etc.
- March 7 was thought to be an arbitrary and inappropriate deadline for comments.
- PWFG takes too narrow a geographic focus, and too narrow a policy focus. While numerous key areas of hydrologic significance were mentioned for inclusion, concerns included that wells on and off the Greenbelt are STILL not protected; water conservation is ignored; coldwater streams that feed the Minising Wetland are ignored; sewage, stormwater, and salt run-off from key developed areas are not addressed adequately; 1923 Williams Treaty lands appear ignored; and MNR and MOECC don't have the needed clout to protect water.
- While protecting agriculture remains a key feature of the Greenbelt, fears about past limitations on operations, many of which have been lifted, prevail. Poor government outreach in this regard is stoking mistrust and some un-necessary concerns about the Greenbelt.
- MNR and MOECC are ineffective.
- While the population in Simcoe is growing, many municipalities lack understanding and the expertise needed to pursue sustainable development, green infrastructure, and Low Impact Development.
- Municipal resources are already stretched, and municipalities cannot absorb more downloading of responsibilities for any uncertain roles in natural heritage system planning, agricultural mapping and implementation implications, and watershed planning.
- There was widespread support for integrated water management, with more resources and clearly define roles for municipal government.
- Participants were unanimous in their observations that the Province is not doing enough to protect water in the Greenbelt and indeed across Ontario.

Requested clarifications on legal or policy aspects of CELA's keynote

- What sort of additional charges might municipalities levy to protect /restore water?
- What sort of protections are in place for agricultural lands, and are they different by class?
- Are these the only protections for coldwater streams?
- Are there existing protections for water and agriculture from aggregates? Are they adequate?
- Does PWFG address permits to take water?
- What about areas with boil water advisories not in the Greenbelt – eg Georgina Island? And would we classify First Nation boil water advisories and any lack of action as environmental racism?
- Is Ontario fulfilling its duty to consult with First nations on PWFG?

Comments

- The PWFG mapping is inadequate. It does not show re-charge areas, among other key features, and appears to ignore data from the Ontario Geological Survey
- It might also benefit from 3D mapping instead of the limited views it provides.
- Water must be both protected and conserved – and there is no word on conservation of water
- March 7 is an arbitrary date that does not allow enough time to address the data deficiencies nor for proper public consultation
- PWFG ignores discharges from settlement areas, which can pollute water for nature and other uses, including downstream settlements
- PWFG takes too narrow a geographic focus, and too narrow a policy focus
- More land should be added to the Greenbelt, and natural heritage should be as key a focus as water
- It is deeply concerning that private well, both on and off the Greenbelt, have STILL not been addressed under Source Water Protection plans
- The assumptions behind the mapping exercise are not broad enough. For example, they ignore the coldwater streams that feed the Minising Wetland, probably as they don't originate on a moraine
- We need lots of mapping overlays, including layers on agriculture, natural heritage, white belt lands, groundwater, etc
- Some people involved in agriculture are unaware of or unsympathetic to the past set of changes to the Greenbelt, and worry about some limitations that have been changed. The government has not done enough education
- In fact, the Greenbelt has always tried to give primacy and exemptions to agriculture. The recent changes help and may need to go further. See note below.
- The just-released agricultural inventory presents a further layer of confusion around the mapping exercise for PWFG as it does not include any policies of implementation guidelines, making the arbitrary deadline of March 7 even more impractical for meaningful input
- Regardless, it is important that PWFG recognize the tremendous impact of agriculture on water and natural heritage
- PWFG does not seem to address 7 First Nations in or close to the Greenbelt. As these lands were part of the 1923 Williams Treaty, there should be clear indications of how they relate to this exercise
- In particular, the Treaty ceded land only, and not water rights. On-going trust in the Ontario government will be at stake
- Four speakers mentioned that Elmvale has the purest water in the world (See note below), yet it is skirted in the mapping study area
- Participants responded enthusiastically to a comment about the global water crisis; that water from Elmvale was smuggled across several borders to Capetown South Africa; and that it rained when the water arrived
- There was widespread support that all water in the Province should be better protected – and not just in land added to the Greenbelt

Editor's Note: Some people at the meeting privately expressed empathy for farmers in stranded economic straits, such as those in designated buffers where neither other farmers nor developers would buy their land due to uncertain future rules.

Editor's Note: Recent studies have indicated that Elmvale has been bumped to No 2, behind Puerto Williams in Chile.

- This should/could include the whole Province, the whole of the Greater Golden Horseshoe, wells, shorelines, Tiny Township, and First Nations
- Instead, we have ineffectual policies from MNR and MOECC
- CARS, Client Assessment Reports, and other corporate data, remain self-serving and private, and should be made public domain
- As per a past report from the Environmental Commissioner, water for natural heritage and biodiversity is almost an afterthought, coming after development, agriculture, and aggregates
- No – about 20 times – the Province is not doing enough
- MNR and MOECC don't have the clout needed to protect water
- In the light of multiple Acts and agency silos, Ontario may need to embrace Integrated Water Resource Management and/or enact a comprehensive Water Protection Act
- There were multiple concerns expressed about new regulatory frameworks, such as where aspects of the agricultural mapping, natural heritage system protection, and a pending watershed planning guidance document, may fall on municipalities
- Resources needed for these initiatives are too large and too broad to fall on municipal shoulders and pockets
- Indeed, some municipalities barely have staff for current responsibilities, and new approaches such as Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development aren't understood, let alone being pursued
- Municipalities, developers, and land owners need to be sold on the long-term benefits of new approaches
- Instead, we need a systems approach, not a piecemeal approach
- We need cooperation amongst the Province, municipalities, and conservation authorities for both dollars and authority

Additional written comments left by participants

- Other areas to be included are Waverly Uplands, North Simcoe Uplands (4 times), South Simcoe Highlands, Wasaga Beach, all of Ontario (6 times), Scanlon Creek, more wetlands must be added
- We need more geological research, especially on headwaters
- Need more emphasis on education and water conservation
- Ontario should not export water from aquifers
- We need better regulation for run-off into Lake Simcoe
- We must address sprawl and hard surfaces in Bradford, Innisfill, and Midhurst, as well as the loss of forests and wetlands
- Class A farmland and rural forests should take priority over development
- Salt is damaging Lake Simcoe and groundwater
- We also need recovery plans for damaged areas
- We protection and conservation
- We need integrated and comprehensive water management for the whole province
- We need more funding and more authority for municipal government
- Private data, especially as required under operating conditions, must be made public
- The whole of Simcoe County needs to be protected
- Protection cannot be put on the backs of municipalities
- We need to guard against gaps in protection, monitoring, and enforcement
- More stress is needed on natural habitat

4. Feb 14 – Brant, with Sustainable Brant, Langford Conservancy, & Hamilton NaturalistsThematic Observations

- Two major threads dominated the discussion in Brant: development and agriculture.
- On the former, poor planning, annexations, aggregates, the transition of rural areas to housing expedited by developer investment and a lack of density and affordable housing in major urban areas, and easy access to piped water are significant pressures on water and natural heritage in Brant, aided by questionable decision-making focused on private interests and more taxes.
- On the latter, extensive irrigation and drainage infrastructure, new and increased crops, the transition to industrial farming, and dangerous ground-water and surface water impacts of un-tested and un-monitored biosolid applications to land have significantly reduced natural heritage and placed water quality and quantity at risk, as well as organic certification for farms receiving run-off.
- People expressed deep concerns at the loss of agricultural land, the absence of urgency to protect both source water and water for nature, and a desire to Greenbelt the Grand River in Brant County.
- Participants were unanimous in their observations that the Province is not doing enough to protect water in the Greenbelt and indeed across Ontario.

Requested clarifications on legal or policy aspects of CELA's keynote

- Would CELA support an individual needing help, or just organizations?
- Would you recommend legal incorporation?
- Can we push for greater natural heritage protection under PWFG?
- Does the Greenbelt establish more stringent provisions for aggregates?
- What about restricting aggregate operations below the water table?
- What can we do about bad track records on monitoring from agencies and access to third-party data?
- Members of review tribunals have often lacked training and experience on environmental issues. Will this be improved under the new LPAT (Local Planning Appeal Tribunal) system?
- Do you consider the Greenbelt protections greater than outside the Greenbelt?
- There was also some clarification provided mid-meeting on the Local Food Act and the establishment of new groups such as Sustain Ontario

Comments

- Recent annexations into headwater areas and proposals for pipes are putting increased pressure on water in Brant – we really need Greenbelt protection
- The Grand supplies water to most of the population in Brant, and yet there is opposition to the proposed expansion of the Greenbelt – Why would we not protect our water?
- There is not enough protection for agricultural land in Brant
- PWFG has it backwards: we should Greenbelt all of southern Ontario and provide strict requirements on development
- Poor planning and approvals are rampant, with a participant citing an example where the community kept telling agencies and a developer to not cut the trees on a steep slope. No one listened, with subsequent erosion issues leading to municipal expenditures
- Part of what is driving sprawl is the lack of affordable housing in urban areas, so young people have to consider cheaper housing in what were rural areas, with the resulting longer commutes
- Places to Grow is very important with respect to that, and yet it does not adequately address water
- In spite of supposed protections, natural heritage, farms, orchards, and clean water are disappearing or are under threat
- I am stunned at the on-going loss of farmland

- Irrigation and drainage are more extensive than in the past, expanding growing areas, more crop variety, and more crops in one year. Results include greater demand on local water, more inputs, and subsequent pollution. Such industrial farming is not good for water
- Sludge is also a huge local issue. It is rarely tested, can contaminate groundwater, and surface flows can cross onto neighbouring farms where it can threaten both pond water quality and organic certification
- There should be no more “free” sludge due to its downstream costs
- Rules for nutrient management are inadequate, especially where manure and chemicals such as atrazine might be placed in recharge areas
- Clearly, water protection is an area with a lack of agency collaboration
- We need to ensure that large communities, such as Brantford and London, are both protected and don’t pollute downstream
- The Ring of Fire should not be allowed to become another Fort McMurray
- The whole of the north should be protected – think about Timmins and Attawapiskat
- Perhaps we need to protect water in the same way that acid rain became a key social effort
- We should consider more bans on motor boats to protect our lakes
- We need to address bottled water
- Permits to take water should be tightened
- We must protect water both inside and outside the Greenbelt: it flows across boundaries and the pressure will not go away
- Water cannot be protected in a vacuum, as it provides a nexus for forests, natural heritage, biodiversity, and agriculture
- The Province needs to establish greater support for agriculture, including sustainable and organic agriculture, with less reliance on industrial methods
- The one-word round-the-room exercise presented the following comments: water must be valued; it’s getting better, but a long way to go; water can’t be owned; water should not be seen as a commodity; we must be cautious; water is all-encompassing and should be protected; we need a lot of education to protect and conserve water; I am hopeful but we have a lot of work to do; I am pessimistic; we need a strong public voice to ensure that corners are not cut; water is not being protected (12 times)

Additional written comments left by participants

- All major watercourses should be buffered by a bluebelt.
- We need improved source protection
- And better watershed protection / management
- The proposed mapped areas do not go far enough and should be extended for Brant, Dufferin, Waterloo, and Wellington
- No more windmills, which risk water
- PWFG is a good first step, but headwaters need to be protected and are missing from the mapping
- We need to protect more land for food security
- This started a long time ago and is moving too slowly
- Exemptions for aggregates mean the Greenbelt cannot do its job
- Too many pesticides and herbicides are destroying flora and fauna
- People think water comes from the tap: we need educational efforts
- Listen to source protection committees and prevent any aggregate operations below the water table
- Our government officials need to listen to the people

5. Feb 20 – Niagara, with Trout Unlimited (Niagara) and Save Thundering Waters

Thematic Observations

- The mapping has excluded significant moraines, coldwater streams, and headwaters in Niagara, which should be included in the Greenbelt expansion study areas.
- As Niagara has no drinking water drawn from aquifers, we must be more vigilant about surface water conditions and all the inflow from development and agricultural inputs. We need to consider bans on fertilizers and pesticides for both cosmetic and agricultural use, whereas the current bans are only for cosmetic pesticide use.
- Niagara needs strong provincial policies and municipal oversight. Development in Niagara lacks standards, consistency with provincial policy, and meaningful public input, while enforcement is lacking.
- As there are no areas left for development in Niagara without destroying areas needed for natural heritage and water quality, development should be concentrated on intensification in urban areas and on brownfield sites.
- Nature for Niagara's Future, done by the local CA, could have been the basis for local Greenbelt expansion, but there was no municipal consensus on it and unfortunately, under the previous rules requiring buy-in from local municipalities, the Province abandoned Niagara to unfettered development in rural areas.
- Participants were unanimous in their observations that the Province is not doing enough to protect water in the Greenbelt and indeed across Ontario.

Requested clarifications on legal or policy aspects of CELA's keynote

- While improving some natural heritage protections, doesn't the new Greenbelt framework also make urban expansion easier?
- What can be done to address spills from the US side?
- How can we ensure greater consistency between local approvals and provincial standards?
- What recourse do we have when provincial standards are not met in local approvals?
- Does the Greenbelt make it easier and/or how do we better protect forests, wetlands, and water in official plans?
- How can we ensure enforcement, both on what's normally covered in a permit and to encourage municipal adoption of new technologies such as LID?

Comments

- Protecting headwaters and coldwater streams is a huge priority for Niagara, which should be added to this Greenbelt mapping exercise
- There needs to be a higher profile on landowner stewardship, both in and outside the Greenbelt
- PWFG is an important effort, but is driven by symptoms rather than taking a systems approach, and there is great concern that it does nothing to better protect water in Niagara
- The area's moraines are not included in the mapping
- The area's deep ravines, dating from Lake Tonawanda and comprising coldwater streams, are similarly not included and should be
- Major local hydrologic features, including key features, are not included in a mapping exercise that was restricted
- PWFG mapping also excluded flood plains and areas of planned development – which are important to put the Greenbelt proposed areas into context, for water quality both upstream and downstream of development areas

- There are significant needs in the Greenbelt framework to address fertilizers and pesticides, for both cosmetic and agricultural use, whereas the current bans are only for cosmetic pesticide use
- Niagara needs a better approach to agricultural buffers
- Salt used on roads needs to be reduced
- We need integrated monitoring and enforcement from multiple agencies, more integrated actions
- We need better safeguards against local development intruding into green areas, including into the Greenbelt
- Niagara needs an expanded Greenbelt
- As mentioned before, mapping for Niagara should be done and should include headwaters and the four local moraines
- How is it that we have more legislation than ever, yet we are losing more agricultural land and our streams are worse?
- Niagara is the wild west, with development running roughshod over the landscape and weak planning decisions
- Developers get away with so much locally – including dumping and other damages - that taxes have to pay for clean-ups. It's really like mob rule here
- One local developer is on record as musing about when is a PWS (Provincially Significant Wetland) not a PSW, and subscribing to efforts to chip away at the wetland with edge-development to remove its status
- As Niagara has no drinking water drawn from aquifers, we must be more vigilant about surface water conditions and all the inflow from development and agricultural inputs
- There are no areas left for development in Niagara without destroying areas needed for natural heritage and water quality
- Development in Niagara should therefore be concentrated on intensification in urban areas and on brownfield sites
- We need to protect natural heritage and perhaps use Oakville as a model (identify key areas, establish buffers, and link the areas together)
- There actually was such a study, Nature for Niagara's Future, done by the local CA, which could be the basis for local Greenbelt expansion, but there was no municipal consensus on it
- Unfortunately, under the previous rules requiring buy-in from local municipalities, the Province abandoned Niagara to rapacious development
- We need to use carrots and not sticks, encouraging green jobs and long-term sustainability
- Focus on the proposed mapping may not be appropriate: the focus on provincial interests should go way beyond the Greenbelt to broad interests in protecting natural heritage and water
- The one-word round-the-room exercise presented the following comments: The mapping ignores Niagara x 5; Development in Niagara is a fail x 2; Enforcement x 5; Niagara needs funding and incentives; Protecting water should be about our children; There is a lot of local corruption; the Province should DO something; People need to care; we need more education and consultation on PWFG x 3; we need strong provincial policies and municipal oversight; we need consistent policy implementation; we need political will; infrastructure has high costs; we have to stop subsidizing private profit

Additional written comments left by participants

- Expanding the Greenbelt is good but not enough. Put water protection first and it would go a long way to addressing all environmental issues
- Create a ministry of water
- We need solid policy, enforcement, and guardianship systems to protect water

- Water needs to be better protected everywhere.
- We are still losing sensitive wetlands
- We need comprehensive mapping
- There is so much more to do

6. Feb 22 – Peterborough, in partnership with GreenUP

Thematic Observations

- PWFG talks systems but then does not take a systems approach, and both the mapping and the prospective improvements to policies for water protection in the Greenbelt take a piecemeal approach. Natural heritage, source protection, biodiversity, and the regeneration of depleted systems are not adequately addressed.
- PWFG is time and geographically constrained, and there are many areas around Peterborough that need Greenbelting, greater water protection, and regeneration.
- We need more Greenbelting, especially to counter the development targets in the Growth Plan.
- Provincial oversight and funding are needed for regional planning, which should integrate natural heritage and water protection, agriculture, and growth, as well as with respect to municipal sewage and stormwater run-off and enforcement.
- The protection of agriculture is important but reducing its contribution to pollution is not properly pursued.
- We need a new collaborative framework, and in particular one that takes a system approach and better includes First Nations.
- Participants were unanimous in their observations that the Province is not doing enough to protect water in the Greenbelt and indeed across Ontario.

Requested clarifications on legal or policy aspects of CELA's keynote

- How / what do we do to integrate Indigenous / Non-indigenous perspectives and, in particular, how they relate to the Great Lakes?
- How do Non-indigenous peoples support First Nation efforts regarding the personhood of the Great Lakes?
- Does CELA have info that can be shared with and is relevant to other provinces?

A Word from a First Nation Perspective

The meeting in Peterborough was aided with outreach from GreenUP to two local First Nation organizations and benefitted by having a joint presentation from the Sacred Water Circle and Youth for Water, consisting of elder Dorothy Taylor from Curve Lake and Kristin Muskratt respectively. In addition to sharing a Water Song with the participants, key points of their presentation included:

- First Nations over the world often gather together, and in general have a common perspective on natural heritage and water that is different from that of more recent arrivals
- A key principle in Canada is that water is sacred and part of our mother, and that we should not put garbage into and disrespect our mother
- First Nations continue to seek more fulsome action from Canada to honour treaty rights and their constitutional commitment for consultation
- Aspects of how outreach to First Nations can be pursued were described. This included how to offer tobacco but fundamentally involves authenticity and respect for the First Nation process

- In terms of the Greenbelt, First Nations see a need for collaboration and not stiff consultation; the need for more restoration; and that their traditional environmental knowledge offers specific information about what species have been present, should be protected, and where and how they might be restored

Comments

- PWFG talks systems but then does not take a systems approach
- Both the mapping and the prospective improvements to policies for water protection in the Greenbelt take a piecemeal approach
- Development ignores water quality as it takes more and more land and water, and reduces water quality (as acknowledged in PWFG)
- PWFG uses both undefined words and weasel words, such as “important water features” and “significant development”
- There is not enough water protection in the Greenbelt and it does not include regeneration for forested areas, wetlands, riparian areas, and other aquatic features
- Natural heritage mentioned but inadequately pursued
- Ditto on Biodiversity
- One way Traditional Ecological Knowledge can help is by benchmarking historic natural heritage and species, which can be used both for protection and regeneration
- Source Water Protection is not included in mapping nor integrated to the needed systems approach
- Sewage and storm water are addressed to some degree but not backed up by monitoring and corrective action
- PWFG must include a commitment to eliminate boil water advisories and other restrictions, which could address basic rights and environmental racism
- Clean water should be pursued as a right
- We need to address the challenge of overlaps and gaps in federal and provincial roles with First Nations
- The protection of agriculture is important but reducing its contribution to pollution is not properly pursued
- Society needs to help farmers protect water
- We need funding for that, and should consider all sources including COA – the Canada-Ontario Agreement
- We also need more funding to improve municipal sewage and storm water run-off
- Development in rural or fringe urban areas results in more impervious surfaces, which need new approaches to reduce run-off and pollution
- Environmental impact assessments and municipal class environmental assessments should be better delivered
- This consultation appears to be too constrained in time and geography
- The Trent, the Land Between, and Northumberland county headwaters need to be included
- PWFG needs more educational resources and better integration with the Growth Plan
- Eastern Ontario needs more Greenbelting
- The systems approach described in PWFG is poorly defined and then subverted by a non-systems approach
- Peterborough needs more Greenbelt, especially to counter the development targets in the Growth Plan
- We need provincial help to do regional planning, which should integrate natural heritage and water protection, agriculture, and growth

- Look for new language to protect nature and water in international agreements, such as the convention on biodiversity
- We need to give greater authority to conservation authorities
- The one-word round-the-room exercise presented the following comments: ecosystems approach x 3; we need to value conservation; protect headwaters; protect entire watersheds; use a collaborative process, not piecemeal consultation; protect biodiversity; the approach in PWFG is antiquated; there is urgency for this area; tick-tock; we must address water quality and quantity; we must embrace prevention and resurgence; engage First Nations, and in particular First Nations' women; inclusion; close the loopholes; embrace sustainability; hope; we need a paradigm shift; No x 2; Gchi Nbi (sacred water)

Additional written comments left by participants

- Previous concessions in the Greenbelt need to be redressed: restore, rehabilitate, regenerate
- We need provincial oversight
- We need greater enforcement
- Peterborough, Northumberland, and the City of Kawartha Lakes need increased water protection
- The commodification of water threatens the land and the life of people
- We need greater consideration for First Nations' land rights
- Water and agricultural land needs to be protected throughout the GGH
- Other areas to be added to the Greenbelt include Niagara moraines, Northumberland county, significant recharge areas, Karst formations, and aquifers that supply municipal drinking water
- Expand Clean Water Act to address private supplies, in particular for vulnerable populations
- We need longer term funding for water practitioners
- We need funding for technical studies on groundwater, surface water, water quality and quantity, both in and beyond the current greenbelt

Comments on or questions about these Proceedings should be addressed to
Andrew McCammon Ontario Headwaters Institute
andrew at ontarioheadwaters dot ca 416 231 9484