

2008

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

Future of the
Greenbelt

OFNC Conservation Committee requests YOUR help!

Last June, the City of Ottawa posted a White Paper on its web site called "[Development in the Greenbelt - yes or no?](#)."

It suggests that parts of the Greenbelt, especially along existing road corridors where there is infrastructure such as water and sewer facilities, could be developed for residential and employment purposes.

On August 5, the City posted a questionnaire about the White Paper with a deadline of September 30 for replies.

Meanwhile, the NCC is JUST BEGINNING a 2-year consultation process of reviewing the 1996 Greenbelt Master Plan. Why is the City in such a hurry? Perhaps you agree with the Conservation Committee that the Greenbelt is far too valuable to be squandered for development. Comments below under the heading "**OUR VIEWS**" are those of the Committee.

You can find the [questionnaire](#) on the city's web site and we list all four questions BELOW. Note that three of the questions are about development, and only one question is about keeping the Greenbelt green. IS THE CITY BEING HONEST WITH US? We hope the City gets a strong message from citizens: "HANDS OFF THE GREENBELT!" Given the bias in the City's questions, and the unfairly short deadline for responding, it is less important to explain in detail why you think the way you do at this stage. There will be time for that during the NCC review. Of course, the answers you give are for you to decide.

If you prefer, the City's web site invites you to send your response to the White Paper's author (Ian Cross) in writing, by phone or by e-mail:

Community Planning and Design Division
Planning, Transit and the Environment Department
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

613-580-2424 ext. 21595
ian.cross@ottawa.ca

The Greenbelt Coalition, made up of 14 groups, including the OFNC, has been formed to follow these Greenbelt issues. The Coalition is submitting a response to the City ([GREENBELT LETTER](#)) and will have a lot more to say during the NCC review

process.

**WE HOPE YOU CAN FIND TIME TO MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN BEFORE
SEPTEMBER 30
(and afterwards during the NCC review)**

Let US know that you responded - send a message to greenbelt@ofnc.ca

We will let YOU know how many responses we get to hear about!

City of Ottawa's White Paper

Development in the Greenbelt - yes or no?

A. IMPACT OF THE GREENBELT ON OTTAWA

The City says, "There are economic, social and environmental impacts to keeping the Greenbelt the way it is." And asks, "What is your opinion? Are the Greenbelt's economic and environmental costs justified by its benefits?"

OUR VIEWS: The question is dishonest, because it presumes you accept that the Greenbelt is bad for the City's environment. There are in fact major benefits, as we point out under item D, which far outweigh the alleged costs.

B. DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS FOR THE GREENBELT

The City claims that at least one quarter of the 20,800 hectares in the Greenbelt might be eligible for development, which could provide more than 20 years supply of future urban land.

The City asks, "Should we consider developing limited areas of the Greenbelt as an alternative to building on farmland further away from the city?"

OUR VIEWS: The Greenbelt is too valuable for this, and the question distorts the situation. Ian Cross himself (the author of the White Paper) said only last January that there was a 23 year supply of vacant land suitable for residential development. He didn't mention the Greenbelt then, so what has changed?

C. ARGUMENTS FOR DEVELOPING PORTIONS OF THE GREENBELT

The City claims that developing portions of the Greenbelt would foster "sustainable development," and would make better use of infrastructure that is already built, such as roads, sewers, water and community facilities, reduce taxes, and make public transit more efficient. Revenues generated could be used to acquire additional parkland or conservation areas.

The City asks, "What do you think? If portions of the Greenbelt were developed, should that development provide something unique?"

OUR VIEWS: To call paving over our greenspace "sustainable development" is truly bizarre, and will not lower our taxes. The existing infrastructure in those corridors consists of main trunks that do not have the necessary residential branch facilities, and the trunks would soon need to be augmented. As for acquiring parkland "elsewhere", that would be further away from where most of us live, and beyond the reach of public transit. With rising transportation costs, is that what we want?

D. ARGUMENTS AGAINST DEVELOPING PORTIONS OF THE GREENBELT

The City (very selectively) says: "...the Greenbelt sets up an important contrast between the urban area and the rural area that lies beyond, breaks up the urban areas into discernable communities, and provides a land reserve for the long-term future, to name but a few".

The City ask, "What do you think and why?"

OUR VIEWS: Why only "name but a few"? Is the City trying to hide all the other benefits from us?

Along with Ottawa's citizens generally, we place great value on being close to nature and wildlife, for which the Greenbelt provides important habitat and corridors. The Greenbelt offers recreational opportunities NEAR WHERE WE LIVE. This will be crucial for our quality of life in years to come, as transportation becomes ever more costly and long journeys need to be replaced by short journeys.

The White Paper claims that transportation through the Greenbelt increases pollution, but in reality the Greenbelt provides a net BENEFIT in air quality, acting as a reservoir of fresh air which is replenished by a renewable resource - the wind. During smog conditions - periods of no wind combined with temperature inversion - the Greenbelt is an important reason Ottawa's air quality never falls as low as it does in Toronto.