

Greenbelt Council    Conseil de la ceinture de verdure

777 Bay Street,      777, rue Bay, 13<sup>e</sup> étage  
13<sup>th</sup> Floor            Toronto ON M7A 2J3  
Toronto ON M7A    Tél. : 416-585-6014  
2J3  
Tel.: 416-585-6014



---

Greenbelt Council

Conseil de la  
ceinture de verdure

August 26, 2020

The Honourable Steve Clark  
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
777 Bay Street, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

Re: Effective water governance—Carruthers Creek Watershed Management

Dear Minister Clark,

Last October I wrote to you detailing Council’s 2019/20 work program and informing you of Council’s decision to make watershed planning and management our priority. This decision was taken within the context of a bioregion under stress from rapid urban growth—13.5-million people are expected to live in the region in the next 20 years, all of whom need clean water to drink, local food to eat, access to nature, and protection from flooding. If we are to achieve societal goals with respect to ecology, economy and community, a systemic approach to managing water resources across all Greater Golden Horseshoe watersheds is essential.

Unfortunately water governance continues to be disconnected from critical related systems such as land use planning. The Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan clearly demonstrates that there are existing flood vulnerable areas within the Town of Ajax that will experience significant additional flooding under the Regional storm for which there are mitigation measures that need to be implemented. The downstream effects will have a cost burden on the local municipality that does not benefit from the development proposed. Flooding has become a significant cost to the province, municipalities and individuals.

Part of the ecosystem supporting and supported by the Greenbelt, Carruthers Creek is a small but important watershed that is home to a natural heritage system and Class 1 Prime Agricultural lands. The headwaters are protected by provincial, regional and local municipal land use designations. And consistent with provincial policy the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority has been retained by Durham Region to prepare a watershed plan as part of its Municipal Comprehensive Review, which is expected to conclude in 2021.

We understand that you have been requested to implement a Minister's Zoning Order to facilitate development in the headwaters of Carruthers Creek, an action that is strongly opposed by many stakeholders. As expressed in its August 10<sup>th</sup> letter, these include an impressive collaboration of agriculture, natural heritage and environmental professionals: National Farmers Union – Ontario, Local 345 (Durham, Peterborough, Victoria), National Farmers Union – Ontario, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Simcoe County District Association Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Ontario Nature and Environmental Defence.

As Council recommended in its July 31<sup>st</sup> letter (#12) of advice, Minister's Zoning Orders should not be used to circumvent good planning. They should be used only in exceptional cases and in accordance with an explicit, apriori provincial framework outlining the specific conditions under which MZO's will be used, the types of projects, and how these align with specific provincial priorities. They should not obscure fair and transparent decision-making. Moreover, effective water governance requires a systemic approach within a responsive accountability framework, not one-off isolated decisions.

Today, more than ever, we need strong evidence-based planning, underpinned by trust and informed by effective communication among all stakeholders.

Sincerely,



David Crombie  
Chair, Greenbelt Council

Copies to:

The Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Minister

The Honourable Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance

The Honourable Jeff Yurek, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks

James Wallace, Chief of Staff, Premier's Office

Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Greenbelt Council members

Ed McDonnell, CEO, Greenbelt Foundation

Greater Golden Horseshoe stakeholders