

ONTARIO PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ALLIANCE

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December 14, 2009

The Honorable Jim Watson, Minister
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M5G 2E5

Registered Mail

Minister:

Re: Greenbelt Performance Monitoring
by
Provincial Planning Policy Branch

Personal views relating to subject program were faxed December 3rd to the MAAH Policy Branch on behalf of this writer. After consultation with its member groups the letterhead coalition now submits general comments relative to public awareness and procedures of that initiative as follows:

Our perception is that Greenbelt Performance Monitoring can be broadly interpreted as an initial attempt to develop terms of reference for an interim assessment of, in descending order of importance, the environmental, economic and social effects of the Greenbelt Act. That such data, selectively quoted, might migrate to the scheduled 2015 review of that legislation is a valid parallel assumption.

We understand the monitoring program opened with two workshops in November of this year where a December 7 cut-off date for comment from attendees was announced. Other than the possibility of Internet entries, no advance public notice of these workshops or the condensed time frame allowed for invited remarks can be found. We also note organizations represented at the meetings and the authors of “guideline indicators” first introduced there have not since been publicly identified.

It’s possible, of course, to uncover “performance monitoring” information pages on the Internet. Unfortunately, most Ontario citizens affected by Greenbelt assessments received no prior notice of this polling initiative, a courtesy that might have encouraged their interest and participation. Moreover, few of them possess a computer and an Internet connection much less enough time and patience for electronic surveys of multiple web sites. In any case, scattered among the semantic complexities of available Internet material are the usual cosmetic promises of public input and regime accountability mixed, in this instance, with such conditional parameters as “identity passwords”, “invited guests” and “optional corporate signatures”, all terms that negate rather than endorse public involvement.

Title, intent, language, procedure and pre-orchestrated “indicators” of this program are all painfully reminiscent of various planning devices the Ontario government, in concert with its favorite environmental NGOs, employ to maintain economic control of private property without paying for it. Hence the Planning Act and the Provincial Policy Statement overflow with noble rhetoric in support of natural heritage, a commendable but ill defined legacy long and successfully exploited by NGOs who energetically campaign for more government programs to regulate land they don’t own and won’t buy.

“to protect, and entrench in law, landowner rights and responsibilities”

It's now believed some of these NGOs are complicit in United Nations ambitions for global governance to which national sovereignty, including all land use legislation, would be subordinate. Others are seen to espouse and tirelessly promote what is recently alleged to be manipulated and/or fraudulent environmental science that spawns doomsday predictions of a world being destroyed by its human inhabitants. That such dire prophesies exponentially increase the mega-billion collective net worth of their inventors through monetary infusions from private and government donors is, of course, an inconvenient truth that's seldom mentioned.

These troubling circumstances suggest public identification of the organizations represented at the two November workshops noted above as well as the creators of "program indicators" tabled there should not be delayed. Otherwise, Ontarians may rightly equate Greenbelt Monitoring with the mandate and mind set of NGOs in Ontario who seem committed, at least philosophically, to the junk science that induces and exaggerates public fears of environmental Armageddon. Some bench mark similarities:

1. A British university environmental team allegedly profited by \$ 20 million in "research grants" – a private environmental cartel profited by a \$25 million Ontario government grant over five years to promote Greenbelt programs and activities.
2. The British team supposedly tampered with the bureaucratic processes of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – a coalition of 80 groups led by Environmental Defense pressured the Ontario government to unilaterally prepare and ratify the Greenbelt Act.
3. The British team conspired to redefine interpretation and application of climate change science – contrary to later denials, the Greenbelt Act was designed and imposed without prior submission and circulation of peer-reviewed science and economic impact assessments.

We believe Greenbeltgate, like Climategate, demonstrates an alarming preference for minimal public input and "in camera" administration as well as total disdain for contrary opinion. Some examples:

- Many NGOs outside the environmental loop have been shut out of the Greenbelt public process
- If assembled at all, no Greenbelt threshold data has ever been made available outside "the loop"
- Although funded by taxpayer dollars, Greenbelt meeting Minutes are denied or never recorded
- Greenbelt promoters enjoy government support that's frequently enhanced with public funds
- No Land Use Council member organization was invited to Greenbelt monitoring meetings
- Wildlife habitat protection is now a landowner responsibility enforced under the Greenbelt Act.
- No public funding for the "other" side of the Greenbelt debate has ever been provided
- The Greenbelt Act excludes right of appeal and right of compensation for consequential loss

These and other imbalances are currently helping to demean the inherent benefits of prudent environmental protection. Indeed, as OPERA and appointed Hearing Officers discovered during two Niagara Escarpment 5 Year Plan Reviews, otherwise laudable environmental objectives are almost exclusively interpreted and administered by senior staff aided and abetted by richly rewarded NGOs.

The OPERA coalition has questioned, and continues to do so, revolving government appointments of environmental NGO executives to majority positions in those Queen's Park tribunals dealing with land use planning. Further, in its 2005 submission to the Greenbelt Standing Committee, OPERA expressed serious concerns regarding not the intent but rather the arbitrary and opinionated presumptions by which Greenbelt legislation was being imposed. We regret to say those reservations are in no way mitigated by our spectator perception of the Greenbelt Performance Monitoring program to date.

Manipulated research and counterfeit science said to be uncovered in recent climate change allegations should encourage some agencies of the incumbent provincial government to seek a higher standard of diligence, transparency and accountability than heretofore demonstrated. Thus we respectfully suggest all present as well as all future Greenbelt reviews should be properly and openly conducted as unbiased hearings in the court of public opinion and without the pervasive interventions of professional lobbyists. We believe dilution of those structural parameters risks a corresponding decline in public support for the Greenbelt vision with wider rejection of the illusory claim that the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt is a science based and economically neutral exercise in prudent land management.

We ask and will appreciate your acknowledgement of and response to this commentary

Yours truly

R.A. (Bob) Fowler, Secretary
Ontario Property and Environmental Rights Alliance

c.c. Premier Dalton McGuinty
OPERA Members, Supporters and Contacts
Canadian Taxpayers Federation
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