

## **ONTARIO PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ALLIANCE**

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# Memo

**To:** OPERA Members and Supporters

**From:** Bob Fowler, OPERA Secretary

**Date:** May 16, 2005

**Re:** Coalition Annual Report

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Although dispensing with a membership conference this past year, the OPERA dance card was filled to overflowing during that period. Some examples:

- attended landowner meetings in Lanark, Renfrew, Kaladar, Picton, Tillsonburg and Port Perry
- invited participant at 3 regional Greenbelt Workshops and a half dozen Greenbelt public meetings
- joined a Queen's Park farm rally and shared booth funding/staffing at the 2004 International Ploughing Match
- addressed the Directorate of the Dufferin Federation of Agriculture at Orangeville
- responded to numerous land use queries and provided marketing suggestions to landowner organizations
- protested Greenbelt legislation in letters to Premier McGuinty and the Minister of Municipal Affairs
- delivered Greenbelt oral/written submissions to a provincial Standing Committee at Queen's Park
- previewed with their author, an OPERA associate, 12 Greenbelt studies ( 5 published in Ontario Farmer)
- alerted 200 rural municipalities to MNR proposals that inhibit private land use and shrink the local tax base
- circulated frightening implications buried in a 2004 provincial Panel Report on the Role of Government
- distributed more than 1500 information bulletins among politicians, provincial agencies and municipal councils
- supplied invited comment and land use background papers to out-of-province advocacy groups
- posted new articles to OPERA web page and copied relevant incoming e-mail messages to all members
- selectively forwarded land use reports and comment to non-members on request as a public service

We offer subsidiary comment as follows with respect to 3 government initiatives mentioned above:

**1) MNR dictates that directly affect use and enjoyment of private real estate:**

Under the Environmental Protection Act registry various proposals favoring militant special interest groups to the detriment of private landowners are being posted on the Ministry web site of which affected citizens are expected to be aware and to then find and review their convoluted contents and, that done, to file any comment or objection within a specified (very short) time frame. Welcome to advance public consultation!

**2) Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt:**

This massive government exercise in re-distribution of wealth involves almost 2 million acres of Ontario land, much of it privately owned, including all of the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. It appears land already subject to government control under the latter 2 designations is now further encumbered with such Greenbelt refinements as exclusive Ministerial discretion, no appeal process and no landowner compensation.

**3) Panel Report on Role of Government:**

Stripped of its flowing rhetoric and pseudo science, this document suggests that rural Ontario is now in irreversible social, economic and structural free fall and that any government rescue attempt is not indicated and, in fact, would be useless and regressive. A long list of regulatory assaults on rural life and property in the last 40 years add substance to the assumptions made and conclusions drawn in this chilling Report.

OPERA's operational and administrative budget is funded by member and supporter donations alone and our 2-page Source and Application of Funds Report for the period April, 2004 to May, 2005 is herewith enclosed for interest and information. Some donations received in December, 2004 are credited to the 2005 year and are so recorded in an enclosed Statement of Account for such contributions. Expected 2005 member donations now outstanding are covered in an appropriate invoice enclosed for each donor so identified. We acknowledge, with thanks, those supporters who voluntarily increase their assessed donation each year and we hope their generosity will continue in 2005. Financial management details are listed in Account Statements and Invoices.

Unless otherwise necessary or requested, material selected for circulation will be forwarded to our member groups as and when indicated via e-mail thereby saving time and money formerly expended in preparing, copying and sending quarterly "mail packages". It's expected such material will, in turn, be copied by the recipient organization for selective distribution to its own membership. This communication networking arrangement was established at our 1994 founding meeting and is a cornerstone feature of OPERA's mandate to circulate, with member group assistance, important information to the largest possible clientele in the shortest possible time and at the lowest possible cost.

OPERA will be pleased to personally deliver oral and/or written reports to any of its member organizations on request. Because all rural landowners in Ontario are not actively engaged in the business of farming but are nevertheless equally victimized by repressive land use legislation, it's our hope and intention to interest organizations outside the agricultural community in OPERA's mandate "to protect, and entrench in law, landowner rights and responsibilities against arbitrary restrictions and decisions of government". We believe that common objective can and certainly should resonate with trade associations and urban citizen groups now active in the field of real estate, mortgage lending, property law, resource extraction, community improvement, small business or heavy industry.

Your suggestions are solicited. Your help is appreciated. Your support is critical.

Regards to all

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