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DATE: September 28, 2004

TO: Planning and Development Committee
Meeting Date: October 18, 2004

FROM: Edward R. Sajecki
Commissioner of Planning and Building

SUBJECT: *Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt:*
**Greenbelt Task Force Advice and Recommendations to the
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, August, 2004**

ORIGIN: Planning and Building Department

BACKGROUND: On August 20, 2004, the Greenbelt Task Force released their Final Advice and Recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (under separate cover). The Greenbelt Task Force Advice and Recommendations is a key component of the Provincial Government initiatives to review the Ontario planning system and will be used by the Province to develop the Greenbelt Plan (creating a permanent Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt), which will be release in the fall of 2004.

The planning reform initiatives and growth strategy were summarized in the following three reports from the Commissioner of Planning and Building and have been adopted by City Council:

- "Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt: Greenbelt Task Force Discussion Paper", on July 7, 2004;
- "Planning Reform Initiatives – June 2004", on August 11, 2004;
- "A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe", on September 15, 2004.

These reports have been submitted as Mississauga's comments to the appropriate ministries.

The timing of this report and the response by the Provincial Government is critical as the one-year moratorium on changes from rural to urban land uses, as stipulated in the *Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004*, will expire on December 16, 2004.

COMMENTS:

The Greenbelt Task Force:

- Provided advice and recommendations to the Province on how to proceed in defining those green spaces that must be protected in the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
- Has advised that, when the permanent greenbelt is defined, the government must develop a policy and fiscal framework that ensures the permanence of the greenbelt;
- Acknowledges that the Growth Plan discussion paper (Places to Grow - Better Choices. Brighter Future) released July 12, 2004 represents a complementary plan to other provincial planning initiatives, which focuses and redirects urban development away from the greenbelt protected areas; and
- Advises that the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan must be implemented simultaneously for the greenbelt protection to work.

The August, 2004 recommendations of the Greenbelt Task Force are summarized under the following headings:

Defining the Greenbelt

The Task Force's recommendation that the Provincial Government undertake a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach to defining the greenbelt, and provide a policy and fiscal framework that ensures its permanence is supported. They recognize that municipalities have local level knowledge and information, which will prove essential when drawing the lines that will define the greenbelt lands. They also recommend that lands already in public ownership form part of the greenbelt. The greenbelt lands may include City of Mississauga owned lands within the major valley corridors.

Environmental Protection

The recommendation for a systems approach to environmental protection is supported. A systems approach encompasses: natural heritage, water resources, landform conservation, and a network of open space.

Of particular interest to Mississauga is the recommendation that the greenbelt system is to include connections between the major features, such as the Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment, and their functions, including public parks and stream and river valley linkages to the Great Lakes. Other than stating that the Provincial Government undertake a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach to defining the greenbelt, there is no specific direction as to how the connections will be defined. Potentially, the connections could include the major river valley corridors that are contained in Mississauga such as the Etobicoke Creek and Credit River. Clarification is required as to how these connections will be defined.

The greenbelt system could also include regionally significant features and functions such as portions of the Iroquois shoreline. Again, clarification is required as to how a regionally significant feature will be defined.

The protection of these connections through the City of Mississauga is consistent with the City's Official Plan policies and is, therefore, supported. However, as stated in the report from the Commissioner of Planning and Building titled "Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt: Greenbelt Task Force Discussion Paper", if major watercourse corridors or the Lake Ontario Waterfront within Mississauga are identified in any Greenbelt legislation, the implementation of the policy should not duplicate local efforts with respect to environmental protection.

Agricultural Protection

The Task Force's recommendation to protect key agricultural lands including the tender fruit and grape lands and the Holland Marsh is supported. The Provincial Government has acted on the Task Force's previous recommendations by appointing the Agricultural Advisory Team in June 2004 to ensure agricultural viability.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The Task Force recommends that infrastructure not be located within the greenbelt unless certain criteria are met, namely:

- Infrastructure within the greenbelt should be consistent with the vision and goals of the Greenbelt Task force and the Province's Growth Plan;
- Provincial, regional and municipal planning for infrastructure be coordinated;
- Alternatives must first be explored that maximize conservation, and secondly that optimize the capacity of existing infrastructure;
- Where new infrastructure is determined to be necessary, social, economic and environmental impacts must be minimized and creative approaches to design must be sought; and
- Development of infrastructure, including transportation facilities, should not promote or facilitate land uses that undermine the purpose and integrity of the greenbelt.

These recommendations are supported as well as the recommendation that there be a review of the environmental assessment process to ensure that emerging green technologies and innovative designs are encouraged and that an appropriate balance of roads and transit is established.

Natural Resources

The Task Force recommendation that high-potential mineral aggregate sites be included in the greenbelt and that the Provincial Government review the licensing process to facilitate new supply and ensure the integrity of hydrogeological and ecological systems is supported. In addition, the recommendation that there be more rigorous requirements for rehabilitation and more recycling of aggregate material and that monitoring take place to ensure rehabilitation proceeds is also supported.

The report from the Commissioner of Planning and Building regarding the Greenbelt Task Force discussion paper noted that the Task Force did not address aggregate extraction secondary uses and consistency of site rehabilitation with local official plans. The final recommendations from the Task Force still do not address these points. However, the draft Provincial Policy Statement, dated June 2004, includes these issues and is supported. Section 2.5 of the draft Provincial Policy Statement deals with mineral aggregates and states that final rehabilitation will take surrounding land use and approved land use designations into consideration and secondary uses are permitted as long as they are compatible with existing development and environmentally sensitive areas.

Culture, Recreation and Tourism

The Task Force recommends that the greenbelt be "branded and marketed" for cultural activities, recreation and tourism. They also recommend a system of trails on public and private lands supported by a Provincial Government regulatory framework to address issues such as location and design, user conflict, public safety and liability. In addition, they recommend that a greenbelt parks and trails strategy be developed to identify potential sites for

future public parks, and opportunities to make selected greenbelt lands accessible to the public.

If the Credit River and Etobicoke Creek corridors are identified as greenbelt, the Provincial Government regulatory framework could result in duplication of efforts by the City of Mississauga in trail development and may reduce the flexibility needed to address local issues when siting and connecting trails. Any duplication among provincial, regional and local governments should be avoided.

The staff report on the Greenbelt Task Force Discussion Paper, stated that the Task Force did not address golf courses. The Task Force's August 2004 final advice and recommendations still do not address golf courses. Clarification of whether or not golf courses would be an appropriate greenbelt use is needed and performance measures should be included as part of implementation to ensure compatibility with the greenbelt vision.

Administration and Implementation

The Greenbelt Task Force recommends that:

- The Provincial Government develop legislation and a plan that creates a permanent greenbelt;
- The greenbelt plan be administered by municipalities (outside of the Niagara Escarpment Commission's jurisdiction);
- The greenbelt plan be consistently incorporated into municipal official plans across the greenbelt;
- The Provincial Government allocate sufficient resources to assist municipalities with implementation;
- An appellate tribunal with greenbelt-specific expertise be established to uphold the integrity of the plan; and
- A Greenbelt Advisory Committee be established to advise the minister on implementation, administration, marketing and monitoring issues.

The protection of major valley systems both for their environmental significance and the opportunities for passive recreation has been a policy of Mississauga for many years. The Greenbelt Task Force's recommendation that municipalities be

provided with the tools to implement the goals of the greenbelt protection, while allowing the flexibility to address local issues, is supported.

CONCLUSION:

Coordination between the Growth Plan (Places to Grow - Better Choices. Brighter Future) and the establishment of a Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt Plan should continue to be a high priority for the Provincial Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Council of the Corporation of the City of Mississauga support, in principle, the advice and recommendations presented by the Greenbelt Task Force report titled "*Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt: Greenbelt Task Force Advice and Recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing*", dated August 2004, subject to addressing the following:

- that the recommendations of the Greenbelt Task Force be implemented as part of a comprehensive growth strategy and the associated infrastructure requirements being identified;
- the recommendations of the Greenbelt Task Force be incorporated into the Provincial Policy Statement, where appropriate;
- clarification be provided as to how the connections and regionally significant features will be defined;
- the implementation of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt neither contradict nor duplicate efforts by local municipalities for environmental preservation or the siting of trails; and
- clarification be provided with respect to the appropriateness of golf courses in the Greenbelt.

2. That a copy of the report titled "*Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt: Greenbelt Task Force Advice and Recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, August 2004*", dated September 28, 2004, from the Commissioner of Planning and Building, be forwarded, by the City Clerk, to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Original Signed By:

Edward R. Sajecki
Commissioner of Planning and Building