



## Government Relations Issues Update

### Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt

#### *TREB Key Message*

*TREB is concerned that land restrictions under the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt will make housing in the GTA less affordable. TREB continues to monitor the impact of the Greenbelt.*

#### **Background**

The provincial government passed *Bill 27, the Greenbelt Protection Act*, on June 23, 2004. Bill 27 designated the entire Golden Horseshoe as an area to be studied for a period of one year, retroactive to the day the legislation was introduced (December 16, 2003), to develop a plan to permanently protect significant environmental and agricultural lands. Bill 27 imposed a one-year moratorium (retroactive to December 16, 2003) on rezoning of land outside existing municipal official plan urban boundaries to allow time to complete the study.

The main objective of Bill 27 was to allow for the development of a plan to create a permanent Golden Horseshoe greenbelt. In February 2004, the provincial government established a task force to make recommendations in this regard. In May 2004, this task force released a discussion paper on various Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt issues.

After receiving advice from this task force, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced Bill 135 to allow for the implementation of a plan to create the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt. A draft plan was released at the same time.

Public consultations on Bill 135 and the Draft Plan were held. **TREB** made numerous written submissions to the Minister and to the legislative committee reviewing Bill 135.

In addition, **TREB** participated in stakeholder consultation meetings and public meetings held by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

While **TREB** supports the principle of growth management, a number of concerns were raised with the impact of using a Greenbelt approach. Specifically, **TREB** is concerned that:

- Land restrictions under the Greenbelt will drive up the price of housing in the GTA, making it less affordable.
- **TREB** also called for the government to ensure that the Greenbelt would not interfere with the provision of adequate infrastructure to sustain the region's quality of life.
- **TREB** told the provincial government that an incentive-based approach to growth management would be effective, respect property rights, and help keep housing affordable in the GTA.

Bill 135 and the Greenbelt Plan were finalized in February 2005. The Greenbelt joins together the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine, both of which were already protected under separate legislation. The Plan's policies do not apply to lands that were already designated for growth, meaning that municipalities are able to continue growing to the urban boundaries established in their existing plans.

At the same time that the Greenbelt Plan was finalized, the provincial government implemented a Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area, to articulate plans for how this region's expected population growth in coming decades will be accommodated with a significant amount of land restricted under the Greenbelt. The Growth Plan establishes population growth targets and requires increased development density for most GTA municipalities.