



Regional Containment Policies to Control Growth: The Greenbelt in the Greater Toronto Region

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Urban growth has presented itself as an issue or problem in many countries throughout the world. The most appropriate response to address growth pressure is to undertake some form of policy on a regional level. This may be undertaken by a regional government or agency, if one exists that encompasses the appropriate geographic area; or alternatively by a senior level of government. In either case, the policies typically need to address the problem on a regional basis.

The policy approaches that are applied to address these issues are often referred to as “containment policies”. In North America, these have often been undertaken under the name “growth management” in the early 1990’s, and “Smart Growth” at the turn of the century. A feature of these urban containment policy initiatives has often been either an urban growth boundary, or in some cases the establishment of a “greenbelt” to form a firm urban growth boundary. More broadly greenbelts have been used as a growth control measure in the United Kingdom, Korea, and Japan. (Evans, 2004)

The objective of this paper is to analyze the Ontario government’s approach to urban containment in what now has come to be known as the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area, GGHA. (See Map #1) The 2001 population of this area was 7.8 million people and it is expected to increase to 11.5 million by 2031. (Hemson, 2005) This is a geographic expansion over the previously addressed Greater Toronto Area, GTA that has been identified as one of the most rapidly growing regions in North America. The new Provincial, Liberal, government has undertaken two policy initiatives to address the growth related sprawl and containment issues in Southern Ontario. The first of these was the “Places to Grow” discussion paper released in summer 2004 by the Ontario Growth Secretariat, which is located in the newly formed Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, MPIR. (Ontario Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, 2004) The second initiative is the tabling of legislation to create a Greenbelt to facilitate the containment of growth and sprawl. This is being undertaken via the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. When the government announced the implementation of this election promise initiative, lands within the greenbelt were frozen for new development. Originally the final greenbelt legislation was scheduled to be passed in December 2004 long in advance of the “Places to Grow” legislation.¹ This leads to concerns about the coordination and consistency of two highly interconnected pieces of legislation. Ultimately the passing of the Greenbelt legislation was been postponed until early 2005.

Prior to analyzing the urban containment initiative in the Toronto/Ontario area the next section of the paper will provide background on the application of containment policies. The following section will discuss the Ontario context within which regional growth policies have been undertaken. Having set the context, the following sections will briefly describe the two pieces of legislation that form the essence of the containment policy; the “Greenbelt Plan” and “Places to Grow”. Once their basic elements are understood the policies will be critiqued in terms of their ability to be effective. The next section will suggest some simple measures that may be used to assess if the policies are being effective. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn about the policy application.

¹ The legislation received Royal Assent and became law on June 13, 2005.



Map 1. Greater Golden Horseshoe Context



Background on Containment Applications

The idea of using greenbelts as a containment tool to contain growth is not new to urban planning. The most well know early approaches were undertaken in England as an effort to contain growth and the perceived ill effects resulting from this growth in urban areas. It could be argued that this began in 1898 with Ebenezer Howard and his Garden Cities concept and movement. His approach was to deflect or attract growth into his carefully planned Garden Cities, which were essentially satellite new towns, each of which was confined by an agricultural greenbelt. A more serious attempt at containment in England was initiated in 1938 with the passing of Green Belt Act whose ideas and principles were contained in Greater London Plan of 1944. This plan envisaged a continuous greenbelt of up to 10 miles around the entire city. With the passing of the Town and Country Act of 1947, it became possible to apply greenbelt plans in areas throughout the country. Over this period greenbelts were applied in a number of jurisdictions in England and they gained broad acceptance in the British planning practice of regional planning.

Western Europe has also had some experience in applying containment policies. These have been undertaken in France, the Netherlands, Denmark and the former West Germany. These typically have been implemented through the drawing of boundaries on maps indicating urban and rural zones with the prohibition of urban uses encroaching on agricultural land. There also is the tendency to reduce automobile use by public transit investment and the development of cycling and walking paths. There has been a tendency through these policies to raise development costs that has lead to the more intensive use of land for development.

The European approaches to containment and the use of greenbelts has generally predated the North American applications with one notable Canadian exception, the Ottawa Greenbelt. Generally, North American approaches did not come in full-blown until after 1970. In the Canadian context the best-known example of a greenbelt is the application in the area of the capital city of Ottawa. In this case the greenbelt was implemented in the 1950's as part of a plan for the capital region developed by Jacques Greber.



More recent applications in North America have resulted in responses to the “Growth Management” movement that began in the 1990’s in response to concerns regarding growth generally and more specifically sprawl that has been taking place in a number of high growth North American cities. By 2004 urban containment policies exist in approximately 100 metropolitan areas or regions and twelve states (Nelson, 2004). In studying the historical and more recent US applications of urban containment policies Nelson et al draw some conclusions about the fundamental purpose of urban containment programs.

Two fundamental purposes of urban containment:

- 1) To promote compact and contiguous development patterns that can be efficiently served by public services
- 2) To preserve open space, agricultural land, and environmentally sensitive areas that are not currently suitable for urban development.

These are not especially surprising or earth shattering purposes but rather reflect what might be called historically good planning and more recently reflect approaches to growth management. However, when they are operationalized via urban containment it generally entails drawing a line around an urban area and then either preventing or discouraging growth outside the boundary. The amount of land within the boundary generally is sufficient to meet the growth needs over some defined period, perhaps 10 or 20 years.

Typically these containment plans are supported by other policies or plans to support the necessary servicing and infrastructure required to ensure that the growth will occur in the appropriate locations and densities that will lead to an efficient urban built form. Land outside the containment line or greenbelt is typically restricted to low density development or agricultural/resource related uses with low provision of infrastructure to accommodate development. This may require conscious policies to address these issues.

In examining the successful containment policies in Florida, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii, the following set of objectives have been developed by Nelson and his colleagues.

A containment program should:

- 1) Accommodate long range urban population growth requirements consistent with state and local goals and policies:
- 2) Fulfill local needs for housing, employment opportunities, and livability
- 3) Provide public facilities and services in an orderly and economic manner,
- 4) Maximize efficiency for land uses in or at the fringe of existing urban areas,
- 5) Consider all environmental, energy, economic, and social consequences,
- 6) Preserve farm, forest, and other resource land,
- 7) Ensure the compatibility of proposed urban uses with nearby resource activities. (Nelson, 2004)

These objectives are useful as they can be used as the objectives against which the success of containment policies may be evaluated. In order to use them however, measures for the objectives would have to be determined and also the objectives and measures may have to be prioritized.

In their analysis of US urban containment programs Nelson et al develop a number of useful typologies for understanding and analyzing various types of urban containment programs. They indicate that the different scales of containment that they undertake may separate them, and they may be analyzed in terms of different institutional structures of urban containment. After they actually undertake some analysis, they come to a conclusion that there are four frameworks that may be used to analyze policy driven urban containment.

The four frameworks are:

- 1) Weak-Restrictive Framework
- 2) Strong-Restrictive Framework
- 3) Weak-Accommodating Framework
- 4) Strong-Accommodating Framework.

The analysis undertaken in their research provides policy analysts with a framework within they can understand and analyze containment programs. By understanding the typology within which a plan fits it is possible to better understand the potential and perceived benefits that can be expected by the policy applied.



The Ontario Context

In the Canadian context it is the provincial government rather than the central or Federal government that has jurisdiction over municipalities and consequently municipal and also regional land use planning. Each province passes legislation that outlines the functions and controls the activities of the local governments within its jurisdiction. Consequently, each province has some form of a municipal act and a planning act in addition to a range of acts that place other controls and regulations on local governments.

In the Province of Ontario there has been interest and initiatives from time to time by the government of the day to take an interest in planning on a broad regional scale. These efforts have tended to focus on the highly urbanized area of Southern Ontario focusing on the broad area or region centering on the city of Toronto. Toronto is the urban and economic center of the province as well as being a prime center to the national economy. The Provincial government undertook the first of these attempts when in 1970 it unveiled *Design for Development: The Toronto Centred Region Plan*. This plan attempted to direct growth patterns to various centres across southern Ontario by designating locations for new highway and infrastructure and protecting environmental features and farmland by designating a hierarchy of urban locations. The plan was never formally implemented. However, it did provide a blueprint for infrastructure investment through the 1970's and 1980's.

Through the 1980's census data identified that the population growth in Metropolitan Toronto was relatively stable with very little growth while the population of the Regional municipalities surrounding Toronto were experiencing significant growth.² This led to concerns that a more coordinated planning effort for the GTA was necessary. Consequently in 1988, the Province created the Office of the GTA, and established the Greater Toronto Coordinating Committee. While the Provincial office undertook research and analysis regarding GTA, the coordinating committee was comprised of officials from GTA municipalities and attempted to coordinate efforts to address a number of growth related planning issues.

In 1995, the Provincial Government created the Task Force on the Future of the Greater Toronto Area to address the growing concerns "about the health and workability of the city-region." This was necessary, as the work undertaken by the previous government did not result in any direct actions or policy. This task force studied many of the issues that currently faced the GTA with the purpose of making recommendations for addressing these issues including those related to government reorganization. The last area to be addressed by the task force was government structure. It was logical that this issue would be addressed after all of the other issues are analyzed and understood. However, there was a change in the Provincial Government and the new government ordered the task force to wrap up its work and report (January 1996) before they had the opportunity to thoroughly address the government structure issues.

In 1997, the new government established the Greater Toronto Services Board that was comprised of representation from all municipalities comprising the GTA. The initial responsibility given to this body was the coordination of transportation throughout the GTA. Additional responsibility and powers were not specified at the outset but they were to be decided at a later date. Despite the great potential for such a coordinating agency, it was plagued by political infighting and was not very effective. After later reports to analyze its future responsibility and structure, the Province who took over the transit coordination function disbanded it.

It was the previous Conservative Provincial government that launched the Smart Growth initiative in 2001 and located the secretariat in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Its mandate was to coordinate the efforts of nine ministries in urban development issues. It began stakeholder consultations as the initial input into a number of Smart Growth plans for different panels across the Province. The Central Ontario Panel which is essentially the area currently covered by the Greater Golden Horseshoe delivered its final report in April 2003.

When the liberal government was elected in 2003 it appeared to in principle support a Smart Growth agenda. However, in an effort to put their own stamp on the initiative, they created a new ministry, The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, and relocated the Smart Growth secretariat in this ministry altering the name to the Growth Secretariat.

After the most recent provincial election where the liberals came into power, we saw some changes occur in the structure of Smart Growth related responsibilities and initiatives. Despite the Liberals touting smart growth

² For example in 1971 the population of the GTA was 2.9 million, 71.6% of which was in Metropolitan Toronto. By 1991, the total population was over 4.2 million with 51.5 % residing in Metro Toronto.



principals in their election campaign, it is not surprising that they initiated some changes in the structure by which Smart Growth initiatives would be addressed.

The history of new provincial governments in Ontario is that when elected they either reject and alter the policies and programs of the previous government or if they fit into their policy agenda they find a way to alter them in name or content to put their own government “stamp”, i.e. name or perspective on the revised approach.

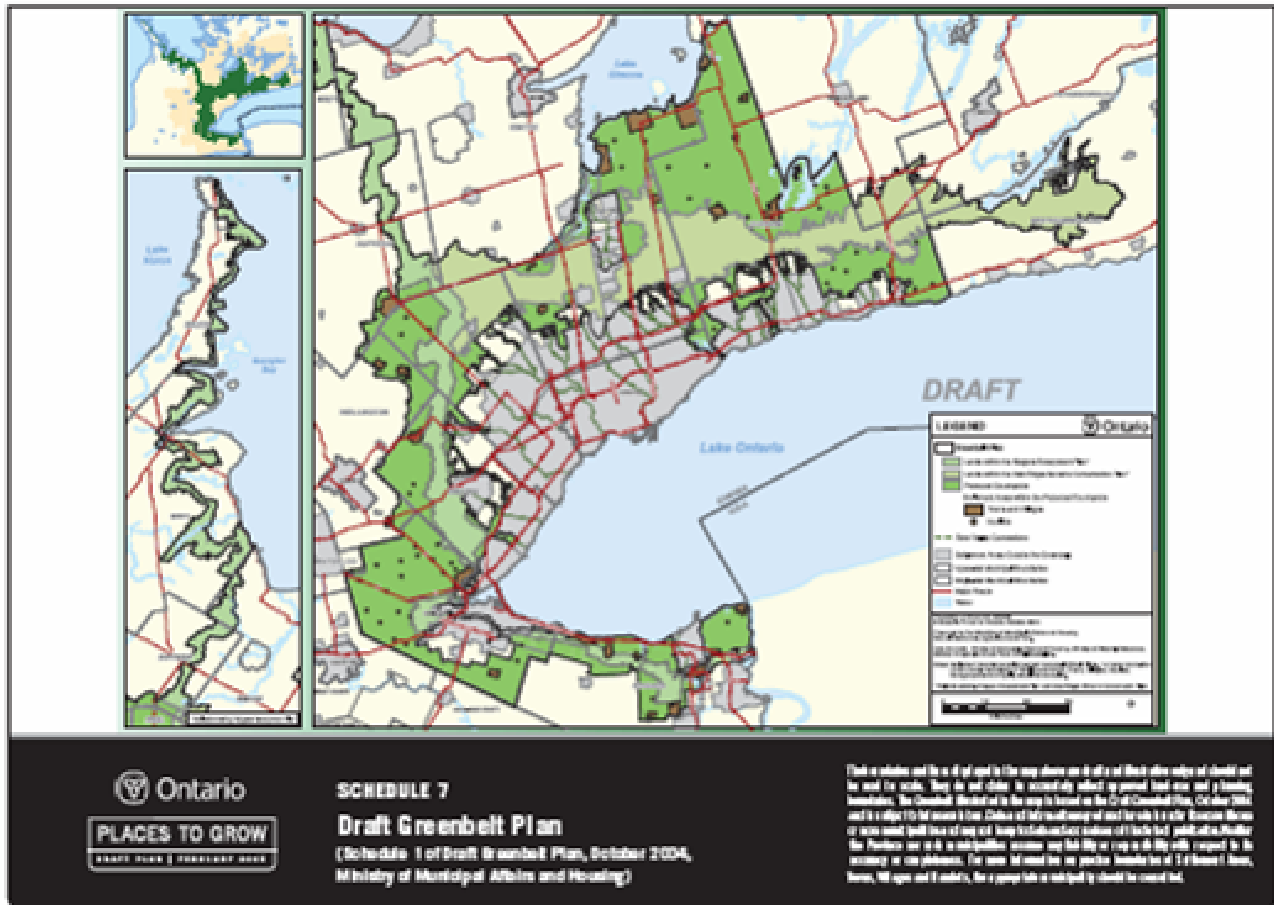
This happened in the application of Smart Growth after the liberals won the election. They basically relocated the previously established Smart Growth Secretariat and into the newly created Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Despite the fact that previously the mandate of the secretariat was to coordinate smart growth initiatives across all of the relevant ministries, it was most closely associated with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. The reason for this is that it was viewed as a planning activity, which had generally been associated with this ministry, and most of the secretariat staff was drawn from this ministry. The relocation of the secretariat becomes an issue with the two new policy documents that are created as part of the new provincial policy. As previously mentioned the Greenbelt Plan that is essentially the containment policy document was drafted and implemented by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. However, the other piece of legislation that is intended to compliment the Greenbelt Plan, the “Places to Grow” initiative, was drafted and will be implemented by the Smart Growth group in the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Green Belt Plan

The Greenbelt is the prime component of the Growth Plan for what is now referred to as the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This area is an extension of what was formally known as the Greater Toronto Area. The objective is to provide clarity where development may occur and what areas need to be protected for current and future generations. More specifically the Greenbelt indicates what areas are to be protected from urbanization for agricultural and environmental purposes. This plan builds on and provides protection of lands in similar fashion to two previously implemented plans that had similar purposes, The Niagara Escarpment Plan (1985) and the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan (2001). The plan purports to base its boundaries based on a combination of the best science available, taking into account the existing and future patterns of urbanization, and the advice and knowledge of local residents and politicians. (See Map #2)



Map 2. The Greenbelt Plan



The objective is to protect agricultural areas, environmental sensitive areas, and rural communities.

With respect to agricultural activities the desire is to protect specialty crop areas and prime agricultural land. This is especially true for the specialty crop areas of the Niagara Peninsula. With respect to environmental features there is the desire to protect the natural heritage, which includes key hydrologic and landform features within the Greenbelt. This includes connecting open space connections between the previously protected areas, Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine as well as the river valleys and surface water sources. In terms of the rural communities the idea is to support a strong rural economy by permitting the uses, social, institutional and commercial, necessary for the existing local populations.

The objectives will be achieved via first the delineation of the Greenbelt itself, and then applying the identified policies to the various areas or components included within the Greenbelt. This entailed a specific set of policies for the agricultural system, the natural system, parkland including open space and trails, and for settlement areas. In addition to these specific policy areas, the plan has general policies for the protected countryside. These policies address items including non-agricultural uses, infrastructure, natural resources, cultural heritage resources, and existing land uses.

The plan also sets out the implementation process. This includes components that define municipalities' role in the implementation of the plan that also discuss the plan in relation to the existing land use planning system (Planning Act). The implementation also specifies the exact boundaries of the greenbelt as well as the process for reviewing and amending the plan. As part of this monitoring process, it specifies that performance measures are to be established. Finally, the Province may establish a Greenbelt Advisory Council to assist in the implementation and review process.



The important aspects of the implementation are that; the local land use plans are to be brought into conformity with the Greenbelt Plan, that the plan will only be reviewed after a ten year period, and that amendments to the plan may only be proposed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and housing and that they may only be considered under three specified circumstances. The monitoring is to be undertaken through the already established Municipal of Municipal Affairs and Housing's

Municipal Performance Measurement Program. In developing these measures the government will work with other relevant ministries, municipalities and stakeholders. The composition and mandate of the Greenbelt Advisory Council is purposely kept fluid as it may change over time. For example, in the early years its mandate may focus on coordination and implementation, while towards the end of the ten year period it may focus on the requisite review process. In terms of its composition, the plan indicates that it should include representation from a number of sectors including environment, agriculture, recreation, resource, municipal and the development industry.

Places to Grow

The Places to Grow document and the associated legislation basically represents the draft Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. As mentioned previously this is the companion policy document to the Greenbelt Plan, which has been prepared by the Ontario Growth Secretariat in the new Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Whereas the Greenbelt Plan places prohibitions where growth should not occur, this document is intended to show where growth should occur and encourage it various tools to occur in the location, form, and density that supports the previously developed objectives of the Ontario Smart Growth initiative. Despite the minor name change to the secretariat and the relocating it in the newly formed ministry, the general philosophy has been unchanged. This draft plan has been prepared after the discussion paper "Places to Grow: Better Choices Brighter Future" was released for public and stakeholder comment in 2004. In response to this paper, eight public meetings were held across the Greater Golden Horseshoe and more than 1,600 people participated.

The intent of the plan is that it will guide decisions via its policy framework on a range of issues that include land use planning and the related built form housing and infrastructure planning; environmental issues related to natural heritage and natural resource protection; and economic development and local servicing. All of these aspects will be taken into account in the implementation strategies of the plan. The plan will be integrated with and in some cases build upon the Greenbelt Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan. In addition it will reflect Provincial planning reform related to the Planning Act and the Provincial Policy Statements³. An overriding Provincial concern is for the economic development and activity of the region, it is anticipated that the plan will set out a clearer environment for investment decisions to support the long run prosperity of the region.

The plan has a vision of what it expects to be the state of the Greater Golden horseshoe in 2031 for a great place to live. It anticipates that the communities will be based on several pillars that include a strong economy, a clean and healthy environment, and social equity. There will be a variety of living choices. Movement will be easy due to an integrated transportation network. The natural environment will be healthy and support protected high quality agricultural lands. Urban centres will be characterized by compact settlement and development patterns. The region will be a thriving world-class metropolis.

A number of guiding principles have been established in the Growth Plan that is deemed to be essential to meet the vision that has been articulated. The principles are highly related growth principles that provide a framework for growth management. Furthermore, the growth plan develops strategies and policies for implementation based on these principles.

The intent of the proposed legislation is that there will be hierarchy of plans with the prime document being the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The plan envisions that there will be five sub areas each of which will have its own growth strategy that is consistent with the plan but takes into account local conditions and needs. The central sub area, the GTA and Hamilton are within the greenbelt containment area, while the other four sub areas all lay outside of the proposed greenbelt. In addition to the conformity of these strategies with the overall growth plan, there is also the requirement that the traditional land use plans mandated under the Ontario Planning Act will have to be brought into conformity with these newly development documents. This means that upper tier Official Plans (Master Plans) for regional Governments and counties will have to be

³ The Planning Act and the Policy Statements guide land use planning activities for local and Regional Municipalities in the Province of Ontario.



brought into conformity with the new documents and then in turn the Official Plans for the local municipalities will also have to be brought into conformity. The end result is conformity and consistency in the planning documents for all levels of government. In addition to these planning documents there will also have to be consideration to the newly revised Provincial Policy Statement as the Planning Act requires local governments to take these into consideration when they are preparing planning documents i.e. official plans, zoning by-laws, and approving plans of subdivision.⁴

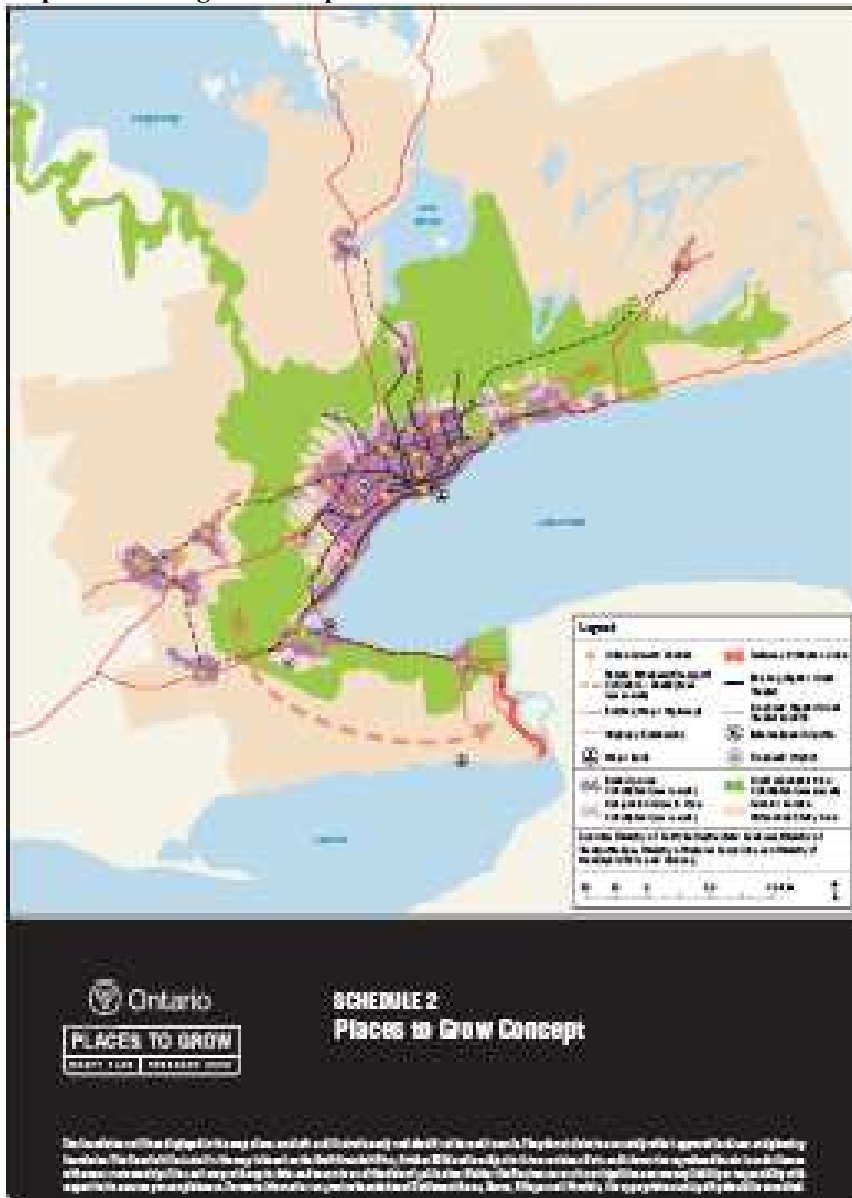
There are a number of key aspects in the content of the plan. (See Map #3.) One of the main components is of course intensification and compact development. A target has been developed that 40% of all new residential development will take place in existing urban areas.⁵ An additional topic with specific policies is that of identifying growth centres and intensification corridors. This builds on a similar concept in the new City of Toronto Official Plan that promotes intensification along major arterial streets. In this case, mixed-use higher density development is being advocated along major regional roads and transportation corridors. Policies have also been developed to guide the development that must take place on greenfields to accommodate growth pressures. In addition, a set of policies has been developed specifically for small cities and towns. The plan also addresses the implementation of the plan and its associated policies. Of course a central element of the implementation must be the provision of growth related infrastructure in the appropriate places and types to support the plan. This includes transportation infrastructure and water related infrastructure, both for supply and wastewater. To address the infrastructure issue the plan proposes to develop a provincial ten-year infrastructure plan.

⁴ The Provincial Policy Statements were developed so that when there are matters of provincial interest in planning activities clear and consistent policy direction can be provided to local government concerning the provincial interest in the matter. Originally these statements related to three environmental matters and affordable housing.

⁵ This target has been studied and confirmed as being viable and realistic by an addition study for the Secretariat See Hemson



Map 3. Places to grow concept



Critique

There was a broad based understanding that something had to be undertaken to address growth related pressures and issues. However, it could not be done by local or even regional municipalities without a Provincial initiative. There have been a number of critiques and comments on the approach that has been undertaken by the provincial government both in general and in terms of the process and a number of elements that comprise the content of both the Greenbelt and Places to Grow legislation.

Some aspects of the public consultation for the two discussion documents lead some people and organizations to question the sincerity of the desire for public input into the documents and the ability to integrate the two documents. Both the Greenbelt and Places to Grow discussion papers were made available in 2004. However, the time frames for responding were different, once again reflecting the fact that they were prepared by two different ministries who perhaps reflecting a lack of coordination between the two documents. There were also some specific rather problematic issues with the response time frames for the Greenbelt legislation. First, there was the relatively short timeframe for responding. Responses were due by mid December. Secondly, in response to this input the Province /Ministry indicated that they anticipated revised draft legislation go to the legislature about one week later. This did not instill confidence in the process especially with respect to the public input being given proper consideration with respect to the stakeholders. It was pointed out in several venues that it



would be very difficult if not possible for the ministry staff to receive, read and interpret any briefs or feedback that was received during the end of the consultation period, analyze it and place the new material into the new legislative document. Ultimately, after significant pressure regarding the timeframe, it was extended to the beginning of the following year to permit adequate time for public response and ministry staff reflection and consideration with the potential to impact on the legislation that was brought forward.

A number of the critiques that were brought forward especially by the development and building industry had to do with the manner in which the boundaries for the greenbelt were determined. Despite the fact that the ministry insisted that the staff used the best science available to draw the boundaries, the industry continually suggested that the boundaries were drawn based on “political science” rather than “natural science”. Despite continual requests, they were never permitted to have their consultants/experts peer review the analysis undertaken by ministry staff. There are some very clear existing environmental physical features some of which have been clearly delineated in other legislation such as the Niagara Escarpment and the Oakridge’s Moraine. However, there are a number of areas in which the boundaries are not entirely clear and controversial. This has led to the controversy especially when they are in areas where developers have significant land holdings. Also, a number of farmers and agricultural associations have raised concerns about how the boundaries have been drawn. This does not always arise due to the concern for protecting agricultural land but from the interest of individual farmers desiring to eventually “cash in” by selling their land to developers for urban uses. A number of farmers are waiting for the optimal time either in terms of the price for their land relative to the market and urbanization, or relative to the time in their life cycle or career to sell their land. The inclusion of their land within the greenbelt obviously precludes this transaction from happening at least for the ten-year time horizon before the greenbelt may be reviewed.

The above commentary also leads to several other related concerns that have been raised about the legislation. The first issue is that the Greenbelt is fixed in place for a ten year period and can only be reviewed after the ten year period. The second issue is that there is no opportunity or mechanism for appealing the boundaries or conditions specified in the Greenbelt legislation. With respect to the 10-year time horizon critics argue that it is too long a period given that there is no opportunity to amend the boundaries or conditions over this period. Also, there is also no opportunity for appeal of the initial boundaries and conditions of the legislation. Some argue that the 10 year period without review is too long as conditions can change that will require amendments before that time, or that there may be items in the initial legislation that will be not quite right in implementation and that amendments will be necessary to make the legislation more effective. The ten year period appears too long and inconsistent with other planning tools as the Planning Act requires that municipalities review their official plans, which is a long range planning document with a 20-25 year time horizon, every five years. Government officials on the other hand argue that a ten-year time horizon is essential to provide certainty of the positions and that it is necessary to make the greenbelt effective.

These same arguments are made by government officials with regard to the lack of appeal of the location or conditions of the greenbelt. However, critics have pointed out that our land use planning system has been premised on public input into land use decisions and plans as well as citizens and property owners having the right to appeal decisions to the Ontario Municipal Board when affected parties disagree with decisions.⁶ In the case of this legislation, it has been argued that many citizen rights have been eliminated due to the lack of any appeal being permitted.

These concerns are based on the fact that prior to the development of the legislation no impact studies have been undertaken or at least been made public. The central studies that would be very useful would be economic impact studies especially any study that would examine the impacts on the land market both within and outside the greenbelt. Many containment policies have been undertaken in North America without the benefit of undertaking background impact studies. (Nelson et al, 2004) Critics have argued that, as the one of the primary results of the greenbelt is to limit or reduce the supply of land available for urban development. The constraint or reduction in supply would then in turn lead to increases in land prices, which would lead to higher housing costs, and prices. One of the major concerns is whether there will be an impact on housing affordability and especially the ability to provide assisted affordable housing. Government officials have argued that other jurisdictions in North America where containment policies have been undertaken have not experienced increased land prices as a result of the containment policy applied in those jurisdictions.

⁶ The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) is a quasi-judicial body that hears and makes decisions regarding planner matters that have been appealed to it. Property owners and citizens have the right to appeal municipal land use planning decisions such as rezoning applications and official plan amendments to this body.



Another major concern regarding the implementation of the containment policy has been the coordination of the various ministries and initiatives that are required to make the policy effective. This concern begins with the fact that the two key policy documents, the Greenbelt Plan, and the Places to Grow initiative are based in legislation that was drafted and also will be implemented by two separate ministries, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the new Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal respectively. Although, this may not be a cause for concern in the short run as both initiatives reflect the policy of the current Liberal government who initiated the policy, in the longer run this ministry fragmentation may be problematic especially if there is a change in government which given recent political history in Ontario is likely over a ten year period of the plan.

Furthermore, there is the question of the coordination of the implementation of the Places to Grow legislation itself. A key to the implementation of this plan is the need for infrastructure investment to support both the location and density of development envisioned in the plan. This means the Province will need to make significant investments in both transportation as well as sewer and water infrastructure. This is especially important as it is generally acknowledged that there is a significant deficit in infrastructure funding in the Province. Also, the Super Build program of the previous Provincial government was ineffective. This is in part the reason for the creation of the new Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. In order to implement the plan, it is necessary to facilitate the movement of both people and goods. To move goods to support the economy it is necessary to improve the highway infrastructure in the identified corridors as this is the primary mode for the movement of goods. To move people between their place of residence and employment in support of the plan significant transit investments are required. In addition to support the density of population that will support densities that support mass transit investment in sewer and water infrastructure is also necessary. Given the current financial position of the Province, some people doubt whether the Province has the financial ability or the willingness to make the expenditures to support the infrastructure required in the plan.

Although the concept of intensification is widely accepted as a key component to growth management, smart growth, and containment policies to provide for efficient development and servicing patterns as well as densities that support mass transit, problems tend to arise when these plans are operationalized. The Places to Grow Document pursues intensification through the establishment of targets for Regional governments. Each regional government is asked to meet the target of having 40 out of every 100 of their residential units built in existing designated urban areas. Furthermore, the regions are expected to work with municipalities to achieve this 40% target by 2015. This will be achieved by using various tools including fiscal tools to promote higher densities in the centers and along intensification corridors.

Despite a study commissioned by the province that demonstrates that these are realistic targets, critics felt that these standards may be difficult to achieve. The exception to this is the City of Toronto where there is general consensus that the targets can be met. This in part reflects the relatively recent City of Toronto official plan that suggests one million additional people can be accommodated in Toronto through intensification along major arterials and developing on Brownfield's. Achieving these targets will generally require fiscal tools to encourage high-density development and the development on Brownfield's. In response to the Provincial Smart Growth initiative the past provincial government passed Brownfield legislation to encourage and support the redevelopment of Brownfield sites. This was a first step however; the development industry feels that the legislation required strengthening in several areas. Another important fiscal tool that the province is considering making available to municipalities is Tax Increment Financing. This may also support Brownfield redevelopment as well as transit-oriented development.

An additional impediment to approving and supporting high-density development in centers and corridors is the public reaction to intensification proposals. Despite the general acceptance of the containment initiative in principle, local residents have opposed intensification projects in Ontario when public meetings have been held regarding their development.⁷ Consequently, a number of recent cases have led to public opposition. This has led one local politician who is an acknowledged leader in supporting intensification and containment to remark that the only thing that his constituents hate worse than sprawl is intensification. This issue of local citizen resistance must be considered, as a serious impediment to the plan and steps must be taken to educate the public to have them accept these newer more intensive forms of development.

A final comment must be made regarding the new planning containment policies that have been proposed and adopted by the new provincial government. Although they are consistent with the Smart Growth initiative of the

⁷ In Ontario the Planning Act requires public meetings for rezoning applications or variance to the zoning by-law, which typically must be undertaken with projects that include intensification.



previous government, they represent a different approach and trend than what had been occurring thorough out the 1990's. While the planning reform that took place in the 1990's moved away from Provincial regulation, the new legislation as explained above is implemented through provincial regulatory policies. In the early 1990's, the Planning Act reform moved away from the province having to actually approve all municipal planning policy changes. Rather the province would lead with broad policy and municipalities who had demonstrated planning expertise were permitted to undertake these changes. The smart growth initiative in the late 1990's also was based on provincial policy leading local government decisions. However, the onset of the two initiatives discussed in this paper move to a strong provincial regulatory approach with little local government flexibility or regulatory discretion.

Evaluation

How will the success of the containment policies be determined? As previously stated the provincial government has suggested that they will be a review of the Green belt policy in ten years. However, they also suggest that the Places to Grow Policy should be evaluated on an annual basis in a fashion incorporated with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Municipal Performance Measurement System. Although the preliminary documents do not mention any specific measure, it is possible to suggest some measures that might be useful. As two of the key objectives of containment are to increase land intensification and promote transit usage there are some simple measures in these two areas that may be measured annually and then examine the trends over a five or even ten year period. With respect to intensification a simple measure to apply would be the degree to which the intensification target, 40% of new units in designated urban areas, is met by the regional governments and then also be the local governments. With respect to transit use, there are several relatively simple straightforward measures that may be used. The first is modal split. Are more people using transit due to the provision or improvement to transit systems and people living at transit supported densities. Related to an improved modal split away from place of residence.

Finally, there are the unintended impacts of the policies that may be negative in impact and not be considered in all of the calculations. One of the main concerns in this area is what will be the impact on the land supply which in turn may alter the land price which will affect the price of housing. A specific set of concerns may be raised about the community being able to provide affordable housing. This requires the monitoring of land prices for tracts of land both within and outside the existing greenbelt. To facilitate this analysis, local data systems that monitor land and housing prices may be used, or more complex systems may be adapted to the Ontario application (Knapp, 2001)

Conclusion

Despite some of the issues and problems identified in the process of developing the joint containment policy documents, i.e. the Greenbelt Plan and Places to Grow, there are a number of components of the containment policy structure that provide the opportunity for an effective and successful policy structure. For example, the policy appears to be addressing the general objectives that Nelson et al identify as the primary objectives for an urban containment policy. Also, the principles identified in the Places to Grow document are compatible with those identified as the key principles in the containment literature. Furthermore, there are two documents one of which is intended to support the built form. This approach is required for the success of a containment policy. This approach is compatible with what has proven to be successful in North American containment programs.

As usual in the policy process, implementation is the key to successful policies. There are some concerns regarding the implementation of these policies. One concern is the complexity of bringing all of the land use policy documents into compatibility and conformity; strategic sector plan, regional official plans and local official plans in the context of the Provincial Policy Statements. The greatest concern, which has been echoed by many commentators on the policy, is whether the Province will provide adequate funds for the infrastructure necessary to make the containment policy successful. (Greater Toronto Homebuilders Association, 2005) (Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, 2004) This includes the necessary transportation infrastructure as well as sewer and water infrastructure. The last major concern regarding implementation is political in nature. As the plan is fixed for ten years, and this is consistent with the implementation time frame, what will be the impact if there is a change in government? This is very likely over a ten-year time horizon in the current Ontario Provincial Political environment. The practice over the past fifteen years of Ontario Provincial politics is the new governments cancel or alter many policies of the previous government. Therefore the policy implementation may be interrupted, altered, or terminated.

It would appear that the proposed containment policy structure has a reasonable chance of being successful, i.e. meeting the stated objectives, if the implementation concerns are addressed. However, the proposed continuous



monitoring and evaluation must be undertaken to ensure that there are not any significant unintended impacts, and to ensure that the policy is on track and adjusted if necessary. We will see how well the policy works the policy unfolds with its full implementation over time.



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