

2. POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION/POLICY/STANDARDS/GUIDELINE DOCUMENTS

2.1.1 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) is issued under the authority of Section 3 of the *Planning Act*. It provides direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development, and promotes the provincial planning system. The current PPS came into effect on April 30, 2014 and applies to planning decisions made on or after that date. It replaces the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005.

The PPS recognizes the complex inter-relationships among economic, environmental and social factors in planning and embodies good planning principles. It includes enhanced policies on key issues that affect our communities, such as:

- The efficient use and management of land and infrastructure;
- Protection of the environment and resources; and
- Ensuring appropriate opportunities for employment and residential development, including support for a mix of uses.

The PPS guides growth within settlement areas away from significant or sensitive resources and areas that may pose a risk to public health and safety. Furthermore, it recognizes that the wise management of development may involve directing, promoting or sustaining growth. It states that land use must be carefully managed to accommodate appropriate development to meet the full range of current and future needs, while achieving efficient development patterns.

The PPS states that the Province's natural heritage resources, water, agriculture lands, mineral resources, and cultural heritage and archaeological resources provide important environmental, economic and social benefits. The wise use and management of these resources over the long-term is a key provincial interest. Through the PPS, the Province wants to ensure that its resources are managed in a sustainable manner to protect essential ecological processes and public health and safety, minimizing environmental and social impacts to meet long-term needs.

2.1.1.1 Transportation Systems

The PPS states that transportation systems should be provided which are safe, energy efficient, facilitate the movement of people and goods, and are located appropriately to address projected needs. The PPS focuses on connectivity within and among transportation systems, as well as efficient use of existing and

GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study
Draft Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints
Working Paper Update
June 2015

planned infrastructure as part of the overarching multimodal transportation system. Emphasis is placed on minimizing the length and number of vehicle trips and supporting current and future use of transit and active transportation.

Specifically, Section 1.6.7 speaks to transportation systems and notes that, “systems should be provided which are safe, energy efficient, facilitate the movement of people and goods, and are where appropriate to address projected needs”. Section 1.6.8 also speaks to transportation and infrastructure corridors and notes that, “when planning for corridors and rights-of-ways for significant transportation, electricity transmission, and infrastructure facilities, consideration will be given to the significant resources in Section 2.0: Wise Use and Management of Resources”.

Planned corridors are defined by the PPS as:

Corridors or future corridors which are required to meet projected needs, and are identified through provincial plans, preferred alignment(s) determined through the Environmental Assessment Act process, or identified through planning studies where the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is actively pursuing the identification of a corridor. Approaches for the protection of planned corridors may be recommended in guidelines developed by the Province.

Section 1.6.8 highlights the policies for transportation and infrastructure corridors. This section describes the importance of long-term protection of major goods movement facilities and corridors. In addition, Section 1.6.8.3 outlines “new development that is proposed on adjacent lands to existing or planned corridors and transportation facilities should be compatible with, and supportive of, the long-term purposes of the corridor and should be designed to avoid, mitigate or minimize negative impacts on and from the corridor and transportation facilities.”

The PPS includes two (2) sections that relate directly to environmental conditions and constraints, Wise Use and Management of Resources (Section 2) and Protecting Public Health and Safety (Section 3) which are summarized in the following sections.

2.1.1.2 Wise Use and Management of Resources

The PPS identifies six (6) broad categories for protection:

[Natural Heritage \(Section 2.1 of the PPS\)](#)

This section includes statements about the protection of:

- Natural features and areas for the long-term;
- The long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems;
- Significant habitat of endangered species and threatened species;

GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study
Draft Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints
Working Paper Update
June 2015

- Significant wetlands, woodlands and valleylands, as well as significant wildlife habitat and areas of natural and scientific interest;
- Fish habitat;
- Natural heritage features; and
- Agricultural uses.

[Water \(Section 2.2 of the PPS\)](#)

This section includes statements about the protection, improvement and restoration of:

- Quality and quantity of water; and
- Sensitive surface and groundwater features.

[Agriculture \(Section 2.3 of the PPS\)](#)

This section includes statements about the long-term protection of the “Prime Agricultural Areas” and “Speciality Crop Areas”. It also describes permitted uses that are compatible with agricultural operations, guidelines on types, sizes and intensities of the agricultural land uses and new land uses in agricultural areas. Sub-sections include:

- Permitted uses;
- Lot creation and lot adjustments; and
- Removal of land from Prime Agricultural Areas.

Clearly defined and organized environmental practices are necessary for the conservation of land and resources. The long-term protection of quality agricultural lands is a priority of the Province of Ontario and has been addressed in the PPS (2014).

[Minerals and Petroleum \(Section 2.4 of the PPS\)](#)

This section identifies a need to protect minerals and petroleum resources for long-term use. Sub-sections 2.4.2, 2.4.3, and 2.4.4 describe:

- Protection of long-term resource supply;
- Rehabilitation; and
- Extraction in Prime Agricultural Areas.

[Mineral Aggregate Resources \(Section 2.5 of the PPS\)](#)

This section states that mineral aggregate resources shall be protected for long-term use. Guidelines are listed for:

GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study
Draft Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints
Working Paper Update
June 2015

- Protection of long-term resource supply;
- Rehabilitation;
- Extraction in Prime Agricultural Areas; and
- Wayside pits and quarries, portable asphalt plants, and portable concrete plants.

Cultural Heritage and Archaeology (Section 2.6 of the PPS)

This section includes guidelines for the conservation of:

- Significant built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes;
- Potential and significant archaeological resources; and
- Lands adjacent to protected heritage property.

The protection of these resources is integrated in the *GTA West Study* through the inclusion of relevant environmental factors and criteria which will be used in assessing planning alternatives developed during Stage 1 of the study and through the assessment of route alternatives to be undertaken as part of Stage 2 of the study. A description of existing environmental features is provided in subsequent sections of this report.

2.1.1.3 Protecting Public Health and Safety

Section 3.0 of the PPS states that, “Ontario’s long-term prosperity, environmental health and social well-being depend on reducing the potential for public cost or risk to Ontario’s residents from natural or human-made hazards. Development shall be directed away from areas of natural or human-made hazards where there is an unacceptable risk to public health or safety or of property damage, and not create new or aggravate existing hazards”.

Natural hazards include hazardous lands adjacent to shorelines or watercourses, beach areas, areas prone to erosion and floodways. Development shall not be permitted on hazardous lands and hazardous sites. This includes institutional (hospitals, long-term care homes, retirement homes, daycares, and schools), essential emergency services, or the disposal, manufacture, treatment or storage of hazardous substances.

Section 3.2 of the PPS outlines the policies for human-made hazards, which include lands affected by mine hazards (i.e., oil, gas, and salt hazards) and sites with contaminants on land or in water.

The protection of the public health and safety as described in the PPS will be accomplished through the application of relevant environmental factors and criteria in the evaluation of planning alternatives developed during Stage 1 of the study and through the assessment of route alternatives to be undertaken as part of Stage 2 of the study. Information on natural and human-made hazards is being collected as described in subsequent sections of this report.

GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study
Draft Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints
Working Paper Update
June 2015

2.1.2 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Minister of Energy and Infrastructure released the final *Growth Plan* for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) in June 2006. The *Growth Plan* outlines a set of policies for managing growth and development, and guiding planning decisions in the GGH to 2031 with populations and employment projections extended to 2041 through Amendment #2 (May 29, 2013). Municipalities within the Study Area have recently completed planning exercises to ensure that their Official Plans conform to the *Growth Plan* with respect to growth management.

In the *Growth Plan*, Section 3.2.2.3 policies relate to the “development, optimization, and/or expansion of new or existing transportation corridors”. It states that government bodies will:

- Ensure that corridors are identified and protected to meet current and projected needs for various travel nodes;
- Support opportunities for multi-modal use where feasible, in particular prioritizing transit and goods movement needs over those of single occupant vehicles;
- Consider increased opportunities for moving people and moving goods by rail, where appropriate;
- Consider separation of modes within corridors, where appropriate; and
- For goods movement corridors, provide for linkages to planned or existing intermodal opportunities where feasible.

The May 29, 2013, Amendment #2 to the *Growth Plan* revised the 2031 population and employment projections and extended the projections to 2041. **Table 2-1** summarizes those projections as they apply to the Study Area and the entire GGH area.

The revised 2031 population projections (2031B) increased the forecasted populations of York, Peel and Halton Regions by 260,000 persons and increase the employment forecasts by 20,000 jobs.

The *Growth Plan* identifies proposed transportation infrastructure intended to move people and goods efficiently within and through the GGH. These plans are conceptual in nature and need to be supported through appropriate studies, such as this study (e.g. the *Growth Plan* shows a conceptual Future Transportation Corridor from Highway 400 in the east, north of Highways 401 and 407, to Guelph in the west. This Future Transportation Corridor conceptually reflects the Study Area for the GTA West Study and as identified during Stage 1).

GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study
Draft Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints
Working Paper Update
June 2015

Table 2-1 Distribution of Population and Employment for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2041 (Figures in 000s)

	POPULATION	EMPLOYMENT	UPDATED FORECASTS					
			POPULATION			EMPLOYMENT		
			2031A	2031A	2031B	2036	2041	2031B
Region of Durham	960	350	970	1,080	1,190	360	390	430
Region of York	1,500	780	1,590	1,700	1,790	790	840	900
City of Toronto	3,080	1,640	3,190	3,300	3,400	1,660	1,680	1,720
Region of Peel	1,640	870	1,770	1,870	1,970	880	920	970
Region of Halton	780	390	820	910	1,000	390	430	470
GTAH TOTAL*	8,620	4,330	9,010	9,590	10,130	4,380	4,580	4,820
TOTAL GGH*	11,500	5,560	11,950	12,740	13,480	5,650	5,930	6,270

Note: Numbers rounded off to nearest 10,000 for GTAH municipalities, GTAH Total

*Total may not add up due to rounding.

Source: Amendment 2 to the Growth Plan for the GGH

This broad based plan represents a planning “vision” for the Province. As part of the vision, the *Growth Plan* outlines a strategy for “Where and How to Grow”, “Infrastructure to Support Growth”, “Protecting What is Valuable”, and “Implementation”. The *Growth Plan* indicates that planning decisions made by the Province, municipalities, and other authorities would have to conform to its policies. Municipalities must conform to the *Growth Plan*.

The *Growth Plan* identifies the need to consider solutions to the significant transportation deficiencies in the GGH area. The consideration of alternatives and the implementation of individual infrastructure solutions need to be examined within the framework of the Ontario *Environmental Assessment Act* and as described in the approved EA ToR for this study. **Exhibit 2-1** illustrates Schedule 2 from the *Growth Plan* which identifies the future transportation corridors.

GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study
Draft Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints
Working Paper Update
 June 2015

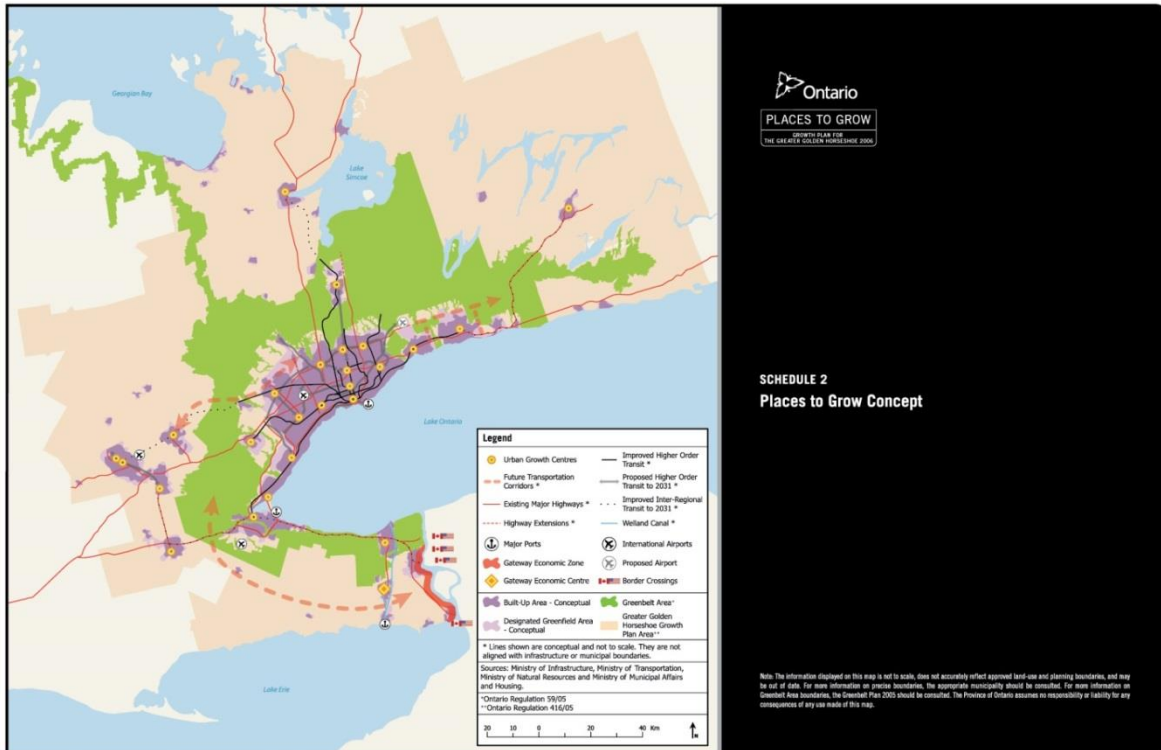


Exhibit 2-1 Schedule 2 - Places to Grow Concept

2.1.3 Greenbelt Plan

The *Greenbelt Plan*, introduced in 2005, provides direction on where urbanization should and should not occur in southern Ontario. The *Greenbelt Plan* covers a large tract of land within the Study Area. **Exhibit 2-2** illustrates the Greenbelt in the GGH.

The goals of the Infrastructure and Natural Resources policies of the plan are to support infrastructure that is consistent with the aim of the *Greenbelt Plan* and *Growth Plan*, while seeking to minimize the impact on the environment. Infrastructure policies allow for the planning of new or expanded infrastructure provided that it serves the expected growth in southern Ontario by creating connections between Urban Growth Centres. Policies further state that the location, construction, and maintenance of the proposed infrastructure shall minimize impacts on the environment wherever possible. Similar to the PPS, lot creation is not generally permitted in rural areas, but may be allowed in order to acquire land for public infrastructure purposes.

In February 2008, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) released a document entitled, *Growing the Greenbelt*. Working in partnership with other provincial ministries, draft criteria was developed to consider municipal requests to grow the Greenbelt. MMAH sought input on the proposed

GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study
Draft Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints
Working Paper Update
June 2015

criteria in spring 2008, and the final document was released in August 2008. Additional information on *Growing the Greenbelt* may be obtained at www.greenbelt.ontario.ca.

Environmental features of the *Greenbelt Plan* are described in greater detail in **Section 3.0**.



Source: Schedule 1 – Greenbelt Plan Area, Greenbelt Plan, 2005

Exhibit 2-2 Greenbelt Plan Area

Ontario Endangered Species Act Ontario contains over 200 flora and fauna species that are At Risk. Ontario's *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) (2007) provides protection for provincial Species at Risk (SAR) and their habitats. Species are classified into one of four levels of risk (Extirpated, Endangered, Threatened, Special Concern) through science-based assessment via the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO); classification is based on best-available science and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge. Species classified as Threatened or Endangered on the Species at Risk in Ontario (SARO) list are afforded protection under the ESA. Protection for these species under the Act includes individuals of the species and their habitat.

GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study
Draft Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints
Working Paper Update
June 2015

Protection under the ESA, therefore prohibits the “killing, harming, harassing, possessing, buying, selling, trading, leasing or transporting species listed as threatened, endangered or extirpated”. The ESA also includes preparation of recovery strategies for species ranked as Threatened or Endangered, and management plans for those ranked as Special Concern.

The objectives of the ESA are as follows:

1. To provide for government regulation and permitting procedures for activities that would otherwise be prohibited under the Act;
2. Recognize the importance of both species and habitat protection;
3. Recognize and incorporate community and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge;
4. Encourage and promote stewardship activities to help protect and recover species at risk;
and
5. Create greater accountability in government reporting requirements.

Species and their habitats are protected under the ESA by restrictions on activities that may affect these flora or fauna and their habitats. Where a proposed activity will impact protected species or habitat, changes to timing, location and methods of the proposed activity should be considered, wherever feasible, to avoid impacts to SAR. Where impacts cannot be avoided or mitigated, a permit process can be entered into. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) may grant a permit, or other authorization, for activities that would otherwise not be allowable under the Act. Several permit types are available to the MNRF, depending on the nature of the proposed work and may include conditions for the activity to meet which aid in the protection or recovery of the targeted SAR.

2.1.4 Environmental Protection Requirements

Over 60 federal and provincial statutes, regulations and formal policies have been identified as applicable to the environmental aspects of transportation planning and highway design, construction, operation, and maintenance activities. Some of these statutes supporting regulations and/or formal policy have overlapping or complimentary requirements. To clarify its legislative obligations, the MTO reviewed and synthesized the statutes and the supporting and formal policies, interpreted how each is applied to the transportation planning and highway design, construction, operation and maintenance activities, and developed concise statements called “Environmental Protection Requirements”. The Environmental Protection Requirements were developed by the MTO in consultation with various agencies mandated with the statutes to ensure a common interpretation. The Environmental Protection Requirements can be found in MTO’s *Environmental Protection Requirements for Transportation Planning and Highway Design, Construction, Operation and Maintenance* (2014).

GTA West Transportation Corridor Planning and Environmental Assessment Study
Draft Overview of Environmental Conditions and Constraints
Working Paper Update
June 2015