



## CITY OF PORT COLBORNE

Municipal Offices  
66 Charlotte Street  
Port Colborne, Ontario  
L3K 3C8  
[www.portcolborne.ca](http://www.portcolborne.ca)

COMMUNITY & CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT, CLERK'S DIVISION

September 27, 2017

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative  
20 North Wacker Drive  
Suite 2700  
Chicago, IL 60606

Attention: David Ullrich, Executive Director and Co-Chair

Dear David Ullrich:

**Re: City of Thorold Resolution – Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative –  
Commitment to Publically Managed Water Service**

Please be advised that, at its meeting of September 25, 2017, the Council of The Corporation of the City of Port Colborne resolved as follows:

That the resolution received from the City of Thorold Re: Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative – Commitment to Publically Managed Water Service, be supported.

A copy of the above noted resolution is enclosed for your reference. Your favourable consideration of this matter is respectfully requested.

Sincerely,

Ashley Grigg  
City Clerk

ec: City of Thorold  
Local Area Members of Parliament  
Local Area Members of Provincial Parliament  
Niagara Region and Local Area Municipalities



September 8, 2017

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence  
Cities Initiative  
20 North Wacker Drive  
Suite 2700  
Chicago, IL 60606

Attention: David Ullrich, Executive Director and Co-Chair

Dear Mr. Ullrich:

Re: Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative - Commitment to Publically  
Managed Water Service

Please be advised Thorold City Council, at its September 5, 2017 meeting, adopted the following resolution:

Whereas, in 2010 the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution A/RES/292 declared safe and clean drinking water and sanitation a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights; and

Whereas, water services are essential to social and economic development; and

Whereas, access to water services is an essential right linked to individuals' security, to protect their belongings, both for public security and fire protection; and

Whereas, water is generally perceived as a common resource, vital to life and to human dignity; and

Whereas, water is not a commodity but a heritage worth protecting and cherishing; and

Whereas, one can observe a clear tendency to reestablish public management of water services where they had been previously privatized; and

...2

City of Port Colborne  
**RECEIVED**  
SEP 11 2017  
CORPORATE SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT

# Thorold

**RECEIVED BY  
COUNCIL**

SEP 25 2017

**A. GRIGG**  
CITY CLERK  
CITY OF PORT COLBORNE

---

City of Thorold

P.O. Box 1044, 3540 Schmon Parkway, Thorold, Ontario L2V 4A7

[www.thorold.com](http://www.thorold.com)

Tel: 905-227-8813

Commitment to Publically Managed Water Service

---

Whereas, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence cities invest a great deal of effort to create a culture of water and to promote it and they have the moral responsibility to ensure the long-term sustainability of the water resource; and

Whereas, providing water services is primarily the responsibility of local public authorities, and they are the closest to citizens; and

Whereas, municipalities are making important investments to maintain and upgrade their water infrastructure in the context of sustainable urban development; and

Whereas, public governance of water services is the best way to ensure long term planning along with direct and transparent management of essential infrastructure; and

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that as member cities of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative we commit to publically and sustainably manage our Great Lakes and St. Lawrence water resources; and

Be it finally resolved, that we will encourage municipalities to promote the public management of water services in order to deliver efficient and affordable water services that answer to all the needs of the community.

**CARRIED**

Yours truly,



Joanne Goulet  
Deputy City Clerk

JG:cd

ec: M. Dilwaria, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Thorold

V. Badawey, MP, Niagara Centre  
Local Area Municipalities



## Community Services

### Legislative Services

October 11, 2017  
File #120203

Sent via email: [Frank.Fabiano@niagararegion.ca](mailto:Frank.Fabiano@niagararegion.ca)

Frank Fabiano, Acting Regional Clerk  
Niagara Region  
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way  
P.O. Box 1042  
Thorold, ON L2V 4T7

Dear Mr. Fabiano:

**Re: Region to Continue to Financially Support Community Improvement Program (CIP)**

Please be advised the Municipal Council of the Town of Fort Erie at its meeting of October 10, 2017 passed the following resolution in response to a Motion brought forward:

**Whereas** the Town of Fort Erie supports the benefit that the Region of Niagara SNIP program has on downtown areas; and

**Whereas** the Town of Fort Erie is disappointed that the Region of Niagara has temporarily suspended funding due to an increase in volume of applications to the Community Improvement Program (CIP) payments for projects approved after August 4, 2017 as this program has been very successful in promoting downtown revitalization and has been matched by the Town of Fort Erie.

**Now therefore be it resolved,**

**That:** The Municipal Council of The Corporation of the Town of Fort Erie requests Niagara Regional Council to include funding in its 2018 budget for this program to continue throughout the end of 2018, and further

.../2

---

**Mailing Address:**

Office Hours 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Corporation of the Town of Fort Erie  
1 Municipal Centre Drive, Fort Erie ON L2A 2S6  
Phone: (905) 871-1600 FAX: (905) 871-4022

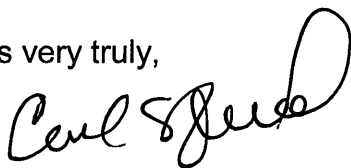
Web-site: [www.forterie.ca](http://www.forterie.ca)



**That:** The Clerk be directed to provide this resolution to area municipalities for support and the Region of Niagara. **(Carried)**

Trusting this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Schofield', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Carol Schofield, Dipl.M.A.  
Interim Manager, Legislative Services / Clerk  
[cschofield@forterie.ca](mailto:cschofield@forterie.ca)

CS:dlk

c.c. Niagara Local Area Municipalities *Sent via email*

**Administration**

Office of the Regional Clerk

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, PO Box 1042, Thorold, ON L2V 4T7

Telephone: 905-685-4225 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215 Fax: 905-687-4977

[www.niagararegion.ca](http://www.niagararegion.ca)

October 10, 2017

**CL 13-2017, October 5, 2017  
PEDC 7-2017, September 27, 2017  
Report PDS 37-2017**

**LOCAL AREA MUNICIPALITIES  
NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

**SENT ELECTRONICALLY**

Agricultural System for Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe  
**PDS 37-2017**

Regional Council, at its meeting of October 5, 2017, approved the following recommendation of its Planning and Economic Development Committee:

That Report PDS 37-2017, dated September 27, 2017, respecting Agricultural System for Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendations **BE APPROVED**:

1. That Regional Council **ENDORSE** the comments attached to Report PDS 37-2017 (Appendix I), which form the Region's feedback to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Implementation Procedures for the Agriculture System in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe; and
2. That a copy of this report **BE FORWARDED** to the local area municipalities and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

A copy of Report PDS 37-2017 is attached for your information.

Yours truly,



Frank Fabiano  
Acting Regional Clerk  
:amn

Encl.

CLK-C 2017-104

cc: E. Acs, Senior Planner  
N. Oakes, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, Planning and Development Services

---

**Subject:** Agricultural System for Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe

**Report to:** Planning and Economic Development Committee

**Report date:** Wednesday, September 27, 2017

---

## Recommendations

1. That Regional Council **ENDORSE** the comments attached to this report (Appendix I), which form the Region's feedback to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs *Implementation Procedures for the Agriculture System in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe*; and,
2. That a copy of this report **BE FORWARDED** to the local area municipalities and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

## Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement for comments prepared in response to the Province's consultation on the proposed Agricultural System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
- On July 6, 2017 the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) released the *Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe* through the Province's Environmental Registry. Comments are due to OMAFRA on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017;
- The proposed Agricultural System's identification of prime agricultural areas at a high level, for the most part, consistent with the Region's agricultural land base as mapped in the Regional Official Plan;
- There are mapping discrepancies between the local and Regional Official Plans and the proposed agricultural system mapping;
- The Province evaluated several characteristics to determine suitability for land to be included in the agriculture system mapping. Land in the Greenbelt was not reviewed as part of this evaluation;
- The Province's desired outcomes for the Agricultural System complement Regional Council's Strategic Priorities and are consistent with comments and requests made through the 2015-2017 Coordinated Plan Review.

## Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial considerations for the Corporation stemming from this report. The draft document for consultation aligns with policy changes in the 2017 Greenbelt Plan which Regional Council were involved in commenting on. If changes in the final version of the Agriculture System are significant, staff will update Council accordingly.

## Analysis

When the 2017 Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe were being developed, OMAFRA in conjunction with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs met with municipalities and agricultural stakeholders with the idea of developing the Agricultural System model in response to calls to increase agricultural viability and sustainability. Policies that discuss taking a systems approach to planning for agriculture were included in the 2017 versions of the Greenbelt and Growth Plans with the intention that OMAFRA would further develop and refine how this approach could be implemented.

In the context of Provincial Plans, an Agricultural System means *“the system mapped and issued by the Province, comprised of a group of inter-connected elements that collectively create a viable, thriving agricultural sector. It has two components:*

- a) An agricultural land base comprised of prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, and rural lands that together create a continuous, productive land base for agriculture; and*
- b) An agri-food network, which includes infrastructure, services and assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector.*

In the Niagara context, the agricultural system identifies the agricultural land base (similar to Schedule B in the Regional Official Plan), and identifies existing agri-food assets and clusters, for economic development purposes.

Additional areas have been added to the agricultural land base map based on a Provincially led Land Evaluation Area Review (LEAR) conducted as background for the proposed system. The LEAR did not evaluate land in the Greenbelt or Niagara Escarpment Plan areas.

The document released for consultation identifies the desired outcomes of the system and is aligned with requests made by the Region and member municipalities during the Coordinated Plan Review. The desired outcomes of the Agricultural System approach are identified as:

1. *Active planning for agriculture and rural economic development based on reliable mapping, data and tools*
2. *Improved viability of agriculture and growth of the agri-food sector*
3. *Better protection of the agricultural land base*
4. *Increased consistency and certainty across municipalities*
5. *Reinforcement of the synergies between agricultural, natural heritage and water systems, as outlined in provincial policy*
6. *Collaboration between the province, municipalities, farmers and businesses with a common interest in a strong agri-food sector.*

Through the work of Regional Council's Agricultural Policy and Action Committee, such as the development of Regional Official Plan amendment 6-2009 (Value Added Agriculture Policies) and the 2016 Niagara Region Agri-Food Strategy, combined with the Region's participation in the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, it is not expected that the implementation of the Agricultural System will require significant policy changes.

The attached comments to OMAFRA are primarily technical in nature and focus on the mapping of prime agricultural areas and identification of assets. While questions with respect to Agricultural Impact Assessments have been raised by staff, OMAFRA has indicated, on several occasions, that additional guidance on this will be released shortly.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

Council could choose not to endorse the attached comments. This option is not recommended as the issues raised for comment to OMAFRA are important.

### **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

This report and the attached comments offer a Niagara Region perspective on the proposed Agricultural System. This system is implemented through policies of the 2017 Greenbelt Plan, which the Region also participated in reviewing and commenting on. This report is linked to the focused project *Influencing Provincial Plans* under the *Fostering Innovation, Investment and Entrepreneurship* priority.



## Other Pertinent Reports

- PDS 27-2017 The Greenbelt Plan 2017

---

### Prepared by:

Erik Acs, MCIP, RPP  
Senior Planner  
Planning and Development Services

---

### Recommended by:

Rino Mostacci  
Commissioner  
Planning and Development Services

---

### Submitted by:

Carmelo D'Angelo, BSc, MPA  
Chief Administrative Officer

*This report was prepared in consultation with Greg Bowie, Planner, Kelly Provost, Economic Development Officer, and reviewed by Danielle De Fields, MCIP, RPP, Manager of Community Planning and Doug Giles, Director of Community and Long Range Planning.*

## Appendices

Appendix 1                      Niagara Region Comments: the Draft Agricultural System    Page 5

## EBR Posting 013-01968

### Niagara Region's Comments on the Draft Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe

As you are likely aware, the Region and its member municipalities have a strong history of agricultural planning. Through the work of Regional Council's Agriculture Policy and Action Committee and membership in the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, the Region is in a good position to implement the proposed agricultural system. That said there are a few areas where oversights and errors have been noted, mostly with respect to mapping:

1. The LEAR conducted by OMAFRA was done using a different spatial projection than what is used in Niagara; therefore, Prime Agricultural Areas identified by OMAFRA are not aligned with property boundaries and are on significant angles.

This issue was raised with OMAFRA prior to the consultation deadline. It was indicated by OMAFRA staff that this would be a technical modification that can be corrected at the time of a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). While this is not a significant issue, it is something that will have to be dealt with moving forward.

2. After posting the consultation document and portal, OMAFRA provided a Municipal Change Request Form that indicated it can be completed by municipalities to address:
  - a. *"Updates to municipal official plan settlement area boundaries and agricultural designations since 2015"*
  - b. *"Large areas, typically greater than 250 ha, that are designated for non-agricultural use(s)"*

However, the Region has identified several settlement area discrepancies below the 250ha threshold which pre-date 2015. Therefore, we have included a map illustrating these areas attached with these comments. The map highlights the data errors and includes a table with additional details.

3. The Region has numerous site specific policies that are not shown in Schedule B (Agricultural Land Base Map) of the Regional Official Plan, but rather are shown on mapping associated with individual amendments.

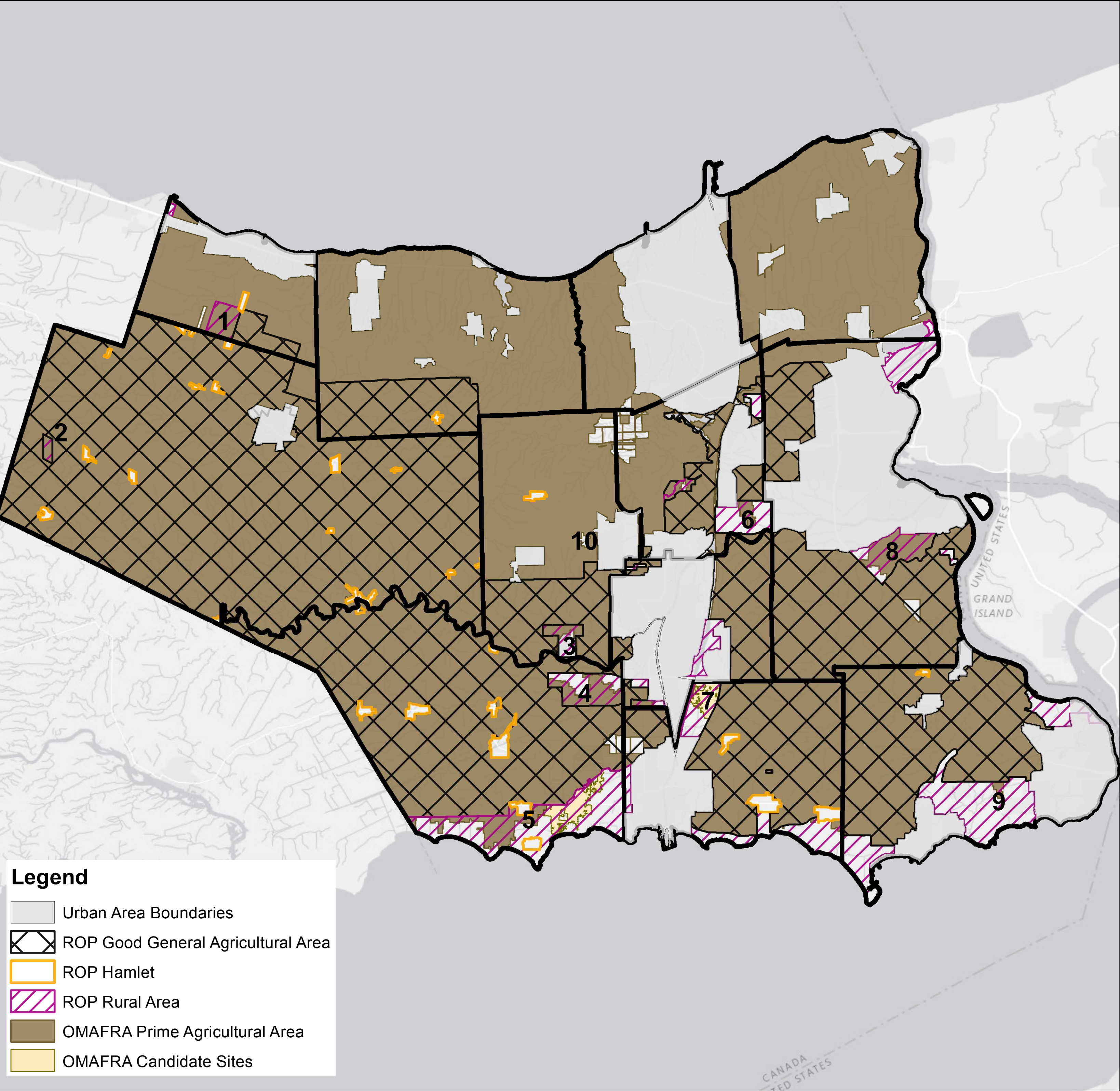
It is important that these existing site specific policies continue to be recognized, therefore, we have included Chapter 13 of the Niagara Region Official Plan for your review. As we are likely not the only municipality with site specific amendments for non-urban lands, the Region would suggest language be included to recognize existing uses which might not be possible to map.

4. The identification of agri-food assets in the draft Agricultural System Portal contains errors. The Winery layer for Niagara shows the correct location of wineries, but has the incorrect winery names associated with the locations shown, this should be corrected prior to finalization of the system. The Region has asset data that can be shared with the OMAFRA if needed.

The Region is hopeful these changes can be addressed prior to the release of the final Agricultural System. Staff is willing to assist OMAFRA with mapping refinements or provide data to address concerns.



# Niagara Region: OMAFRA Agricultural System Data Review



**Legend**

Urban Area Boundaries

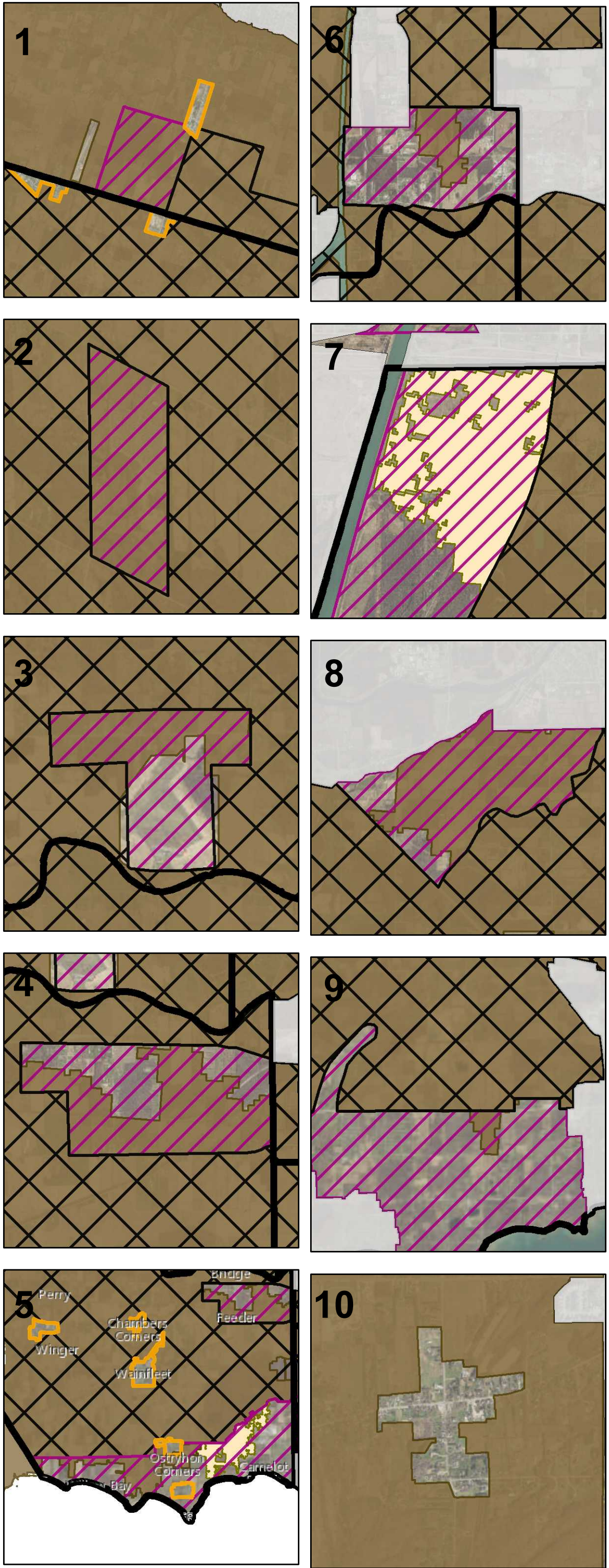
ROP Good General Agricultural Area

ROP Hamlet

ROP Rural Area

OMAFRA Prime Agricultural Area

OMAFRA Candidate Sites





Location #	Municipality	Comment	Recommended Update Process
1	Grimsby	Rural lands from the Region's Official Plan and the Town of Grimsby Official Plan have been rolled into the Agricultural system as Prime Agricultural. These lands should be removed now to remain consistent with the Regional and Local Official Plans.	EBR Commenting Process
2	West Lincoln	Rural lands from the Region's Official Plan and the Township of West Lincoln Official Plan have been rolled into the Agricultural system as Prime Agricultural. These lands should be removed now to remain consistent with the Regional and Local Official Plans.	EBR Commenting Process
3	Pelham	Rural industrial lands from the Region's Official Plan and the Town of Pelham Official Plan have been rolled into the Agricultural system as Prime Agricultural. These lands should be removed now to remain consistent with the Regional and Local Official Plans.	EBR Commenting Process
4	Wainfleet	Revisions were made by the Township of Wainfleet that are more current than the Region's Agricultural Land Base mapping, and therefore, changes should be made through the MCR process to ensure consistency between Township, Region and Province.	MCR
5	Wainfleet	Revisions were made by the Township of Wainfleet that are more current than the Region's Agricultural Land Base mapping, and therefore, changes should be made through the MCR process to ensure consistency between Township, Region and Province.	MCR
6	Thorold	Lands identified as Prime Agricultural through OMAFRA's LEAR process are actually rural employment lands in Niagara's Economic Gateway Zone and Centre.	EBR Commenting Process
7	Port Colborne	Lands identified as Candidate Sites through OMAFRA's LEAR process are actually rural employment lands in Niagara's Economic Gateway Zone and Centre.	EBR Commenting Process
8	Niagara Falls	Lands identified as Prime Agricultural through OMAFRA's LEAR process are currently designated Rural in the Niagara Region Official Plan and Good General Agricultural in the City of Niagara Falls Official Plan. These lands are part of Special Policy Area 8 in the Niagara Falls Official Plan, noting these lands are to be studied as a future urban growth area in the Region's MCR.	MCR
9	Fort Erie	A small area of rural lands from the Region's Official Plan and the Town of Fort Erie Official Plan has been rolled into the Agricultural system as Prime Agricultural. These lands should be reviewed and updated through the Region's Official Plan.	MCR
10	Pelham	Through the Coordinated Policy Plan review, the Region and Town of Pelham requested Ridgeville be recognized as an historic Hamlet. This was approved and a draft boundary was provided to MAH. That boundary is currently being represented in the draft Agricultural System from OMAFRA. The official boundary will be implemented through the Region's MCR.	MCR



**Administration**

Office of the Regional Clerk

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, PO Box 1042, Thorold, ON L2V 4T7

Telephone: 905-685-4225 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215 Fax: 905-687-4977

[www.niagararegion.ca](http://www.niagararegion.ca)

October 10, 2017

**CL 13-2017, October 5, 2017**  
**PEDC 7-2017, September 27, 2017**  
**Report PDS 36-2017**

**LOCAL AREA MUNICIPALITIES**  
**NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**  
**MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND FORESTRY**

**SENT ELECTRONICALLY**

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System Consultation  
**PDS 36-2017**

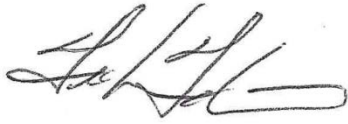
Regional Council, at its meeting of October 5, 2017, approved the following recommendation of its Planning and Economic Development Committee:

That Report PDS 36-2017, dated September 27, 2017, respecting Growth Plan Natural Heritage System Consultation, **BE RECEIVED** and the following recommendations **BE APPROVED**:

1. That Regional Council **ENDORSE** the comments attached to Report PDS 36-2017 (Appendix II), which form the Region's feedback to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's Development of the Proposed Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;
2. That the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry **BE REQUESTED** to directly inform each landowner when a change in designation or policy overlay of their land is proposed; and
3. That a copy of this report **BE FORWARDED** to the local area municipalities and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

A copy of Report PDS 36-2017 is attached for your information.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Fabiano', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Frank Fabiano  
Acting Regional Clerk  
:amn

Encl.

CLK-C 2017-104

cc: E. Acs, Senior Planner  
N. Oakes, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner, Planning and Development Services

---

**Subject:** Growth Plan Natural Heritage System Consultation

**Report to:** Planning and Economic Development Committee

**Report date:** Wednesday, September 27, 2017

---

## Recommendations

1. That Regional Council **ENDORSE** the comments attached to this report (Appendix II), which form the Region's feedback to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's *Development of the Proposed Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*; and,
2. That a copy of this report **BE FORWARDED** to the local area municipalities and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

## Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement for comments prepared in response to the Province's consultation on the proposed Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- On July 6, 2017 the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) released the *Development of the Proposed Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* through the Province's Environmental Registry. Comments are due to the MNRF on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.
- The comments in this report and appendices are high level due to the Province not providing sufficient mapping detail for analysis. Further, local municipalities in their submissions have identified site specific mapping concerns that demonstrate the requirement for more detail mapping to be provided.
- The proposed Natural Heritage System only applies to lands outside of existing settlement areas and does not include lands in the Greenbelt Plan area. This means non-urban lands in: Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Wainfleet, Welland, and non-Greenbelt lands in West Lincoln, Pelham, Thorold and Niagara Falls are captured.
- The proposed Natural Heritage System does not apply to existing urban areas. However, the proposed system would apply to settlement area expansions.
- The Greenbelt Natural Heritage System, initially released in 2005, and updated in 2017 remains separate and is not the subject of this consultation.
- Implementation of the Natural Heritage System would be undertaken through the Region's new Official Plan, and is required by the Province to be in place by 2021.

## Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial considerations for the Corporation stemming from this report. When the final Natural Heritage System has been established, and the true impacts are understood staff will update Council accordingly.

## Analysis

During the Coordinated Policy Review, which recently concluded with the release of the 2017 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2017 Greenbelt Plan and 2017 Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Growth Plan was updated to include new language surrounding the development of Natural Heritage System Mapping (Section 4.2.2, 2017 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe).

As defined by the Province of Ontario in the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement, a Natural Heritage System means *“a system made up of natural heritage features and areas, and linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species and ecosystems. These systems can include natural heritage features and areas, federal and provincial parks and conservation reserves, other natural heritage features, lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, areas that support hydrologic functions and working landscapes that enable ecological functions to continue...”*<sup>1</sup>

While a similar Natural Heritage System was established for the Greenbelt Plan area in 2005, that system did not extend beyond the Greenbelt Plan boundary. The proposed Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan area aims to build off of the established Greenbelt system, through similar policy approaches and aligned mapping, however, the methodology used to develop the proposed system is significantly different resulting in more intensive Natural Heritage System identification.

There is no disputing the importance of protecting natural heritage features, however, the Province's approach to identifying a Natural Heritage System for the non-urban areas of the Growth Plan is at odds with other Provincial Planning documents, such as the Growth Plan's conceptual identification of the Gateway Economic Zone in Niagara; most notably along the QEW Corridor between Niagara Falls and Fort Erie. The use of smaller size core areas, and computer generated linkages impacts Niagara's ability to fully realize the potential of the Gateway Economic Zone, and it undermines agricultural production by impacting how land can be used.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=10463>

Staff have prepared detailed comments in response to the MNRF's consultation (Appendix I) which focus on:

- Mapping of the Natural Heritage System for the Gateway Economic Zone;
- In a question and answer webinar with the MNRF, it was clearly indicated that any adjustments (after approval) of the NHS can only be minor in nature and must be based on NHS methodology (aerial system approach that doesn't focus on value of features);
- Core and linkage methodology which is not consistent with the approach use for Greenbelt Plan mapping;
- Proposed reduced minimum core area size, resulting in higher numbers of core areas and linkages
- Data sources used to identify natural heritage features, including the use of Agriculture and Agrifood Canada data to detect fallow agricultural land and designate it as Core Natural Heritage; and
- Transparency of the consultation process, including review times and not releasing detailed mapping for review.

The following recommendations have been made to the Province related to the topics outlined above. For additional details on each component and recommendation please see Appendix II.

	Component	Recommendation
1	Gateway Economic Zone	<p>The Niagara Region recommends that the Gateway Economic Zone be excluded from the Proposed Regional Natural Heritage System mapping.</p> <p>The Region also requests that the methodology for the NHS be updated to indicate that settlement areas and the Gateway Economic Zone are excluded from the system.</p>
2	Criteria for developing the Proposed NHS	The MNRF should develop a consistent practical methodology which can be applied across all 4 Provincial Plan areas.



3	Core Area Composition: Public Lands	Only public lands with existing natural features should be included in the core area criteria.
4	Core Area Composition: 50% Natural Cover	Based on a review of the core areas from the MNR Technical Report, it appears the target of 50% natural cover and 100 ha size includes a significant amount of Niagara's prime agricultural areas. While the Growth Plan does make certain exemptions for agricultural properties and uses, the proposed methodology should be refined to omit agricultural property with no significant natural heritage features.
5	Core Area Size	<p>The concept of using 100ha as a minimum core size, when the MNRF's own information supports the establishment of larger core areas is contradictory.</p> <p>The 1000ha core area, reduced to 500ha to address fragmentation should not be further reduced to 100ha.</p> <p>The Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan area should be developed consistent with the Greenbelt Plan area using a 500ha minimum core size.</p>
6	Core Area Holes	The concept of "holes" should be revisited in the MNRF methodology and either be eliminated or rethought.
7	Linkage Methodology	<p>A more robust methodology needs to be used to identify the location, length and width of linkages.</p> <p>The Province should provide guidance on identifying linkages but allow for Regional municipalities and Conservation Authorities to work together to identify linkages that are more appropriate given local context and scale.</p>

		Each linkage identified by the MNRF should be thoroughly reviewed to ensure it can function as a linkage and does not inadvertently impact rural lands for the sake of a mathematical exercise.
8	Data Sources	<p>The Province should allow municipalities flexibility, where more accurate data sources are available, to reproduce the same analysis but refined with local datasets and knowledge.</p> <p>The scale and accuracy of the SOLARIS dataset may be appropriate at a Provincial level, but alternative datasets should be used where available to ensure accuracy in the analysis and allow for local refinements.</p>
9	Refinements	<p>The NHS methodology should include specific direction on what constitutes refinements and how this can be done through an MCR.</p> <p>Refinements should be allowed in all aspects of the system where said refinements can improve the system and quality of features within it.</p>
10	UAB Expansions	<p>The Province must provide greater clarity on implementing the Regional Natural Heritage System within newly expanded settlement areas.</p> <p>Details should be provided specific to when the NHS becomes part of the settlement area, including how components of the system (beyond features) are maintained or enhanced.</p>

## Alternatives Reviewed

Council could choose not to endorse the attached comments. This option is not recommended as the issues raised for comment to the MNRF could have significant impacts for Niagara.

## Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report and the attached comments offer a unique Niagara Region perspective on the proposed development of a Natural Heritage System for a significant portion of the region. This system is implemented through policies of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which the Region also participated in reviewing and commenting on. This report is linked to the focused project *Influencing Provincial Plans* under the *Fostering Innovation, Investment and Entrepreneurship* priority.

## Other Pertinent Reports

- PDS 28-2017 Understanding the 2017 Provincial Growth Plan, June 21, 2017

---

### Prepared by:

Erik Acs, MCIP, RPP  
Senior Planner  
Planning and Development Services

---

### Recommended by:

Rino Mostacci, MCIP, RPP  
Commissioner  
Planning and Development Services

---

### Submitted by:

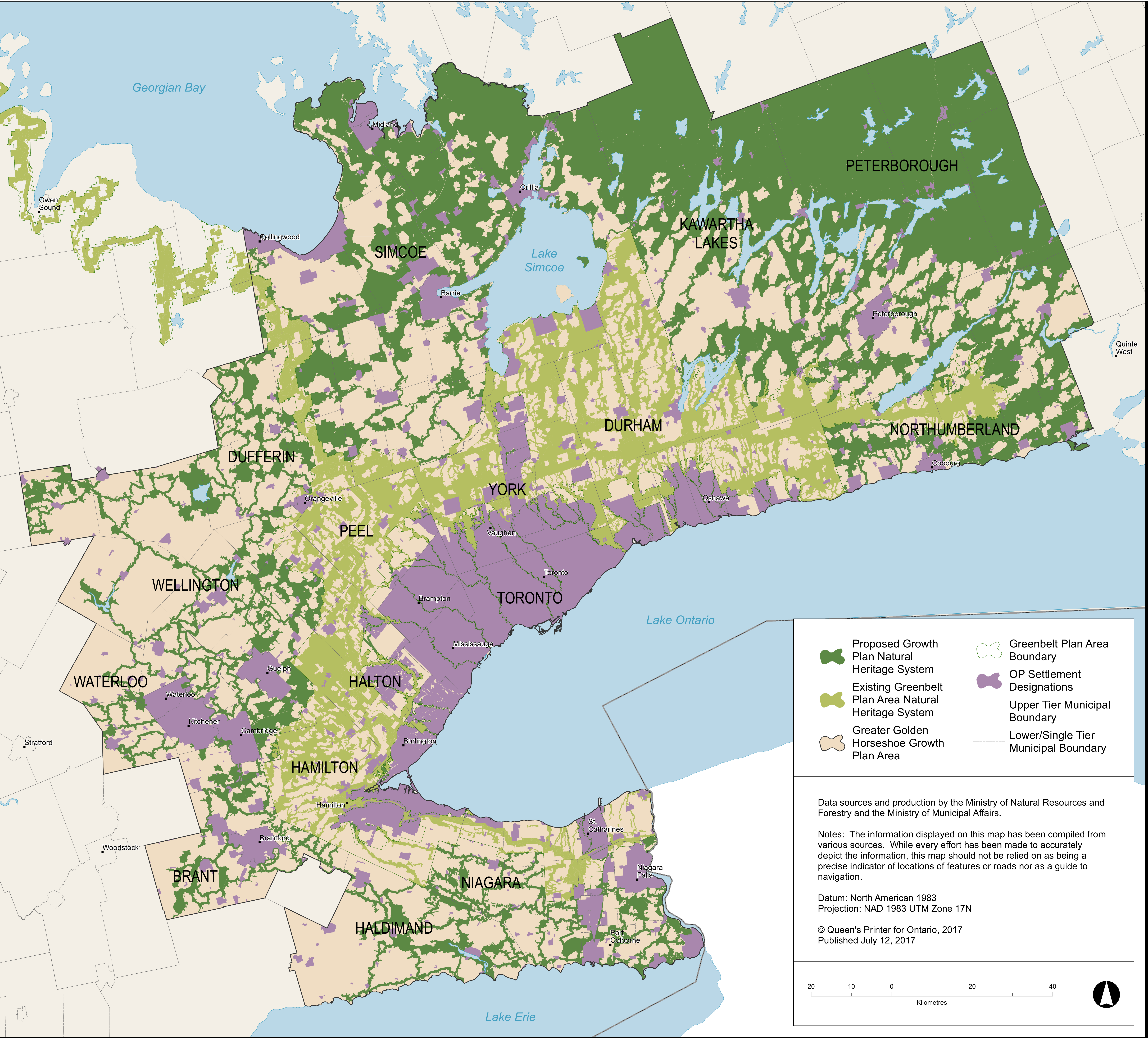
Carmelo D'Angelo, BSc, MPA  
Chief Administrative Officer

*This report was prepared in consultation with Greg Bowie, Planner, Dave Heyworth MCIP, RPP, Official Plan Policy Consultant and reviewed by Danielle De Fields, MCIP, RPP, Manager Community Planning and Doug Giles, Director Community and Long Range Planning .*

## Appendices

Appendix I	Proposed Regional Natural Heritage System Map	Page 7
Appendix II	Niagara Region's Comments to the MNRF	Page 8





**PLACES TO GROW**  
GROWTH PLAN FOR THE  
GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE, 2017

**Proposed Regional  
Natural Heritage System**

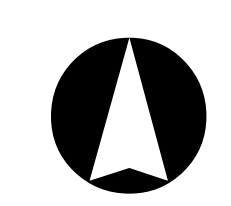
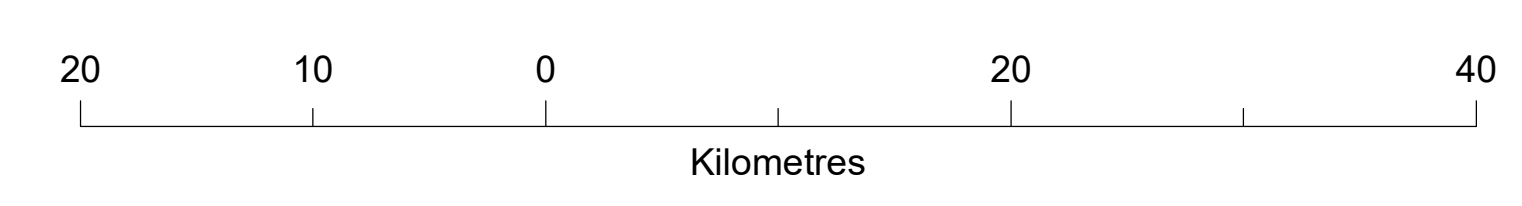
- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Proposed Growth Plan Natural Heritage System         | Greenbelt Plan Area Boundary         |
| Existing Greenbelt Plan Area Natural Heritage System | OP Settlement Designations           |
| Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan Area            | Upper Tier Municipal Boundary        |
|  | Lower/Single Tier Municipal Boundary |

Data sources and production by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

Notes: The information displayed on this map has been compiled from various sources. While every effort has been made to accurately depict the information, this map should not be relied on as being a precise indicator of locations of features or roads nor as a guide to navigation.

Datum: North American 1983  
Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N

© Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2017  
Published July 12, 2017



Note: The information displayed on this map is not to scale, does not accurately reflect approved land-use and planning boundaries, and may be out of date. For more information on precise boundaries, the appropriate municipality should be consulted. For more information on Greenbelt Area boundaries, the Greenbelt Plan should be consulted. The Province of Ontario assumes no responsibility or liability for any consequences of any use made of this map.



## Niagara Region Comments: Proposed Regional Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

### 1. Gateway Economic Zone

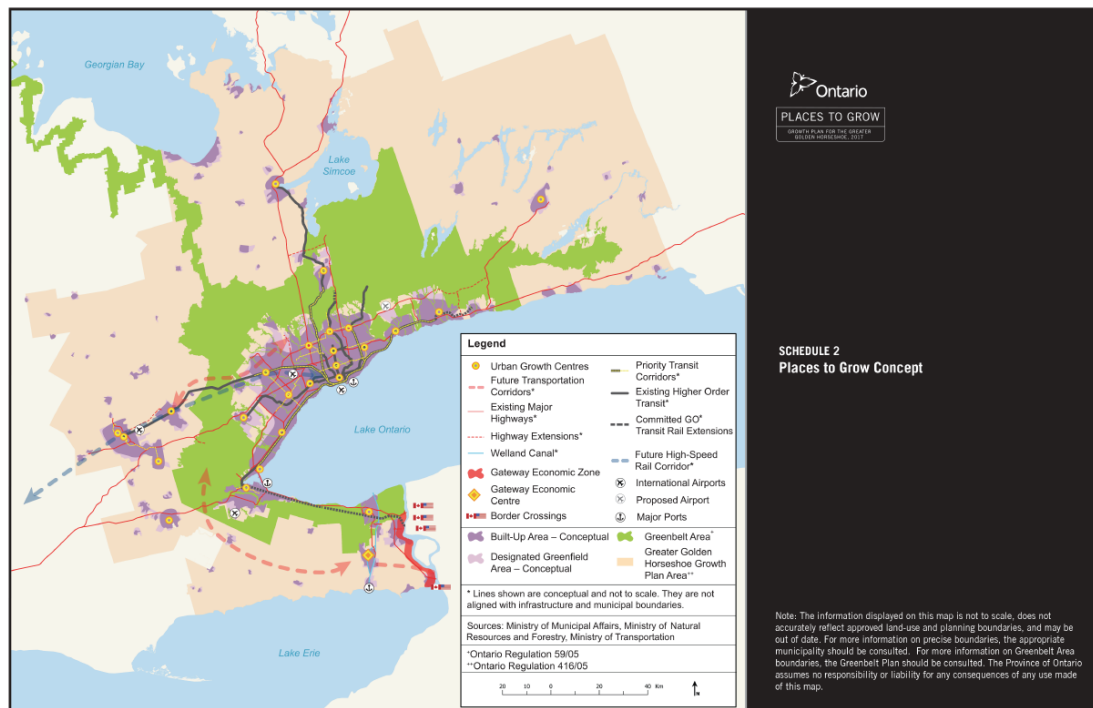
#### MNRF Proposes:

The mapping for the *Proposed Regional Natural Heritage System* does not include mapping within Official Plan settlement area, however, MNRF has mapped a natural heritage system for the conceptual Gateway Economic Zone shown along the QEW corridor between Niagara Falls and Fort Erie.

#### Niagara Region's Comments:

Presumably the mapping of the natural heritage system for the Gateway Economic Zone was done in error. References to the Gateway Economic Zone and policies related to its importance as an employment area and its roll in moving goods are woven throughout the 2017 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

*"In recognition of the importance of cross-border trade with the United States, this Plan recognizes a Gateway Economic Zone and Gateway Economic Centre near the Niagara-United States border. Planning and economic development in these areas will support economic diversity and promote increased opportunities for cross-border trade, movement of goods, and tourism." (2017 Growth Plan)*





The value of these lands for employment purposes was one of the primary reasons they were identified by the Province as the Gateway Economic Zone, and more recently as a Foreign Trade Zone. There are several approved employment generating developments, along the QEW corridor between the urban areas of Fort Erie and Niagara Falls that have not yet been realized. The NHS as proposed by the MNRF will require any settlement area expansions, including lands within the Gateway Economic Zone, to consider the NHS overlay. This will likely undermine the intent of the Gateway Economic Zone, as such it's imperative that the Natural Heritage System does not place an overlay on the Gateway Economic Zone that would restrict these developments, or future development of other surrounding lands as identified in Schedule 2 of the 2017 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Recommendation:

The Niagara Region recommends that the Gateway Economic Zone be excluded from the Proposed Regional Natural Heritage System mapping. The Region also requests that the methodology for the NHS be updated to indicate that settlement areas and the Gateway Economic Zone are excluded from the system.

## 2. Criteria for developing the Proposed NHS

MNRF Proposes:

The Natural Heritage Reference Manual provides guidance for developing NHS', but doesn't include criteria for sizing core and linkages. The manual notes that size thresholds should consider the landscape context, such as small core areas "where the landscape is highly fragmented and there is limited natural cover"

Niagara Region's Comments:

Section 5 of the proposed guideline document suggests that the development of the NHS was done following general principles such as:

- Well documented and clearly explained criteria, rationale and methods to be used
- Defendable and repeatable methodology is to be used

Based on the criteria for the Growth Plan NHS, there approach to developing NHS' across the Province is not consistent or easily explained. The methodology notes that core area sizes range from 1000ha minimum, to 500ha minimum in the greenbelt to the proposed 100ha minimum in the Growth Plan area. The application of criteria in a "landscape context" is subjective and opposes the goal of a repeatable methodology. The use of the phrase "highly fragmented" is not explained or defined and could be

understood to mean different things, all of which result in a different approach to developing a NHS.

Recommendation:

The MNRF should develop a consistent practical methodology and apply it equally across all 4 Provincial plan areas.

### 3. Core Area Composition: 50% Natural Cover

MNRF Proposes:

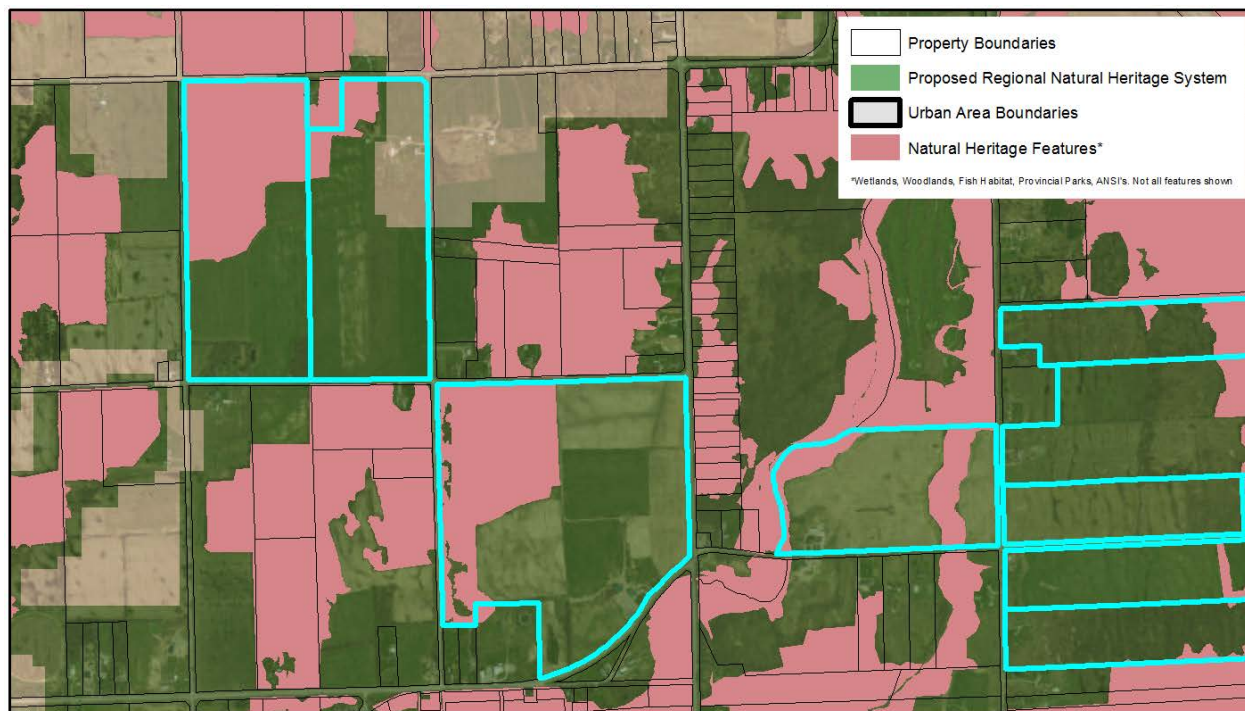
Core Areas are delineated by grouping together natural areas into a minimum core area that is between 1000 and 100 ha in size and 50% natural cover. All natural features in the SOLARIS dataset are summarized as being a natural area or not. Therefore, no natural features have greater weight than another.

Niagara Region's Comments:

Creating core areas with a minimum natural coverage of 50% means that these areas are a collection of natural areas as well as other land uses. In the case of Niagara, these areas can be 50% natural coverage and 50% agricultural. Where farmers previously had to undertake studies within a certain distance of a feature, they may now have their entire property identified as a component of the NHS.

Figure 1 shows the Natural Heritage System against actual features and farms. The properties highlighted in blue are being farmed, but have been lumped into the natural heritage system due to the location of natural features on and around the property. Some of these properties are largely free of natural features, but due to proximity, are being generalized into the system.

**Figure 1: Farm Properties Lumped into NHS**



For the natural features, the methodology suggests that grassland on the edge of a wetland are as important as the wetland itself and a 10 year old tree stand is as important as a 100-200 year old forest. Consideration should be given to the ecological function and value a feature plays, with connections of highly valuable features getting more weight than connections of less significant natural areas.

#### Recommendation:

Based on a review of the core areas from the MNR Technical Report, it appears the target of 50% natural cover and 100 ha size includes a significant amount of Niagara's prime agricultural areas. While the Growth Plan does make certain exemptions for agricultural properties and uses, the proposed methodology should be refined to omit agricultural property with no significant natural heritage features.

#### 4. Core Area Composition: Public Lands

##### MNRF Proposes:

The criteria and methods suggest that the inclusion of provincial public lands for core areas is appropriate because these lands could be composed of natural features or they could offer opportunities for restoration.

##### Niagara Region's Comments:

The inclusion of land based solely on ownership raises several concerns:

- Ownership of land doesn't automatically translate into ecological value, and may result in identifying core areas with little to no value, artificially increasing the amount of core area for the sake of metrics.
- Since each core area requires a linkage, public lands captured with little to no ecological value potentially alter the linkage routing between legitimate features, which could result not identifying features that should be protected.

Recommendation:

Only public lands with existing natural features should be included in the core area criteria.

## 5. Core Area Size

The Province asked: *"Do you agree that there should be consideration of smaller core areas to acknowledge highly fragmented area with limited natural cover"?*

MNRF Proposes:

Core areas for the Growth Plan were initially mapped with a 500ha minimum size – consistent with the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Plan. However this approach left large gaps in the Natural Heritage System within the Growth Plan area.

The degree of landscape fragmentation and amount of natural cover was assessed across the Growth Plan area to identify areas where smaller core areas should be applied. A minimum size of 100ha was used. "The lower minimum size threshold in these highly fragmented areas will enable to identification of habitat to fill gaps in the system where little natural habitat exists.

Niagara Region's Comments:

The technical background NHS document: *Development of the Proposed Regional Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Technical Report of Criteria, Rationale and Methods*, states

*"To help achieve objectives of the Natural Heritage System, it is better to have larger, rather than smaller core areas. Larger areas generally have a broader array of habitat types, support more species, are more likely to sustain populations and ecological functions over time, are more resilient to disturbance and usually have interior habitat that is less subject to edge effects" (MNRF, 2017).*

The document goes on to explain that a 1000ha minimum core area is used north of the Oak Ridges Moraine and east of the Niagara Escarpment, however, due to

fragmentation, a 500ha minimum core area was established for the Greenbelt Plan area.

In Niagara, the Specialty Crop lands of the Greenbelt Plan area are significantly more fragmented than the lands south of the Greenbelt which are subject to the proposed 100ha minimum core area.

Since the Province was not willing to share mapping for the Growth Plan area at the 500ha minimum core area, the degree to which “*gaps in the system where little natural habitat exists*” can’t be compared with the same mapping at the 100ha minimum core size. In Niagara, gaps in the system at the 500ha level are likely the result of the utilization of prime agricultural land for crop production. The Natural Heritage System criteria give no consideration for the ecological benefits of agricultural activities, yet the value of perennial and annual crops are well documented.

#### Recommendation

The concept of using 100ha as a minimum core size, when the MNRF’s own information supports the establishment of larger core areas is contradictory.

The 1000ha core area, reduced to 500ha to address fragmentation should not be further reduced to 100ha.

The Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan area should be developed consistent with the Greenbelt Plan area using a 500ha minimum core size. Failing this, Niagara Region requests that the core area size for the Niagara Region be 500 hectares, consistent with the Greenbelt Plan NHS.

#### 6. Core Area Holes

##### MNRF Proposes:

When identifying Core Areas the Province has indicated holes in the natural cover smaller than 250 ha and without barriers were included in core areas.

##### Niagara Region’s Comments:

The methodology seems to presume that if a “hole” exists, it must be completely surrounded by natural features, which is not the case. As noted earlier, core areas only have to be 50% natural cover and therefore, it is possible that holes identified are free from any natural feature. Figure 2 shows a large area that is likely a core area hole being filled in. This area is not completely surrounded by natural features (pink areas) but has been brought into the core area.

**Figure 2: Large Parcels free from Natural Features Included in NHS as "Holes"**



#### Recommendation:

The concept of “holes” should be revisited in the MNRF methodology and either be eliminated or rethought. Since the MNRF did not provide data for the NHS or sufficient mapping to comment on, it is unclear where these “holes” are in Niagara and what the cumulative impact is.

### 7. Linkage Methodology

#### MNRF Proposes:

The Province has recommended an automated approach to identifying linkages between core areas within the GGH. Linkages are identified using a “least cost” spatial model, meaning linkages are created across the landscape based on cover type. Features that the Province deem to be more hospitable to natural features and creatures (such as agriculture and water features) are given a lower resistance score compared to features that are not conducive to migration of natural features and species (such as urban areas and highways). The model essentially draws a line from one core area to the next based on a path of least resistance. Each core area is given four linkages, and where core areas are particularly large, additional linkages may be added. Each linkage is applied a 250 meter buffer, making each linkage 500m in width.

#### Niagara Region's Comment:

The Province has automated the identification of linkages so that in principle, the process is “repeatable” and free from bias. While the automation lends itself well to replication, it invariably leads to the identification and protection of linkages that are conceptual at best.

Linking core areas needs to be done through a much more scientific process to ensure the linkage is healthy and can be enforced and protected. Simply maximizing the number of linkages per core area will not ensure the core areas are protected or mean the best or most correct linkages are even identified.

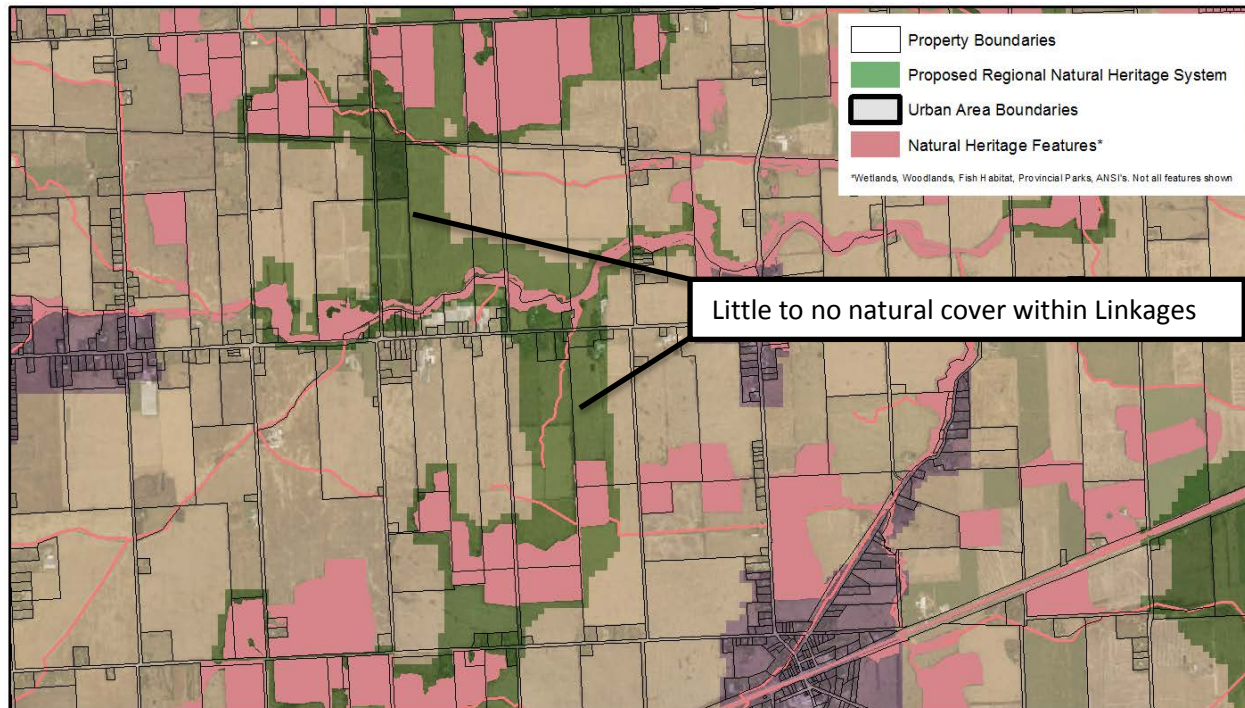
The minimum linkage width of 500 metres is substantial and should be reconsidered. Providing a consistent linkage width regardless of linkage length is contradictory to the Provinces Natural Heritage Resource Reference Manual – one of the guiding documents for the Proposed Natural Heritage System. Width should be determined based on the distance between core areas and the ecology of the areas.

Further to this, the Natural Heritage System Technical Background document analyzed 69 corridor widths ranging from 100m – 520m to in part, justify the selected Natural Heritage System corridor width of 500m. However, the width of the 69 corridors analyzed was determined based on a relationship with corridor length. The technical background document suggests that the 500m width is appropriate for a “landscape-scale system intended to conserve biodiversity”, yet linkage locations are not based on features, and in many cases there is limited to no biodiversity to protect.

Figure 3 provides an example where two linkages were identified across agricultural fields where little natural area is present. Because these areas are used for farming, they were deemed to be viable linkages and assigned the constant 500m width. These two links are now assumed, through the policy component of the Natural Heritage System, to become more naturalized and allow for the flow of species between core areas – despite have next to no features present at this time.



**Figure 3: Linkages with Minimal Existing Natural Features**



**Recommendation:**

A more realistic and scientific methodology needs to be used to identify the location, length and width of linkages. The Province should provide guidance on identifying linkages but allow for Regional municipalities and Conservation Authority to work together to validate linkages that are more appropriate given local context and scale.

Each linkage identified by the MNR should be thoroughly reviewed to ensure it can function as a linkage and does not inadvertently impact rural lands for the sake of a mathematical exercise.

**8. Data Sources**

**MNRF Proposes:**

The Province relies heavily on the Southern Ontario Land Resources Information System (SOLRIS) version 2.1 (2011). This dataset is raster based and contains a minimum cell size of 0.5 ha. Additional datasets include Ontario Hydro Network and Road Network (OHN and ORN), Where the Trees Are (WTTA) (2014) and Annual Crop Inventory data from the Federal Government. The identification of "natural areas" is mainly driven by the 2011 SOLARIS dataset.



Niagara Region's Comment:

The SOLARIS layer used by the Province is not nearly as accurate as other vector based data sources available to the Province. SOLARIS may be a product that is available across Ontario, but in municipalities such as Niagara, other (more accurate) sources exist.

Recommendation:

The Province should allow municipalities flexibility, where more accurate data sources are available, to reproduce the same analysis but refined with local datasets and knowledge. The scale and accuracy of the SOLARIS dataset may be appropriate at a Provincial level, but alternative datasets should be used where available to ensure accuracy in the analysis and allow for local refinements.

## 9. Refinements

The Province Proposes:

The Natural Heritage System materials released for consultation do not provide any guidance with respect to municipal refinements. The 2017 *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (Section 4.2.2.5) indicates that upper and single tier municipalities may refine provincial mapping through an MCR.

MNRF provided some details through the public consultation process, noting that refinements may include expanding the system and minor changes that are consistent with the intent of the Growth Plan.

Niagara Region's Comment:

There does not appear to be any provisions that allow for refining the system based on local datasets that tend to be more detailed and accurate. The MNRF should allow municipalities that have access to more accurate mapping or previously completed systems work, an opportunity to refine the system to be as effective as possible.

Recommendation:

The NHS methodology should include specific direction on what constitutes refinements and how this can be done through an MCR.

Refinements should be allowed in all aspects of the system where said refinements can improve the system and quality of features within it.

## 10. Settlement Area Expansions

The Province Proposes:

The 2017 *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (Section 4.2.2.7) states:

*If a settlement area is expanded into the Natural Heritage System in accordance with the policies in subsection 2.2.8, the portion that is within the revised settlement area boundary will:*

- a. be designated in official plans;*
- b. no longer be subject to policy 4.2.2.3; and*
- c. continue to be protected in a manner that ensures that the connectivity between, and diversity and functions of, the natural heritage features and areas will be maintained, restored, or enhanced.*

### Niagara Region Comments

Based on the above policies, and lack of information in the NHS methodology it is unclear what happens within newly designated settlement areas. There are no identified study requirements associated with settlement expansions into the NHS. While the Growth Plan indicates that settlement expansions should “avoid if possible” the NHS, sufficient detail on the process and implementation are lacking.

### Recommendation:

The Province must provide greater clarity on implementing the Regional Natural Heritage System within newly expanded settlement areas where significant and detailed analysis will be undertaken.

Details should be provided specific to when the NHS becomes part of the settlement area, including how components of the system (beyond features) are maintained or enhanced.



# Township of Wainfleet

*"Wainfleet - find your country side!"*

October 5, 2017

Ashley Grigg, City Clerk  
City of Port Colborne  
66 Charlotte Street  
Port Colborne ON L3K 3C8

SENT VIA EMAIL  
[ashleygrigg@portcolborne.ca](mailto:ashleygrigg@portcolborne.ca)

**RE: Resolution of Support - Township of Georgian Bay Re: Invasive Plant Species**

Dear Ms. Grigg,

Please be advised that Council for the Township of Wainfleet at their regular meeting of Council held October 3, 2017 resolved as follows:

**Resolution No. C-276-2017**

**Moved By** Terry Gilmore  
**Seconded By** Ted Hessels

"**THAT** Correspondence item No. C-205-2017 received from the City of Port Colborne Re: Resolution of Support – Township of Georgian Bay Re: Invasive Plant Species be supported."

**Carried**

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Regards,

Meredith Ciuffetelli  
Deputy Clerk

cc: Area Municipalities



PORT COLBORNE

CITY OF PORT COLBORNE

Municipal Offices  
66 Charlotte Street  
Port Colborne, Ontario  
L3K 3C8  
www.portcolborne.ca

COMMUNITY & CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT, CLERK'S DIVISION

**Sent via E-mail**

kwynne.mpp@liberal.ola.org

September 13, 2017

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queens Park  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

Dear Premier:

**Re: Resolution of Support – Township of Georgian Bay Re: Invasive Plant Species**

Please be advised that, at its meeting of September 11, 2017, the Council of The Corporation of the City of Port Colborne resolved as follows:

That the resolution received from the Township of Georgian Bay Re: Invasive Plant Species, requesting the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Transportation work to eradicate invasive plant species on Provincially owned lands, be supported.

A copy of the above noted resolution is enclosed for your reference. Your favourable consideration of this matter is respectfully requested.

Sincerely,

Ashley Grigg  
City Clerk

ec: Township of Georgian Bay  
The Honourable Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Natural Resources  
The Honourable Chris Ballard, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change  
The Honourable Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation  
Local Area Members of Parliament  
Local Area Members of Provincial Parliament  
Niagara Region and Local Area Municipalities

C- 217 -2017

**THE TOWNSHIP OF GEORGIAN BAY**  
**Council Agenda**

DATE: 14 August 2017

	YEA	NAY
Councillor Bocek	_____	_____
Councillor Cooper	_____	_____
Councillor Douglas	_____	_____
Councillor Edwards	_____	_____
Councillor Kay	_____	_____
Councillor Wiancko	_____	_____
Mayor Braid	_____	_____

MOVED BY: K. Kay

SECONDED BY: [Signature]

DEFERRED \_\_\_\_\_ CARRIED ✓ DEFEATED \_\_\_\_\_ REFERRED \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS The Township of Georgian Bay has identified Invasive Plant Species that are a threat to our Natural Environment, our Eco-System and our Residents Health;  
AND WHEREAS The Township of Georgian Bay is working proactively with The District of Muskoka and many volunteer groups to hopefully eradicate these Invasive Plant Species;  
AND WHEREAS the cost to provide these local programs is rising each year;  
AND WHEREAS the identified plant species being Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Phragmites are currently found growing along Provincial Highways, namely Highway 400 in our Municipality and on Crown Lands;  
AND WHEREAS the seeds from these plants are migrating on to Municipal lands and Municipal Road Allowances as well as Privately Owned Lands;  
AND WHEREAS the fastest spreading Invasive plant is Phragmites which is currently eradicating Wetland Cattail fields which are a huge benefit to our eco-system;  
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Township of Georgian Bay requests the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and the Ministry of Transportation to work collaboratively to eradicate these invasive species on Provincially owned lands;  
AND THAT copies of this resolution be forwarded to all Ontario Municipalities asking for their support and copies be sent to our MPP Norm Miller, our MP Tony Clement and to our Premier Kathleen Wynne.

[Signature]  
MAYOR