



environmental  
defence  
INSPIRING CHANGE

Thursday June 19, 2014

Attention: Planning and Growth Management Committee  
Toronto City Hall, Committee Room 1  
100 Queen Street West, Toronto ON

Dear Chair and Members of Committee,

**Re: Greenbelt Urban River Valley Designation in Toronto Report**

Thank you for the opportunity to address you with regards to the report before you today. As one of Canada's most effective environmental action organizations, we work to challenge and inspire change in government, business and people to ensure a greener, healthier and more prosperous life for all.

Over the past number of years, we have worked to assist municipalities in Ontario who have an interest in connecting their natural heritage systems to the Greenbelt - especially through urban environments and urban river valley systems (URV). Most recently we have been working the Town of Oakville and the City of Mississauga on their urban river valley expansion processes.

We are encouraged by the City of Toronto's longstanding desire to move forward with inclusion of the Don, Humber and Etobicoke River Valley Systems into the larger Greenbelt Natural Heritage network.

The report before you outlines several options. Given our experience, we urge you to adopt the URV expansion model as the way forward to further protecting the City's the City's watersheds, a protection the Rouge watershed already enjoys.

We understand that staff has identified concerns around process and costs, however given our attendance at numerous municipal meetings with provincial staff the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) we know the following:

- ✓ MMAH have said they are keen to make the process work for Toronto
- ✓ MMAH is clear that there are low cost methodologies for delineating the Greenbelt boundaries in urban river valley contexts (including use of existing natural heritage system mapping)
- ✓ Extensive title search work is not required in most cases

- ✓ Through the URV designation the City would retain title, still have the flexibility to deal with infrastructure and other city related needs within river valley contexts
- ✓ Other municipalities are taking advantage of the opportunity is now to work with the province to add these lands efficiently and effectively to the larger Greenbelt
- ✓ URV are moving forward in other municipalities, and they have found ways to reduce the cost and administrative issues that staff has identified.

It is clear that the public cares deeply about the values offered by connecting to the Greenbelt – protection of the City’s watersheds starting in the Oak Ridges Moraine and flowing to Lake Ontario, protecting remaining farmland and access to local food, and feeling connecting to a larger sustainable natural heritage network across the GTA.

It is time to take advantage of the opportunities before you and we are happy to be of assistance in this matter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Erin Shapero

Program Manager – Land and Water  
Environmental Defence