

## **Our Plan Toronto: Draft Environment and Climate Change Official Plan Policy Updates**

Date: March 7, 2022

To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division

Wards: All

### **SUMMARY**

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This report presents draft environment and climate change policies for the purpose of public consultation as part of the Growth Plan conformity and Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) of the Official Plan. The draft policies presented are intended to bring the Official Plan in conformity with A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) (the "Growth Plan"); the Provincial Policy Statement (2020); the Greenbelt Plan (2017); and the Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement (2018). The draft policies also address City Council direction to support TransformTO recommendations for the Net Zero Strategy and the 2019 declaration of a Climate Emergency. The draft policies address the commitment to review additional Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) since the last Official Plan update (OPA 262) and input received from Our Plan TO consultations, which focused on protecting the environment and acting on climate change.

The City of Toronto has a strong legacy of introducing leading-edge policies to protect the natural environment and address climate change. Existing Official Plan policies include many examples of successful implementation related to environment and climate change action, and include: Green Roof By-law 2009; introducing and updating the Toronto Green Standard to require new development to meet sustainable performance measures; adding polices and requirements for green infrastructure, energy conservation and Energy Strategies in 2015; identifying and protecting 68 additional Environmentally Significant Areas; and in 2019 adding references to Council's declaration of the Climate Emergency.

For the purposes of the conformity exercise and the MCR, the City is substantially in conformity with the requirements for the climate change and conservation policies and only minor modifications are required to improve alignment and reflect Growth Plan language. Beyond Growth Plan conformity, the MCR provides an opportunity to enhance policy requirements and to clarify messaging in order to further advance climate resilience and mitigation. Outcomes of this update to the Official Plan's environment and climate change policies will support the City's declaration of a climate emergency and reflect Council-approved updates to TransformTO - Toronto's recently

updated Net Zero Strategy which outlines a pathway to achieve net zero emissions in Toronto by 2040.

This Official Plan update emphasizes achieving net zero emissions and climate adaptation and reliance. Protection and enhancement of the City's natural heritage system and water resource systems is a key element of climate adaptation and resilience. Proposed changes include new maps to identify the water resource systems, an update of Map 9 Natural Heritage System to include water resource features and to align with the Ravine and Natural Feature Protection bylaw regulated area and a new layer that identifies areas that contribute to resilience of the natural heritage system. Four new ESAs and additions to two existing ESAs are proposed for designation bringing the total number of ESAs to 90. A new Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW) are proposed to be added to Map 12b.

Further proposed changes include updating policy language to reference net zero emissions, embodied emissions from building materials, minimizing extraction and discharge of clean groundwater into the sewer system, reduce vulnerabilities to the potential impacts of climate change, integration of impacts of a changing climate into stormwater management plans. Language refinements have also been made to policies to reduce fossil fuel use and support the use of low carbon fuel sources throughout the plan. Revisions have been made to the Climate Emergency sidebar in Chapter 3 to reflect the Net Zero 2040 Strategy. Under Schedule 3, the Energy Strategy, required as part of a complete application, is proposed to be renamed 'Net Zero Emissions Strategy'. Policies are also updated to ensure conformity with provincial policies related to conservation objectives for solid waste and reuse of excess soil.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, recommends that:

1. Planning and Housing Committee authorize the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to use the draft Revisions to Official Plan Environment Policies, attached as Attachment 1 to this report (March 7, 2022) from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning as a basis for consultation and bring forward a Final Report by May 31, 2022.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The City Planning Division confirms that there are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year.

## EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

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The Official Plan provides a vision for the City grounded in principles that assure a successful and healthy future. A founding principle of the Official Plan is that Toronto's future must be diverse, inclusive and equitable. Official Plan policies addressing net zero emissions, climate adaptation and resilience will help prepare the city for the future. New development that is built to the highest standards and qualities with reduced energy, emissions and environmental impacts will result in a more affordable, resilient, sustainable and liveable city for all residents.

## DECISION HISTORY

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At its meeting on February 2, 2022 City Council approved the Our Plan Toronto: Update on Growth Plan Conformity and Municipal Comprehensive Review (Item PH30.6). This included a request made by Council to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to set an alternative timeframe by which the City of Toronto's Official Plan must conform to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This report can be accessed at: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.PH30.6>

At its meeting on December 15, 2021, City Council adopted TransformTO - Critical Steps for Net Zero by 2040 (Item IE26.16). This decision included a request for City Planning to continue to ensure the Official Plan, Zoning By-laws, planning policies, and various Planning guidelines support the recommendations in the Net Zero Strategy. This includes discouraging vehicle trips, enhancing building energy efficiency, reducing embedded carbon during construction, and to encourage active transportation and transit for short trips. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE26.16>

At its meeting on July 14, 2021, City Council adopted the Toronto Greens Standard, Version 4 (Item PH25.17). This decision directed City Planning to consider whether additional Official Plan policies are required to improve waste diversion from new development. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.PH25.17>

At its meeting on June 29, 2020, City Council approved the recommended approach and work plan for the Growth Plan Conformity and Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) - Work Plan (Item PH 14.4). <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ph/bgrd/backgroundfile-147670.pdf>

At its meeting of October 2, 2019 City Council adopted item MM10.3 - Declaring a Climate Emergency and Accelerating Toronto's Climate Action Plan. This motion was passed for the purpose of naming, framing and deepening the City's commitment to protect the economy, ecosystems and the community from climate change. The City Council decision can be found at: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.MM10.3>

At its meeting on July 12, 2016, City Council adopted Official Plan Amendment 346 (Item PG 13.4) to bring the Official Plan into conformity with the 2005 Greenbelt Plan. The proposed amendments identified the Greenbelt Protected Countryside and Urban River Valleys on Map 2 and in Chapter 2 of the Official Plan. Council approved Site and Area Specific Policies 135 and 141 to reflect Greenbelt Plan policies, including providing detailed direction about how natural and hydrologic features and functions should be protected. The City Council Decision can be found at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.PG13.4>

At its meeting on June 10, 2015 City Council adopted Official Plan Amendment 262 (Item PG 4.5). This included updated environmental policies to bring the Official Plan into conformity with the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement, including the designation of new Environmentally Significant Areas.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.PG4.5>

## COMMENTS

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### Background

In June 2020, City Council approved the work plan for the City-initiated Growth Plan Conformity and Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). This report covers updates and revisions to the Official Plan related to environment and climate change. The Planning Act requires that municipalities revise their Official Plan to ensure conformity with provincial plans, including the Growth Plan.

The City of Toronto has a strong legacy of introducing leading-edge policies to protect the natural environment and address climate change. Existing Official Plan policies include many examples of successful implementation related to environment and climate change action and include: introducing and updating the Toronto Green Standard to require new development to meet sustainable performance measures; adding polices and requirements for green infrastructure, energy conservation and Energy Strategies in 2015; identifying and protecting 68 additional Environmentally Significant Areas in 2015; and in 2019 adding references to Council's declaration of the Climate Emergency.

The Growth Plan requires municipalities to ensure Official Plan polices address a range of planning considerations to manage growth and protect what is valuable, including actions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate adaptation. These range from requirements for stormwater planning to address impacts of extreme weather and incorporate green infrastructure and low impact, to protecting natural heritage and water resource systems, to promoting polices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience.

Staff's review of the Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plan (2017) suggests that, for the purposes of the MCR, the City is substantially in conformity with the climate change, energy and air quality policies. Minor modifications to the Official Plan policies and additional mapping are required to improve alignment and reflect the language, terminology, and requirements of the Growth Plan.

Beyond Growth Plan conformity, the MCR provides an opportunity to enhance policy requirements and to clarify policy directions in order to further advance climate resilience and mitigation. Outcomes of this update to the Official Plan's environment and climate change policies will support of the City's declaration of a climate emergency and reflect Council-approved updates to TransformTO - Toronto's recently updated Net Zero Strategy which outlines a pathway to achieve net zero emissions in Toronto by 2040.

## **Summary of Draft Policy Changes**

This report presents draft Official Plan updates related to environment and climate change for the basis of consultation. The draft policies presented are intended to bring the Official Plan in conformity with the Growth Plan; the Provincial Policy Statement (2020); and the Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement (2018). The draft policies also address City Council direction to support TransformTO recommendations for the Net Zero Strategy and the 2019 declaration of a Climate Emergency. These proposed Official Plan updates also address the commitment to review additional Environmentally Significant Areas during last Official Plan update (OPA 262), and input received from Our Plan TO consultations.

A summary of key changes proposed to the Official Plan policies are highlighted below, organized within three key theme areas: natural heritage system and water resource systems, climate change, and solid waste. A comprehensive version of the draft updates for consultation can be found in Attachments 1 & 2. Attachment 2 illustrates the draft changes being proposed, compared with the Official Plan currently in force. Through Our Plan Toronto and the MCR, additional updates will be proposed to be made to the Official Plan as it relates to the intensification strategy, employment lands, and other policy matters. The draft Official Plan updates shown in Attachment 1 represent only the components of the MCR related to environment and climate change updates. Additional proposed updates to the Official Plan that relate to the intensification strategy, employment lands, and other policy matters will be address through subsequent staff reports.

These draft changes are intended to inform further upcoming discussions and consultations focused on environment and climate change related to proposed changes. It is anticipated that draft polices presented in this report will be refined and changed through this process of consultation.

## **Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems Proposed Updates**

Protection and enhancement of the City's natural heritage and water resource systems are key to climate adaptation and resilience. The systems support biodiversity, improve water quality, helps cool urban areas and provide many other ecosystem services both within and beyond the City's boundaries. The natural heritage system and water resource systems also support recreational activities that benefit public health, overall quality of life, and help to moderate the impacts of a changing climate.

## **Water Resource Systems**

Both the Growth Plan and the PPS require municipal Official Plans to identify and provide for the long term protection of the 'water resource systems'. The water resource systems consists of surface water features (including shoreline areas), ground water features and areas, and hydrologic functions. The features and functions of this system provides the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human water consumption. The water resource systems for the City of Toronto has been identified by the Toronto and Regional Conservation Authority (TRCA) and illustrated in two new maps that are proposed to be added to the Official Plan: Map 9B identifies key hydrologic features and Map 9C identifies key hydrologic areas (Attachment 3). Reference to the water resource systems has been added to the preamble to section 3.4 The Natural Environment and to policy wording in sections 2.1, 3.1.5 and 3.4 to help ensure the long term protection of the water resource systems.

### **Key Hydrologic Features (Map 9B)**

Key hydrologic features shown on Map 9B include: permanent and intermittent streams, wetlands, inland lakes and littoral zones and seepage areas and springs. The existing natural heritage system of the Official Plan already includes and protects most of the key hydrologic features. Other small identified areas which are not currently included are proposed to be added to the natural heritage system through amendments to Map 9A enabling the policies that protect the natural heritage system to also protect key hydrologic features. As with natural heritage features, the location of key hydrologic features and appropriate buffers will be required to be identified through a Natural Heritage Impact Statement in the development review process.

### **Key Hydrologic Areas (Map 9C)**

Key hydrologic areas shown on Map 9C include: highly vulnerable aquifers, environmentally significant ground water recharge areas, and significant groundwater recharge areas. Significant groundwater recharge areas are only found in the Rouge Valley and are protected through Site and Area Specific Policy 141. Highly vulnerable aquifers and environmentally significant groundwater recharge areas extend outside of the natural heritage system and into areas with a wide range of underlying land use permissions.

Ecologically significant groundwater recharge areas extend onto tableland areas with underlying development permissions. These areas are linked to highly groundwater dependent ecosystems through groundwater recharge. In order to help protect highly groundwater dependent ecosystems for the long term, a new policy has been added to policy 3.4.1 to encourage infiltration of water by maintaining pervious area and identifying opportunities to reduce pervious areas in ecologically significant groundwater recharge areas and in contributing areas.

Contributing areas are proposed to be added to Map 9A of the Official Plan. They are areas on the landscape which have been identified by TRCA which are important for ecological functions and which could be targeted for green infrastructure and low impact development implementation measures. A new policy is being added to support reducing the amount of road salt entering the environment.

## **Natural Heritage System**

Additions are proposed to policy 3.4.1 to support biodiversity, urban forest and natural features. A policy is proposed to minimize hazards for migratory birds, to support bird friendly build design.

Policy amendments are proposed to help preserve and enhance the urban forest including ensuring adequate soil volumes, protecting mature native and native trees, and supporting street trees to grow to maturity. A policy is proposed to be added to 3.4.1 to avoid or minimize infrastructure within valley lands and ravines, and appropriately sizing and locating crossings to protect natural features and maintain ecological connectivity.

The sidebar on Buffers has been updated to identify recommended buffer widths adjacent to natural features that are consistent with buffer widths identified in the TRCA's Living City policies. Buffer widths of not be less than 10 metres are proposed from the greatest extent of the limit of the natural hazards and natural feature, including the dripline of contiguous vegetation. In the case of wetlands, the proposed buffer widths should not be less than 30 metres.

Updates have been made to the Natural Heritage System and Inventory side bar to ensure consistency with other proposed changes to the plan and sidebars titled The Water Resource Systems, Historical Watercourses, and Watershed Planning are proposed to be added.

## **ESAs and Provincially Significant Wetlands (Maps 12A and 12B)**

Map 12A Environmentally Significant Areas is amended by adding four new ESAs and two additions to existing ESAs, bringing the total number of ESAs to 90. The areas proposed for designation were identified during the previous Five Year Review of the Official Plan and were subsequently investigated using the same methodology as with the ESAs that were added to the Official Plan in 2016.

Map 12B is being amended to include one additional Provincially Significant Wetland that was identified by the Province since the last review of the Official Plan.

## **Site and Area Specific Policy 141**

A new Map 3 is proposed to be added to Site and Area Specific Policy 141 in Chapter 7 of the Official Plan to identify the water resource systems in the Rouge Valley Area. Map 2 of SASP 141 will be modified to avoid duplication with the proposed Map 3 and the map reference in the footnote at the bottom of Table 1 of SASP 141 will be updated (Attachment 5). These changes address policy requirements in the Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan.

## **Net Zero and the Climate Emergency Proposed Updates**

Previous Official Plan Amendments (OPA 66 and 262) advanced Toronto's leadership in climate action through: enabling Toronto Green Standard sustainable performance measure requirements for new development; and addressing climate change and

requirements for green infrastructure, energy conservation and Energy Strategies. In 2019, OPA 456 added reference to Council's declaration of the Climate Emergency.

Through the Official Plan review, a focus has been placed on strengthening policies to put a stronger emphasis on greenhouse gas emissions reductions to achieve Toronto's newly adopted Net Zero 2040 climate change plan (Transform TO, December 2021), and to address Growth Plan requirements. This includes ensuring policy updates for infrastructure and stormwater management planning that takes into account the impacts of a changing climate and extreme weather events, and incorporates the use of green infrastructure and low impact development.

The draft Official Plan updates presented in this report include new references to net zero emissions goals with updates to policy language under Section 2.2 Centres, 3.3 Building New Neighbourhoods, and 5.2.1 Secondary Plans. Policy language is proposed to be added in Section 3.4 Natural Environment to address "embodied emissions" from building materials manufacturing and transport, and minimizing the extraction and discharge of clean groundwater into the sewer system, reduce vulnerabilities to the potential impacts of climate change and integrate impacts of a changing climate into stormwater management plans. Refinements have also been made to policies to reduce fossil fuel use and support the use of low carbon fuel sources throughout the plan. A new sidebar has been added to Chapter 3 to reflect the City's Declaration of a Climate Emergency and the Net Zero 2040 Strategy. Under Schedule 3, the Energy Strategy, is already required as part of a complete application, and is proposed to be renamed 'Net Zero Emissions Strategy'.

## **Solid Waste Proposed Updates**

Staff considered three key drivers to inform draft updates to the Official Plan related to Solid Waste: new Growth Plan policies; the Province's Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement (2018); and previous City Council recommendations.

The Growth Plan included updates to section 4.2.9 "A Culture of Conservation" requiring municipalities to integrate policies related to: promoting building conservation (including reuse and recycling of construction materials), and integrating best practices in excess soil management.

The Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement (2018) was brought forward under the *Ontario Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016*. This Policy Statement refined definitions related food and organic waste and included concepts related to a circular economy.

City Council, through the adoption of the Toronto Green Standard, Version 4 update, introduced a number of recommendations related to introducing Official Plan policies to improve waste diversion in new development. These included exploring policy updates that would encourage additional space allocation to facilitate waste reduction beyond green bin and blue bin programs.

Draft updates were made throughout the Official Plan to reflect the solid waste policy drivers noted above. Key updates include: the introduction of the concept of a circular



economy in the Official Plan; policies encouraging the designing in of space for additional waste streams, and construction waste recovery; and new policy addressing the utilization of best practices for management and reuse of excess soil.

## Consultation to Date

This update of the Official Plan's environment and climate change related policies have been part of a broader consultation on the MCR. Through the banner of Our Plan Toronto, staff have been implementing a virtual citywide engagement strategy. This engagement program was initiated in May 2021 with a series of targeted stakeholder meetings that continued throughout the summer and included a video to explain the process. The video can be accessed at this link: <https://youtu.be/-3ITFf1Oea8>. The Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report can be accessed [here](#).

The Phase 1 engagement and communications focused on launching, building awareness and talking about what a future ready Toronto looks like. A key theme emerged around protecting the environment and acting on climate change and identified specific challenges identified including:

- resilience to climate change;
- access to the ravine system and natural recreation areas for all;
- growth that conflicts with environmentally protected or sensitive areas;
- heat Island effect from increased urbanization;
- low-carbon development, need for incentives for green design; and
- overdevelopment leading to pollution and contaminant runoff to water bodies and groundwater.

The Phase 2 engagement took place between September and December 2021 and included two virtual town halls hosted on October 20, 2021 and a stakeholder meeting focused on Environment and Climate Change. It focused on building awareness and participation in meaningful discussions about planning priorities for Toronto 2051. The Phase 2 Engagement Summary can be accessed [here](#).

Two key themes emerged around the environment and climate change:

- prioritize climate change and apply climate change lens to all aspects of planning; and
- focus on achieving net zero, protecting and improving tree canopy and reducing impermeable surfaces.

Additional feedback has been received through the Official Plan Review's dedicated email account related to the environment and climate change updates. This has included detailed policy suggestions from stakeholders and members of the public. Feedback received to date has helped to inform the direction of these draft policies.

In addition, there is on-going consultation with a Community Leaders' Coalition, Indigenous Treaty Rights Holders and Organizations, and youth through an on-line exercise with the TDSB.

## **Engagement with Equity Deserving Groups**

Staff and the consultant team have initiated a Community Leaders' Coalition (CLC) comprised of representatives who are affiliated with community, advocacy, and Indigenous groups working in communities across the city. The CLC is intended to provide staff input on the challenges faced by marginalized communities within the city. To date, staff have hosted three meetings with the CLC. The organizations participating in the CLC can be accessed through [Item PH30.6](#).

## **Indigenous Engagement**

Staff and the consultant team have identified Indigenous Treaty Rights Holders and Organizations that staff will be engaging with over the course of the MCR. The focus on these engagement meetings have been centred on amplifying Indigenous voices into the engagement process, building and strengthening relationships with Indigenous groups, along with discussing ways in which Official Plan policies can achieve Reconciliation objectives. To date, staff have held five meetings with Indigenous Rights Holders and care-takers. The Treaty Rights Holders and Organizations to whom staff have reached out can be accessed through [Item PH30.6](#).

## **Youth Engagement**

Staff and the consultant team designed an online exercise that has been distributed to Grades 7-12 teachers within Toronto's school boards. This student exercise is intended to help youth better understand climate change and identify adaption measures found within their respective communities. The online student exercise was distributed to teachers in November 2021 and can be accessed at this link: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7b2c6d77bac64c3eb713f1af6d31cbff>.

These themes reflect and are consistent with the policy directions and policy amendments that are being brought forward as part of the proposed to the Official Plan amendment described in this report.

## **Next Steps**

The draft Official Plan updates presented in this report (Attachment 1) will be used for the basis of further consultation. In April, 2022, staff will undertake public engagement targeted on receiving feedback on these environment and climate change related updates. A combination of open house/public meetings will occur virtually, along with a facilitated stakeholder workshop and a meeting with the development industry. Staff will continue to engage with partner divisions and agencies as updates are considered

Following consultation, staff will report to Planning and Housing Committee on the outcomes of the consultation, and present a draft Official Plan Amendment for consideration.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Gregg Lintern, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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- Attachment 1: Recommended Policy Revisions Incorporated with the In-Force Official Plan
- Attachment 2: Recommended Policy Revisions Incorporated with the In-Force Official Plan Showing Differences
- Attachment 3: Revised and New Maps 9A, 9B, and 9C
- Attachment 4: Revised and New Maps 12A and 12B
- Attachment 5: Revised and New Maps 2 and 3 for SASP 141

## **Attachment 1: Recommended Policy Revisions Incorporated with the In-Force Official Plan**

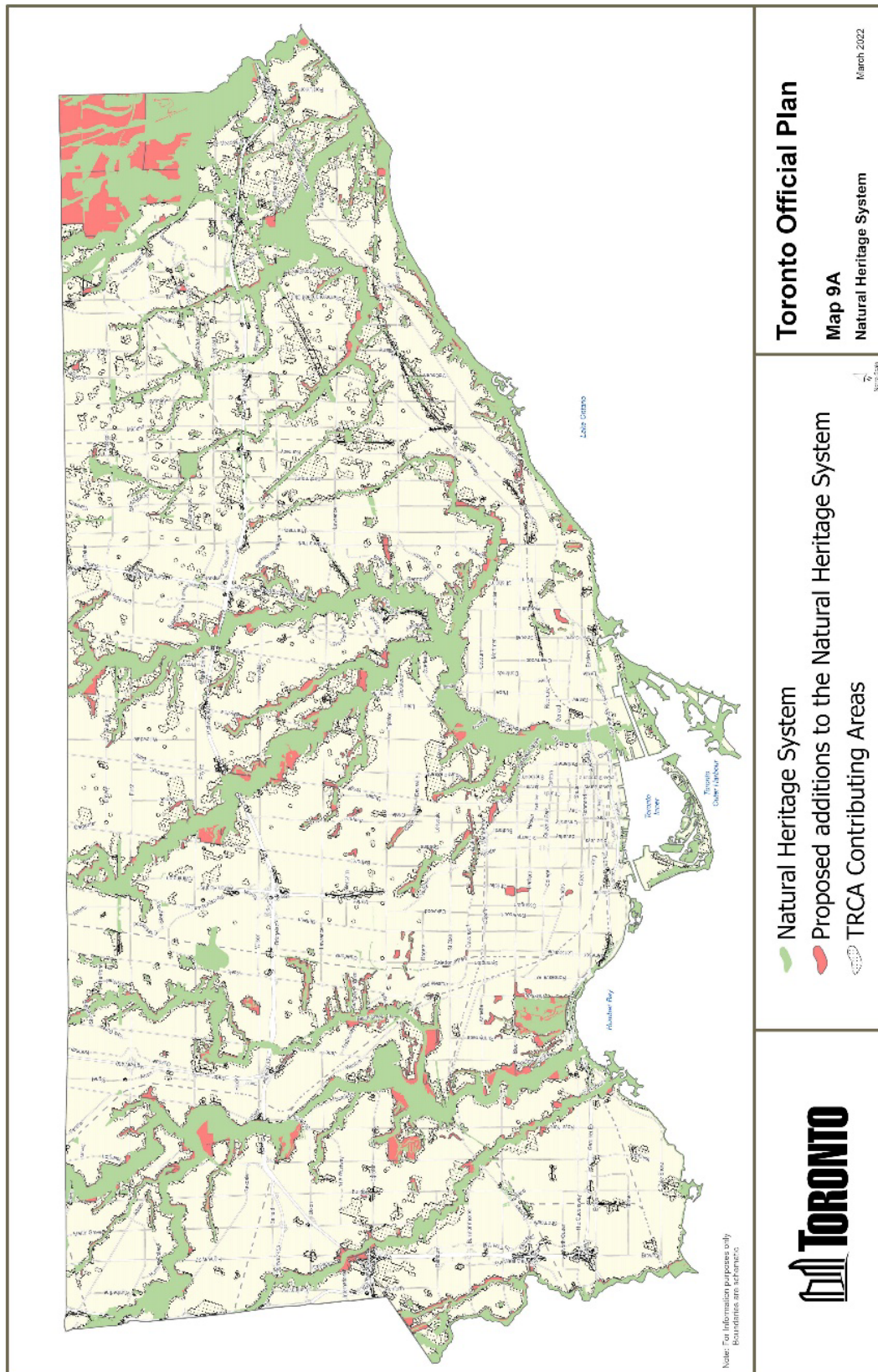
(Provided separately)

## **Attachment 2: Recommended Policy Revisions Incorporated with the In-Force Official Plan Showing Differences**

(Provided separately)

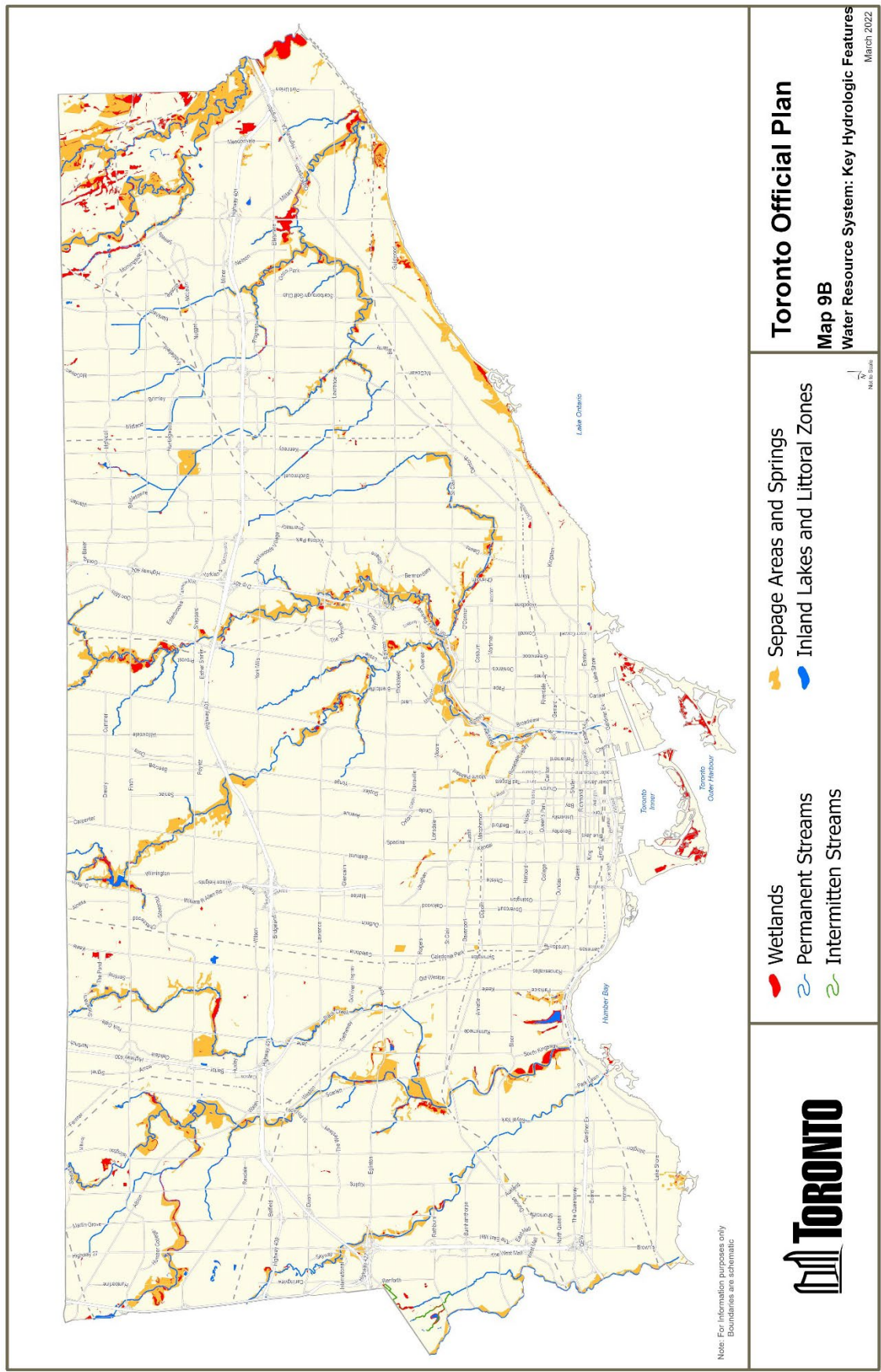
# Attachment 3: Revised and New Maps 9A, 9B, and 9C

## Map 9A Natural Heritage System

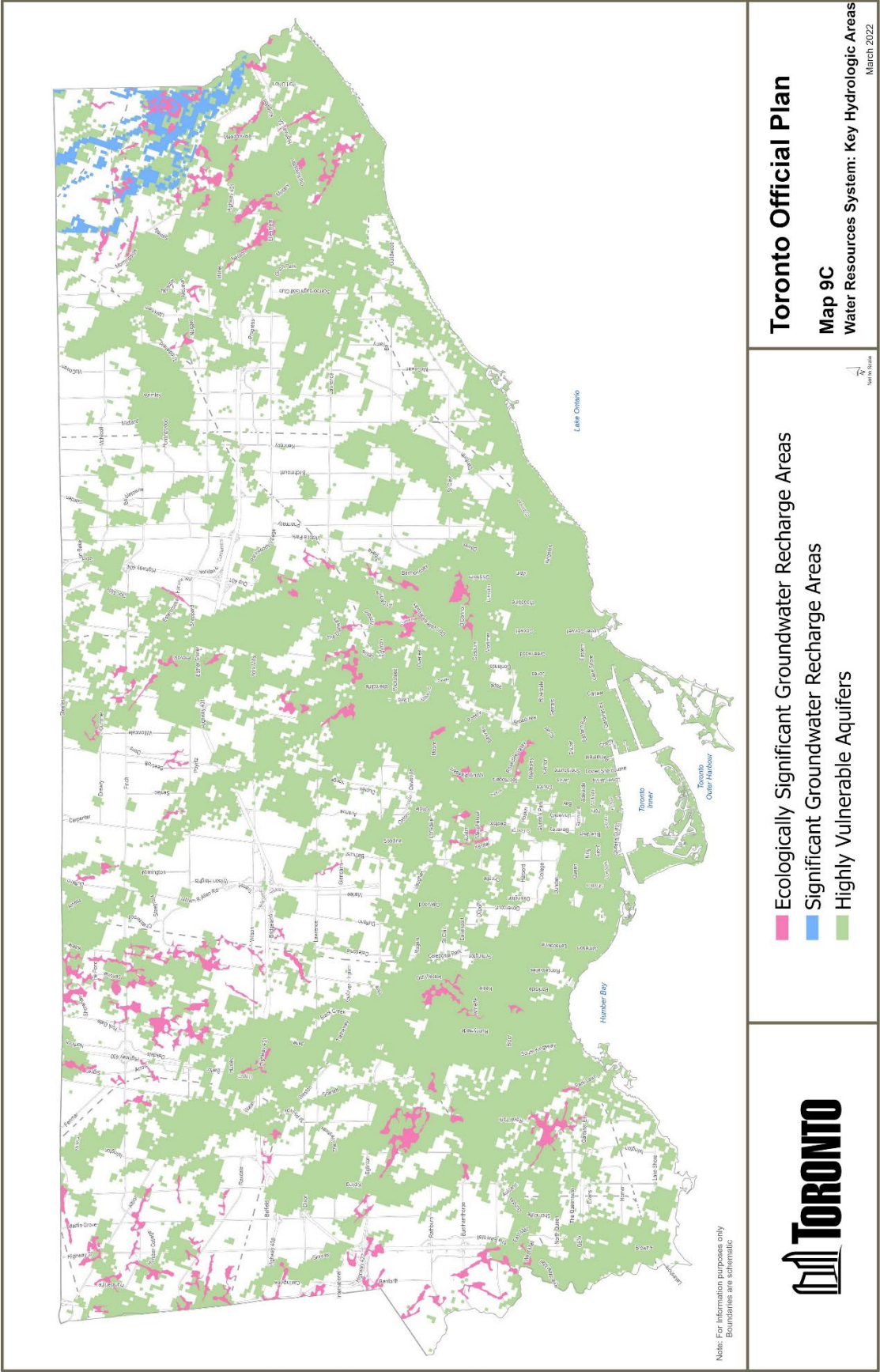




Map 9B Water Resource System: Key Hydrologic Features



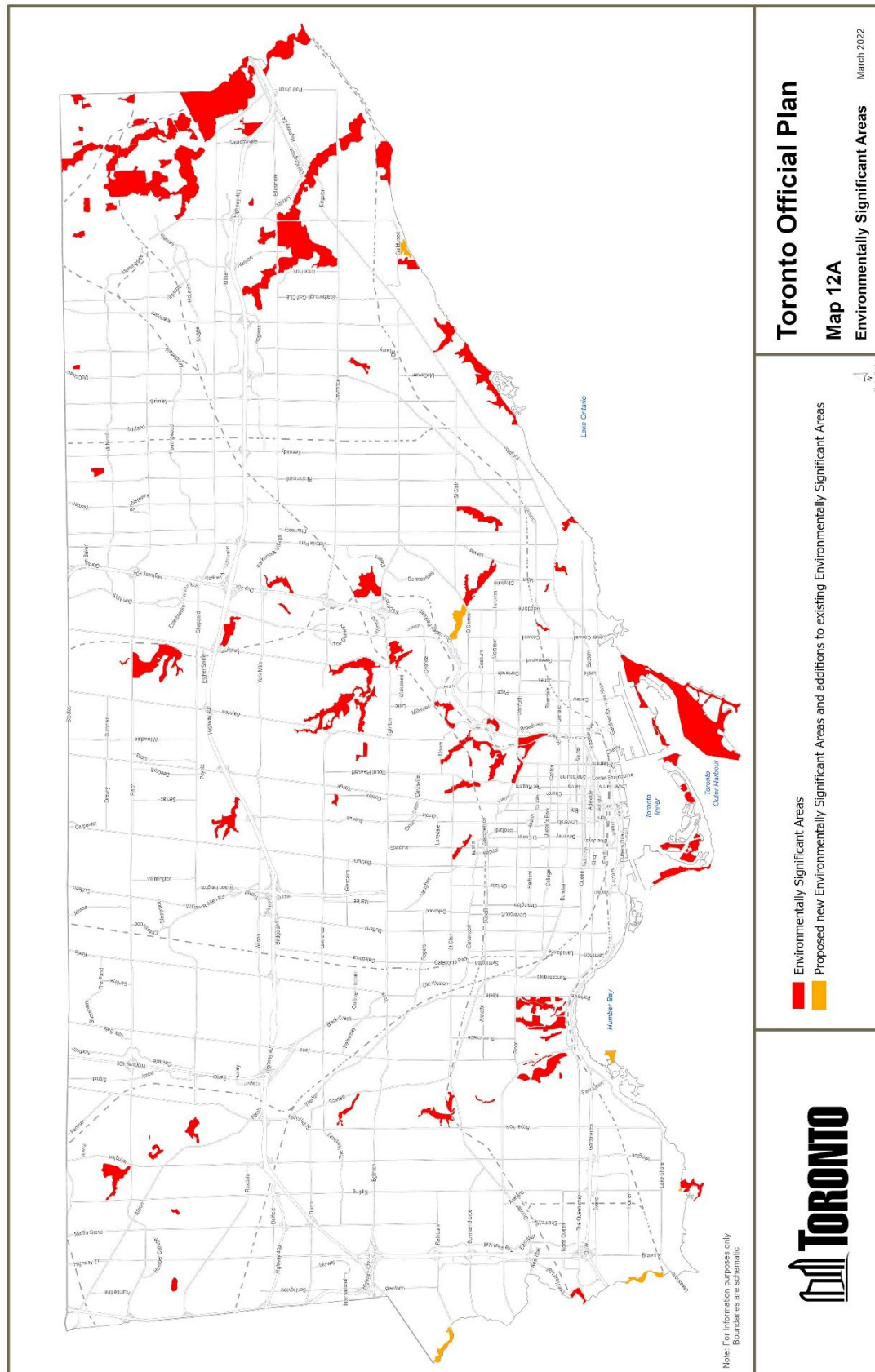
Map 9C Water Resources System: Key Hydrologic Areas



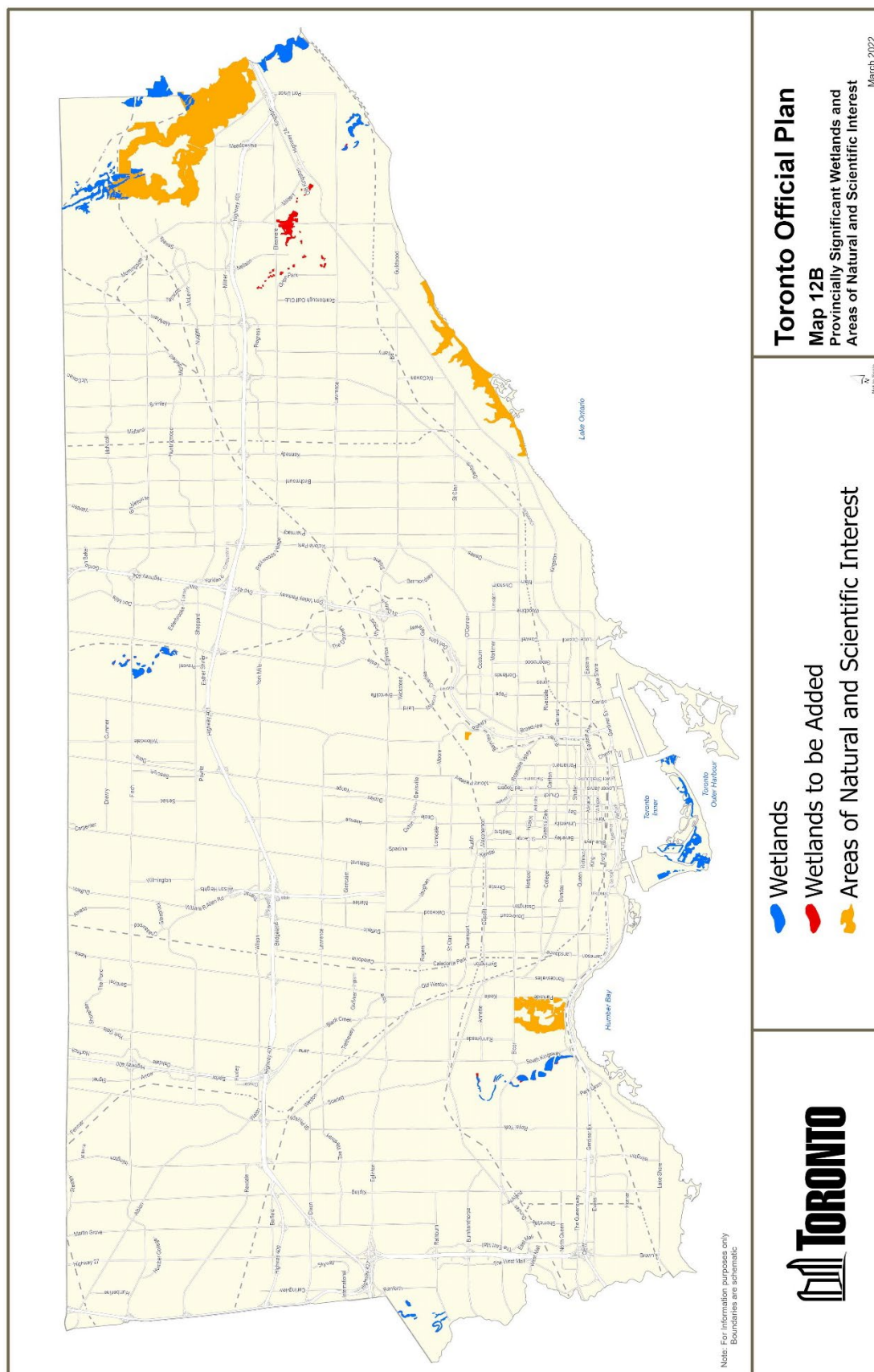


## Attachment 4: Revised Maps 12A and 12B

### Map 12A Environmentally Significant Areas

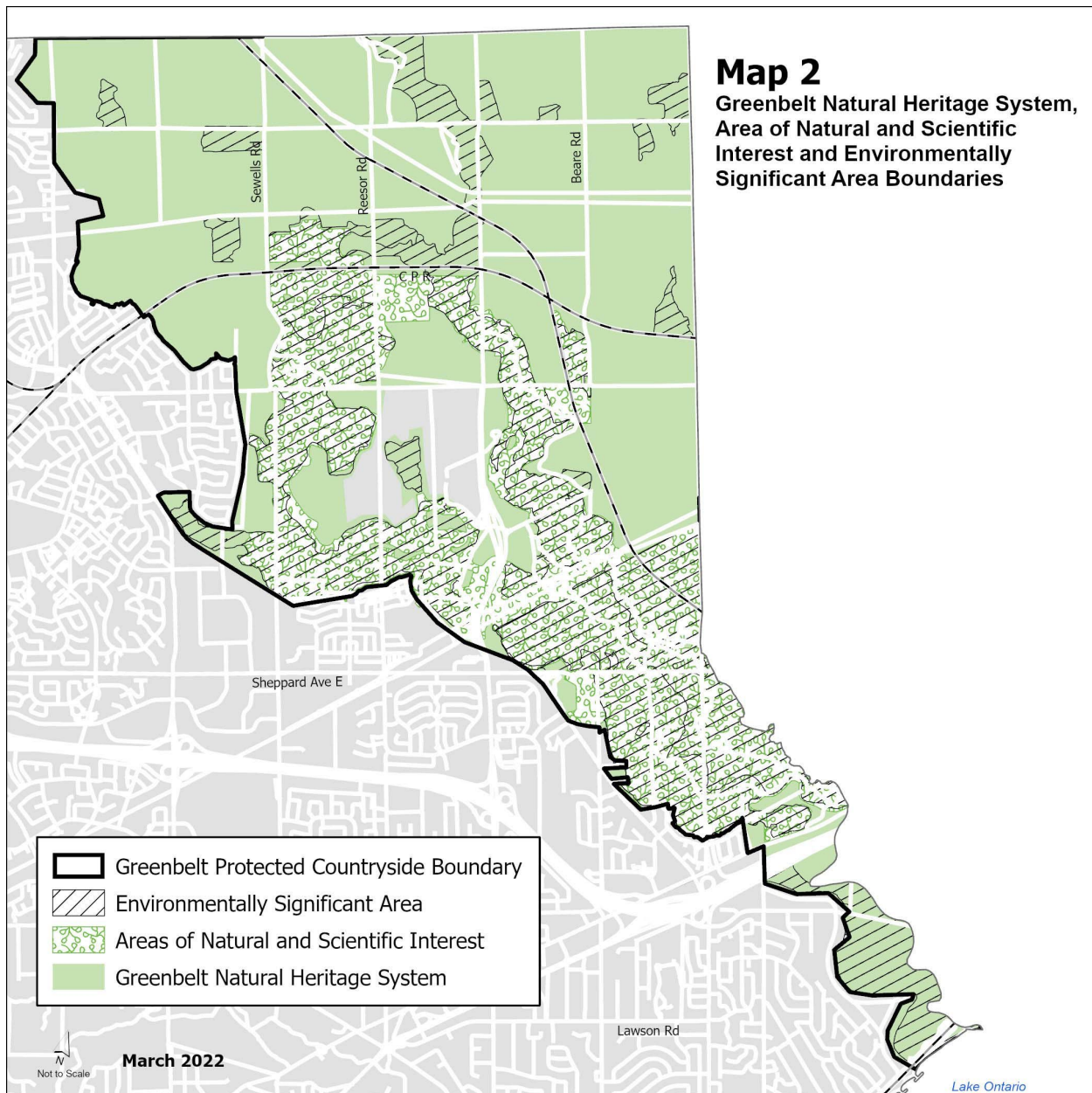


## Map 12B Provincially Significant Wetlands and Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest



## Attachment 5: Revised and New Maps 2 and 3 for SASP 141

### Map 2 Greenbelt Natural Heritage System, Area of Natural and Scientific Interest and Environmentally Significant Area Boundaries





### Map 3 Water Resource System

