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Ontarians may support the Greenbelt but do our municipal candidates?

Today, Four of Ontario's most progressive Mayors and Councillors who Co-chair the Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt launched a new website www.greenbeltleaders.ca that aims to inform voters about which candidates in the municipal elections support the province's Greenbelt. The website features the Greenbelt Pledge which is open for sign on to anyone in Ontario who is running for office.

"We are encouraging candidates and incumbents who care about the future of the Greenbelt to sign the pledge and commit to protecting it during the 2014-2018 municipal term of office," says MLGB CO-Chair, Ajax Mayor Steve Parish.

The Greenbelt is the centrepiece of Ontario's land use planning framework which directs where the province's best farmlands, river systems, wetlands and forests should be protected, while limiting where urban development can go. Beyond stopping sprawl, Ontario's Greenbelt provides \$9.1 billion in economic benefits, 161,000 jobs and \$2.3 billion in ecosystem services providing us with local food, clean water and flood control.

"The MLGB pledge helps voters identify candidates who support the Greenbelt says Mayor Rob Burton of Oakville. With a provincial review of the Greenbelt occurring next year, it's more important than ever that municipal candidates represent the strong public support for the Greenbelt, show they care about clean water, local food and nature, and commit to protecting it into the future.

"With a 2013 poll indicating that 93% of Ontarians support the Greenbelt, it's an easy ask," declares MLGB Co-Chair and Guelph Mayor Karen Farbridge.

"Many people think the Greenbelt is protected, this is simply not the case", states MLGB Co-Chair and Toronto City Councillor Glenn DeBaeremaeker. "The Greenbelt is under threat by developers who want to pave over farmland and grow houses instead of crops, and is also threatened by some municipalities who are focused on sprawl development, rather than protecting our natural assets."

After the provincial election in June, the four co-chairs Mayor Burton of Oakville, Mayor Parish of Ajax, Mayor Farbridge of Guelph and Councillor De Baeremaeker made a bold statement at Queen's Park calling on the Premier Wynne and the province to grow Greenbelt by an additional one million acres and create a permanent provincial foodbelt for local food production in the current Places to Grow Whitebelt.

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