

CEAC Report 2004 – 06

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Debbe Crandall, Chair, Caledon Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC)

Date: September 13, 2004

Subject: Planning Reform: Provincial Policy Statement: Draft Policies; Greenbelt Task Force Discussion Paper *Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt*: (May 2004); Ontario Municipal Board Reform

Background:

In 2001, the provincial government, as mandated by section 3(10) of the Planning Act, began a five-year review of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). CEAC prepared and submitted to Caledon Council a response to this five-year review (CEAC Report 2001-08 dated October 22, 2001).

The province, in keeping with its “strong communities” goal, has undertaken a number of initiatives, as follows:

- The introduction in December 2003 of *Bill 26, The Strong Communities (Planning Amendment) Act, 2004*;
- The passing on June 24, 2004 of the *Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004*;
- The issuance of three discussion papers dealing with reforming the land-use planning and development process, as follows:
 - Provincial Policy Statement: Draft Policies;
 - Planning Act Reform and Implementation Tools; and
 - Ontario Municipal Board Reform;
- The issuance of a discussion paper on Source Water Protection and now draft legislation;
- The issuance of a discussion paper on a Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and;
- The issuance of the Greenbelt Task Force Discussion Paper entitled *Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt*

CEAC previously submitted reports to Council on Bill 26 – Planning Act Amendments (CEAC Report 2004-01) and Source Water Protection (CEAC Report 2004-02).

The three areas of Provincial Policy Statement: Draft Policies, Proposed Greenbelt and Ontario Municipal Reform are dealt with under this one report (CEAC Report 2004-06), to be submitted for Council’s benefit.

Purpose of CEAC Report 2004-06

CEAC's Terms of Reference provides the framework for the mandate of CEAC, which is grounded in the belief that local residents can and should contribute to the stewardship of our common natural heritage and that our communities are planned for environmental sustainability, health and respect for all life. Central to achieving these goals is a strong provincial endorsement of the ethos of sustainability supported by clear lines of command and clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the province and its municipal partners. The topics discussed in CEAC Report 2004-06 (i.e., the PPS, Ontario Municipal Board reform and Greenbelt policies) are some of the key ingredients to achieving a sustainable future and are essential building blocks for other provincial initiatives such as the Growth Strategy and Rural Communities Study.

CEAC feels strongly that an open two-way dialogue between Caledon Council, staff and local residents is more important than ever at this time. And so, CEAC is submitting this report for Council's consideration regardless that the provincial commenting period for the topics covered by this report has expired. Given the far-reaching and ambitious scope of proposed provincial changes to the planning and environmental legislative framework, CEAC is confident that there will be many more opportunities for comment and so will continue to review and where appropriate submit comments on other related provincial and municipal planning initiatives as they arise.

Discussion:

1. Provincial Policy Statement: Draft Policies

Natural Heritage Systems:

Ontario's communities continue to suffer and natural heritage systems continue to decline as a result of a highly fragmented and outdated provincial view of what constitutes "provincial interest" in the PPS. Walkerton is a tragic example of a shortsighted approach to protecting public health within the confines of our environment.

Of primary concern to CEAC is the way that the draft PPS deals with environmental issues and in particular natural heritage systems. The most egregious failing of the draft PPS is that, incredibly, this current version of the PPS is no better than the 1996 version with respect to natural heritage systems. Draft PPS section (2.1.1) begins by giving lip service by stating that natural diversity, connectivity and ecological functions of natural heritage systems "should be maintained", but then continues with policies for a list of fragmented components of natural systems applying only to those small, scattered remnant areas designated solely by the province.

Nothing can better illustrate the inadequacy of this current PPS approach to natural heritage than the disparities between it and the recent April 2004 release of the Toronto and Region Conservation's (TRC) "Terrestrial Natural Heritage System" report. This timely and valuable service for the GTA lays out a much more systematic, comprehensive and clear approach to

preventing our natural systems from experiencing further decline. The most significant revelation of the TRC report is how very inadequate this expression of provincial interest, both quantitatively and qualitatively, is from a natural heritage system point of view.

The TRC report states that currently 17 percent of the total GTA area is under natural cover. Of this 17 percent, only a tiny percentage has protection under section 2.1 of the draft PPS policies. And yet the science is clear that an area of 30 percent of the GTA needs to be in natural cover to sustain natural functions and biodiversity of species.

The collision course encouraged in the current PPS between community health and community growth will cause only more tragedy and decline of quality of life unless far more protection is afforded natural systems in the PPS. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That "Natural Heritage" be used as an all-encompassing term for all policy matters with respect to Land, Water and Air.*
- *That "Natural Heritage" policies state with respect to section 2.1 that natural diversity, connectivity, and ecological functions of natural heritage systems "will be maintained" rather than "should be maintained"*
- *That "Natural Heritage Systems, features and areas" identified by municipalities using a systematic process based on the latest ecological science, such as the April 2004 TRCA process, be deemed eligible in the PPS to guide municipal land use decisions.*
- *That all provincially significant areas (significant woodlands, valleylands, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest and wildlife habitat) noted in current section 2.1.2.3 be unconditionally prohibited to development and site alteration.*
- *That the importance of natural heritage be reflected in the PPS by stating, in the Implementation Section or elsewhere, that municipal decisions prohibiting development to protect natural systems based upon eligible processes of latest ecological science shall have precedence over current PPS housing policies 1.4.1, a and b.*

Strategic Environmental Assessment:

The concept of Strategic Environmental Assessment has recently emerged as a valuable and powerful tool that assesses the environmental impact of plans, policies and programs before decisions have been made which negatively effect the environment. This tool was recently applied to the development of the newly amalgamated municipality of Chatham-Kent's Official Plan by allowing the municipality to evaluate the proposed policies and present alternative policy solutions which better contributed to the sustainability of the community and its economic self sufficiency. There is a wide body of literature about Strategic Environmental Assessments, and yet it has only recently been applied in Ontario. This presents an opportunity for the province to be on the leading edge of environmental protection and assessment on the world stage. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That the draft PPS include a policy to encourage municipalities to conduct Strategic Environmental Assessments as part of the review, amendments to or development of new official plans.*

Air Quality:

The draft PPS fails badly in not specifically addressing air quality issues. It is wholly within the scope of provincial responsibility to take action to improve air quality and thus specific policies must be developed. As an example, smog action plans and air quality initiatives, which have been successfully undertaken in a number of other jurisdictions in Ontario (such as St. Catharines, Toronto, Waterloo, Halton Region, London Middlesex) could be mandated by the province and designed and implemented at the municipal level. Taking specific actions of this nature would not only legitimize policy 1.5.5 (Transportation Systems) but would provide tangible mechanisms for municipalities to make the case for increased funding for public transit. In the same vein, links between transportation, land use and air quality (policy 1.5.5.1 (e)) should be boldly stated in the draft PPS policies. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That policy 1.5.5.1 (e) be amended to read “Transportation, land use and air quality considerations are integrated at all stages of the planning process.*
- *That the province encourage municipalities to adopt aggressive air quality action plans such as smog plans*

Source Water Protection Legislation and PPS

The Ministry of Environment is proceeding with Source Water Protection legislation. In Report 2004-1, CEAC made the following comment:

“What has not been addressed in the White Paper is how source protection legislation would dovetail with the existing planning framework and who ultimately will be responsible for its implementation and ownership. In this uncertain environment, it is quite likely that turf protection by stakeholders and concern for maintaining jurisdictional roles will significantly impair the path to clean water

CEAC continues to have concerns about the relationship between the PPS and Source Water Protection legislation. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That a clear, prescriptive policy with regard to water be articulated to the effect that all municipalities will adopt and implement a SOURCE WATER PROTECTION PLAN in cooperation with other municipalities in their designated regions according to coming Provincial legislation as proposed in the February 2004 White Paper, and that the current (a) through (g) provisions of the Water “policy” be more properly termed guidelines for such a Plan, or eliminated as they are ineffectual as policies.*

Legislative Framework:

CEAC notes that Bill 26 (Strong Communities –Planning Amendment Act) gives municipalities the power to refuse urban boundary expansions independent of the Ontario Municipal Board. While CEAC supports this, it begs the question of how these specific PPS policies and Bill 26 will fit together. In the same vein, the Greenbelt legislation and the Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan further refine the issue of growth in the GTA. While CEAC continues to be supportive of strong provincial leadership, many questions abound as to how all of these pieces of legislation will tie together and complement each other. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That the province continue to consult widely and facilitate public debate on matters that will further the protection of natural heritage systems from incompatible development and land uses and;*
- *That the province through this debate develop a clear administrative ‘road map’ to provide details on the dovetailing and coordination of the Planning Act, the PPS, proposed Source Water Protection legislation, proposed Greenbelt legislation and the Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan, and;*
- *That the province establish funding sources to assist in municipal implementation to ensure that there will be partners willing to work with the province.*

Monitoring and Performance Measures:

CEAC in its response to the Five-Year Review of the PPS (Report 2001-08), made the following comment:

“ That, in addition to environmental, social and economic health, a fourth priority of "performance measurement", particularly for natural water-related systems be identified in the principles of the PPS.”

CEAC notes that the draft PPS uses precisely the same language as the 1996 version despite the fact that performance measurements of the PPS have never been undertaken. Therefore, CEAC recommends that the PPS develop more specific language to tie performance measurements to a Natural Heritage Strategy, which would include all aspects of the environment by amending the relevant section (Section 4.0 No. 10) in the Implementation and Interpretation section to read:

- *To support this comprehensive, integrated and long term approach to natural heritage and water management, the province in partnership with other agencies will develop performance measurements for establishing environmental carrying capacity on a watershed basis, establish a comprehensive monitoring network and will develop a framework for regional State of the Environment Reports*

Section 1.1 Efficient Settlement Patterns - Alteration to Boundaries of Settlement Areas

The draft PPS has gone much farther than the current policies on addressing redevelopment and intensification of existing settlement areas by establishing benchmarks for expanding urban

boundaries. However, it is also noted that policy 1.4.1 (a) requires “all planning authorities to maintain at all times the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 10 years through lands which are designated and available for residential development.” While these two policies may complement each other in urban municipalities (i.e., consistency to and between PPS policies can be achieved due to redevelopment potential), CEAC does not have the same confidence that this is achievable in rural municipalities such as Caledon. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That housing policies 1.4.1, a and b, requiring 10 years supply of designated housing area and 3 years serviced housing area be eliminated from the PPS, or substituted by a policy which counters regional tendencies for urban sprawl and resulting municipal problems of unbalanced tax base and lagging municipal services such as is happening in the fringe of the GTA.*

Reinforcing this lack of confidence in the ability of Caledon or any other municipality to accommodate new residential growth through redevelopment of under-utilized lands or brownfields, is that there is no apparent inventory or database of where these opportune lands exist. A Caledon-wide inventory of potential redevelopment sites would help to focus the attention of the community, local homebuilders and the municipality on opportunities early in the process, thereby allowing for proactive public debate and involvement in what can be a contentious and complex undertaking. Therefore CEAC recommends that:

- *The province develop or update current guidelines that include undertaking municipal-wide inventories of potential redevelopment lands to assist municipalities in moving forward with redevelopment and intensification of settlement areas.*

Implementation and Interpretation:

Both the current PPS (1996 version) and the draft PPS contain similar wording regarding municipalities setting higher or more restrictive standards to that contained in the PPS as follows:

“Nothing in the PPS is intended to prevent planning authorities ... from going beyond the minimum standards ... unless doing so would conflict with any other policy of the PPS.”

Despite this caveat, municipalities continue to be forced to defend, at considerable cost and expenditure of resources, stronger environmental protection or local social values at the Ontario Municipal Board. CEAC does not see much improvement in this area in the draft PPS.

Therefore CEAC recommends that the relevant section in the implementation and interpretation section be amended such that:

- *“The province encourages municipalities to go beyond the minimum standards where it is deemed that they support community values and where long term environmental and social benefits will be realized.”*

2. Greenbelt Task Force Discussion Paper *Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt*: (May 2004)

The Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004 established a Greenbelt study area across the Golden Horseshoe. The following report draws from *Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt: Greenbelt Task Force Discussion Paper* (May 2004) to examine the proposed Greenbelt and its impact and relationship to Caledon.

The stated vision of the proposed Greenbelt is:

“The Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt will be a permanent and sustainable legacy for current and future generations. The greenbelt will enhance our urban and rural areas with a continuous and connected system of open spaces that:

- *Protects and enhances environmentally sensitive lands and natural heritage systems;*
- *Recognizes the region’s social, natural and economic needs;*
- *Conserves for sustainable use the region’s significant natural resources; and*
- *Continues to provide high quality and compatible recreational and tourism opportunities.”*

(Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt: Greenbelt Task Force Discussion Paper (May 2004))

Essentially, residential, commercial and manufacturing industrial uses would be greatly or largely eliminated on lands within the Greenbelt study area to the extent that urban areas could not be created or extended into these areas. However, outside of the current moratorium on urban growth, it is not clear from the discussion paper how the Greenbelt will be implemented nor where or if new urban land uses will be permitted within the study area. The discussion paper lists both regulatory (land planning, bylaws and permits) and non-regulatory tools (acquisition, stewardship, tax incentives.) It also lists monetary, promotional and other incentives to encourage preferred non-urban land uses. In lieu of further guidance from the Province CEAC will examine the five ‘layers’ that are used in the discussion paper to describe the Greenbelt and look at their compatibility with current land use in Caledon and sustainable future land use.

It should be noted that the Greenbelt initiative is being proposed amidst other provincial planning initiatives dealing with land use and related issues of growth and resource conservation. These are, notably, a growth management strategy, a transportation strategy for the Golden Horseshoe and the Source Water Protection Act. Meanwhile, there is an ongoing review of the *Provincial Policy Statement*, which in turn will most certainly affect the planning tools and responsibilities that municipalities have. These various provincial initiatives make it difficult to fully assess the Greenbelt legislation and its effect on Caledon.

The Task Force discussion paper noted five main ‘layers’ of Greenbelt, that could also be interpreted as five ‘allowed or encouraged’ land uses;

- Environmental Protection,
- Agricultural Protection,
- Transportation and infrastructure,
- Natural Resources, particularly mineral resources, and

- Cultural, Tourism and Recreation opportunities.

Given these categories, and the relatively small size of Caledon's established rural settlement centres, theoretically most of the land within the municipality could be Greenbelt. There is no indication if eventually Greenbelt will cover all non-urban areas within the study area or if restrictions on urban development will be less extensive than the current moratorium restrictions but regardless, the Greenbelt designation is compatible with, and in most cases will enhance and entrench, Caledon's official plan and general goals in regard to balanced growth.

Environmental Protection: Caledon is in a somewhat unique position of already having a large area of the municipality designated as protected or conserved under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Caledon has also identified and included into its Official Plan a fairly extensive natural heritage system. The Greenbelt designation would further enforce these natural heritage designations but in the case of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment may actually be redundant. Likewise, urban sprawl will largely occur outside of these already identified areas. Moreover, greenbelt legislation on top of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan lands may impede landowner relations and impose another unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) and Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) already provide a comprehensive protection message for Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment lands and these lands would be best served by maintaining these plans without any additional planning designations that may arise and/or keeping them as separate entities not under the auspices of any Greenbelt 'plan'.

The strength of the Greenbelt would be in protecting the natural heritage system that lies outside of regional plans such as the ORMCP and NEP in regard to features such as provincially significant wetlands, but especially in addressing natural heritage features such as significant valleylands, significant woodlands, other wetlands, etc., that are not backed by specific provincial regulation or policy.

The discussion paper addresses the concept of a '*...continuous natural heritage system...*' with significant natural heritage features "*...and providing connections and linkages between them...*" The consideration of existing natural heritage features (e.g. valleylands) is key to connectivity but true connectivity will also require the identification of other lands requiring restoration or rehabilitation – existing natural heritage features represent a remnant natural heritage system. Given the possible extent of the Greenbelt there is an opportunity to identify restoration lands. This restoration should be considered in the context of other Greenbelt goals to conserve landforms and to create a network of public open space.

Setting aside lands outside of the existing municipally or provincially designated significant natural areas/ESAs will need to be considered to achieve Greenbelt goals of landform conservation and creation of a network of open space, although these goals in terms of land area are not exclusive of creating a natural heritage system. The network of open space calls for expanded parks and open space "*...that can be maintained and secured to support a natural system...*" The discussion paper notes depleted mineral aggregate operations as having potential

for restoration to more natural conditions. There needs to be a consideration that outside of significant natural heritage features an open space network (with a consideration for public access) is called for in implementing the Greenbelt. To this end the discussion paper calls for a *greenbelt parks and trail strategy* and a *greenbelt acquisition and stewardship strategy*.

The discussion paper also notes the importance of a 'Water resources system' but it is difficult to comment on this aspect given the overlap of this topic with the current source water protection initiative.

Therefore CEAC recommends the following:

- *The protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment is best served by the two existing planning mechanisms; these mechanisms and the current plans should be left 'as is' and not subsumed by a greater Greenbelt Plan.*
- *There is potential to better protect natural heritage features outside of the areas of the ORMP and NEP through the Greenbelt particularly if enhanced regulatory (planning) and non-regulatory measures (acquisition, agreements) are available through the Greenbelt; the provincial government should develop and implement such regulatory and non-regulatory measures*
- *There is a need for enhanced natural heritage systems in terms of making linkages and connections. The Greenbelt presents an opportunity to identify and possibly restore lands for such a system. Likewise, there is a provision for an open space network that will provide social and heritage/environmental benefits. However, the mechanisms to establish such a network are not clearly defined.*
 - *Recommend that more information be made available in terms of the potential greenbelt parks and trail strategy and a greenbelt acquisition and stewardship strategy.*
 - *Recommend Caledon pursue representation on these strategies.*
 - *Recommend that Caledon review the quality and quantity of habitat within the town and, using methodologies such as employed as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's in its Terrestrial Natural Heritage Strategy, identify a complete natural heritage system and a complete open space network.*

Agriculture: The Greenbelt has the potential to stop or reduce urbanization of agricultural lands, although it does not necessarily ensure such lands will remain in active agricultural production. The non-regulatory measures to ensure farms are still viable are not well defined nor are they particularly strong given the issues facing farmers. While regulatory planning measures can stop urbanization, they cannot ensure viable farms. Besides the role that agriculture plays in Caledon's economy, its heritage and character, the loss of agricultural lands to urbanization will also have a negative effect on remaining lands, including greenbelt lands. As shown in TRCA's *Terrestrial Natural Heritage Strategy* the replacement of agricultural lands with urban land uses has a negative impact on the quality of adjacent 'natural' lands. The quality of natural lands and their ability to carry out ecological functions to mitigate urbanization (water protection, wildlife habitat, air quality, etc.) is greatly reduced by nearby (within a few km) urbanization. 'Green'

achievements Caledon has made will be greatly reduced by the loss of the compatible buffer of the agricultural lands south of the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine. Urbanization in this area will also be counterproductive to the overall quality of life in Caledon and will likely reduce the viability of land uses allowed within the Greenbelt. Urbanization of the Peel Plain will erode the countryside character of the remainder of Caledon, further impede remaining agricultural uses and increase congestion and traffic throughout the municipality. Adjacent urban uses will be incompatible with mineral extraction and greatly impede the development of a growing economy based on the area's cultural, recreational and tourism opportunities.

However, designation of greenbelt on agricultural lands on the Peel Plain will be far more difficult as there are issues regarding perceived and possible lowered land values, reducing farmers equity in their land. Moreover, protection of pockets of agriculture does not ensure the agricultural viability of such lands – marooned agricultural lands in an otherwise urban area are usually not feasible. To address these issues, the Province has formed a Stakeholder Focus Group and they are expected to report in October of this year. Therefore,

- *CEAC recognizes that one possible outcome of the stakeholder group is that agriculture may not be seen as a long-term viable use on the Peel Plain, but recommends that regardless, a mechanism is needed to protect such lands, such as Greenbelt designation*
- *CEAC recommends that the Province provide a mechanism to address the issue of possible lowered land values within greenbelt designated agricultural lands.*
- *CEAC recommends that Caledon consider new non-urban and non-agricultural land uses if agriculture is not viable or be prepared to work with the province and likely develop its own initiatives to support an agricultural landscape on the Peel plain.*

Natural Resources: Mineral extraction: The proposed Greenbelt allows for extraction but calls for higher standards for pit and quarry rehabilitation. The designation would also preclude future urban uses on current pit and quarry lands. Therefore, CEAC recommends,

- *That current operating mineral extraction lands and Caledon's aggregate reserve lands be designated as greenbelt – this will hopefully be compatible with stopping urbanization*
- *That Caledon continue to work with all stakeholders in terms of aggregate reserve and quarry plans as the Greenbelt will not stop mineral extraction. .*

Culture, Tourism and Recreation: These land uses are encouraged under the Greenbelt legislation and in this area the Greenbelt designation will complement the growth of a recreation and tourism based economy in Caledon. Non-regulatory initiatives noted in the Task Group Discussion Paper, such as possible tourism promotion, will assist development of this sector, however the paper does not provide any tangible numbers of the economic value of tourism to rural municipalities. Impacts from development of this sector will be positive or at the very least neutral compared to effects of possible urbanization. The benefits of culture, tourism and recreation remain elusive and intangible despite being cited as having long-term positive impacts to a rural economy. Therefore, CEAC recommends that:

- *Caledon consider a report looking at the economic, environmental and cultural benefits, and the viability of, of the development of tourism and recreation based initiatives and identify areas for such land uses, as per studies such as the Coulterville special planning area, that could be designated ‘Greenbelt’*

3. Ontario Municipal Board Reform

An independent Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) plays an important role in ensuring that the public is involved in and protected against decisions that do not follow sound planning policies. Our provincial government recognizes that a clean, healthy environment is a cornerstone for our quality of life. The ability of the OMB to contribute to the protection of our natural heritage is only as strong as the quality of its members and the planning policies that guide it. Proposed reforms must be considered in light of the extent to which they promote or impede the sustainable integrity of ecosystems.

Prevention of Appeals:

The prevention of appeals to the OMB on urban expansions that have been opposed by municipal councils seems a promising way to enhance the importance of municipalities in the planning process. It seems unlikely that the public concerned about urban sprawl needs protection against this type of municipal decision. This also appears to allow our municipal government the ability to prevent expansion into sensitive areas such as the Cold Creek headwaters, without the expense of an OMB hearing. While this proposal appears to be positive, it should not be confused with an ability to control growth. The potential remains for an urban expansion to be blocked in one area only to result in an increase in development pressure elsewhere such as an agricultural or rural area. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That the province ensure that municipalities be allowed to make the case for stopping urban expansions onto significant natural heritage areas, agricultural lands or others as deemed valuable by the municipality*

Requirement to “Be Consistent With” a Provincial Interest:

The proposal to require OMB decisions to be consistent with provincial policies has the potential to prevent decisions that stray too far from what is appropriate for an unelected body. How this relates to enhancing environmental protection depends on the quality of the provincial policy. Unless strong statements are made in support of natural heritage systems, this requirement could prove detrimental to environmental health when there is a conflict between the environment and another stated policy. This highlights the need for strong language that makes it clear to OMB members that the sustainability of ecosystems, both natural and human, will be a primary consideration in all activities and decision-making processes. Similarly, the ability of the province to alter decisions that are not consistent with a declared provincial interest could provide accountability, however this underscores the need for a very strong expression of provincial interest in protecting natural heritage systems. As mentioned above, the draft PPS does not adequately accomplish this and as such the requirement to “be consistent with” is of concern. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That the proposal requiring OMB decisions to “be consistent with” provincial policies be suspended until there is stronger language supporting natural heritage systems in the Provincial Policy Statement*
- *That the province provide a very strong expression of provincial interest in natural heritage systems in order to guide OMB decisions in this area*

Recruitment, Training and Terms of Appointment:

The ability of the OMB to make environmentally sound decisions depends heavily on the ability and training of its members. Recruitment should seek to find individuals who will recognize that any economic or social development must occur within the framework of long-term sustainability of ecosystems and subsidiarity (i.e., allowing local residents to design their own solutions to environmental queries and concerns). The OMB membership needs to be better equipped to understand and evaluate expert witness testimony, recognize cumulative impacts and gain the sense of the “big picture” that is required if we are to prevent major environmental problems that stem from a thousand minor decisions. The recruitment and development of suitable members is challenging and represents a significant investment of resources. With the caveat that members are chosen by merit as opposed to political connection, a significant increase in membership training makes an appointment term greater than three years in the public interest. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That experience or training that demonstrates an understanding of long-term sustainability of ecosystems be considered as a keystone for potential OMB members*
- *That learning and training initiatives incorporate current scientific thinking regarding the functioning of ecosystems and the complex relationships that exist between environmental health and human development*
- *That the term of appointment of OMB members be increased if and only if the above recommendations are adopted*

Alternative Dispute Resolution:

The tremendous cost associated with OMB hearings provides a strong incentive for seeking mediated solutions. This approach also provides an increased opportunity for parties to discover suitable compromises that may be missed by going directly to a full hearing. Therefore CEAC recommends:

- *That the OMB be given the authority to require parties to mediate when it is clearly in the public interest to do so*

Debbe Crandall
Chair, Caledon Environmental Advisory Committee