



# ***QUEENS PARK REPORT***

**SPRING 2011**

## **PART A: ONTARIO GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Affordable housing**

The [Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011](#), was passed by the legislature on April 19 with the support of all parties. When the legislation comes into effect, it will reduce barriers to affordable housing, eliminate complicated rules, clarify roles, require secondary suites in municipalities and mandate measuring and reporting. To read more:

<http://news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2011/04/affordable-housing-boosted-by-new-legislation.html>

### **Greenbelt Protection**

February 28, 2011 marked the sixth anniversary of Ontario's Greenbelt. -- the world's largest greenbelt at 1.8 million acres of working countryside, it spans across the Greater Golden Horseshoe and extends to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula.

Boasting some of the best agricultural land in Canada, valuable natural resources and significant environmental features, the Greenbelt is also home to vibrant rural communities engaged in diverse economic activities. The Greenbelt provides numerous recreation, tourism and cultural opportunities. It is the location of historical landmarks, hiking trails, fairs, festivals, farmers' markets, culinary tours, wineries, dining and theatre.

Currently, a number of municipalities are taking steps towards expanding the Greenbelt. The government welcomes requests from other municipalities interested in growing the Greenbelt in their communities. The Greenbelt is a key part of the government's plan to manage growth, build a sustainable green economy and protect the environment, which will help to build prosperous and more livable communities. For more information:

<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page187.aspx>

## **PART B: UPDATE ON PROVINCIAL ISSUES**

### **Protecting Heritage Views of Queen's Park, and Preserving the Dignity of Ontario's Capital Precinct**

Federation President, Archie Campbell wrote Premier McGuinty recently to urge him to support efforts to protect the view of the Ontario Legislative Assembly. You can read the letter here: [Letter on QP Legislative Precinct](#). To date we have not heard back from the Premier.

The Legislature is the seat of government for the province and as such we think this is not only a downtown or City of Toronto issue but also a provincial one. We urge you to write to the Premier and your MPP and ask them to protect the heritage views of the Legislature.

## **Opposition builds to Mega-Quarry in Dufferin County**

A US-owned company wants to build North America's second-largest open-pit mine next to the Niagara Escarpment and amidst the headwaters of rivers that provide drinking water for over a million Ontarians. Farmers, citizens, aboriginal people and environmentalists oppose this planned quarry, which will destroy thousands of acres of prime farmland.

The Ministry of Natural Resources confirmed on April 27, the day that residents and concerned neighbours of the proposed quarry finished a five-day walk from Queen's Park to the site of the proposed quarry, that it is extending the deadline of input for public comment on the licence application under the Aggregate Resources Act to July 11. Some 1,300 Ontarians wrote to the Premier, urging him to extend the period of public comment for 120 days.

The Aggregate Resources Act has a process that gives the applicant up to two years—that would be March 10, 2013—to resolve any objections to the application. If there are still unresolved objections to the licence application after two years, the Ministry of Natural Resources can refer the application to the Ontario Municipal Board.

## **Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPP)**

SLAPP is a lawsuit initiated against one or more individuals or groups that speak out or take a position on an issue of public interest. SLAPPs use the court system to limit the effectiveness of the opposing party's speech or conduct. SLAPPs can intimidate opponents, deplete their resources, reduce their ability to participate in public affairs and deter others from participating in discussion on matters of public interest. The Advisory Panel reported in October 2010 and their report can be viewed at [http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/anti\\_slapp/default.asp](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/anti_slapp/default.asp)

F.U.N. has urged the government to table the necessary legislation at the earliest opportunity.

## **Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 – Five Year Review**

The public input phase of the Province's Review of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 (PPS) was completed in October 29 2010. Still no timeline has been announced for the publication of any revisions to the Provincial Policy Statement.

The PPS sets out the Ontario government's policy direction for land use planning and development. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing sought input on how the PPS is working and whether any changes were needed to protect provincial interests and to make sure that the PPS is adequately addressing emerging land use issues.

## **Provincial Election Financing Reform**

Reform of campaign finance regulations would help provide a level playing field for candidates. The City of Toronto instituted a ban on corporate and union campaign contributions in municipal elections in 2009, putting it in line with a similar ban in federal elections, provincial elections in Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia, and municipal elections in Quebec. It is felt that provincial election financing reform will be necessary before a provincial move to implement province wide election financing reform for Ontario municipalities.

In 2005, F.U.N. recommended that the Ontario Elections Act be amended: "to prohibit contributions by corporations and trade unions and permit taxpayers to designate a portion of their provincial income tax to a political party of their choice". Fair Vote Canada (FVC) has an active campaign pressing for the implementation of these types of policies. Further information is available on the FVC web site at [www.fairvote.ca](http://www.fairvote.ca).