

Crombie to head review of Moraine and Greenbelt plans

Former Toronto mayor David Crombie will be heading up an expert panel dealing with the reviews of the Oak Ridges Moraine, Niagara Escarpment and Greenbelt plans.

And there have been lots of positive comments to the move.

‘He’s known as the perfect mayor of Toronto,’ Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson commented.

‘He’s an extremely good listener,’ Thompson added. ‘Let’s hope he’s listening loud and clear.’

Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones said she had no issue with Crombie’s appointment, but wondered what a former Toronto mayor would know about matters like the Oak Ridges Moraine or Greenbelt.

She also said she would want some clear indication that the process will be open and transparent, while actually looking at how different the three plans are and try to make them consistent.

‘When these plans were first introduced over 10 years ago, they represented the leading edge in conservation planning and protection of our invaluable land and water resources,’ commented Debbe Crandall, policy advisor for Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) Coalition. ‘This review positions the province to re-commit to a strong environmental agenda by strengthening these plans and eliminating policy gaps that have emerged, with the goal of leaving a protected landscape for the next generation of Ontarians.’

‘We are pleased to see the government has enlisted someone with such a strong track record. We expect this panel to help ensure a fair and transparent public review process,’ said Joyce Chau, executive director of EcoSpark. ‘Our partnership will be active throughout the review to engage Ontarians and demonstrate the incredible public support for the moraine and Greenbelt.’

A key feature of this area is the moraine, a 160-kilometre long landform stretching from Caledon and the Niagara Escarpment in the west to the Trent River system in the east. The moraine, together with the Niagara Escarpment and Protected Countryside, comprise Ontario’s Greenbelt; more than 720,000 hectares of protected natural habitat, productive agricultural lands and unique rural communities.

‘The moraine provides countless benefits to communities at no cost,’ observed Joshua Wise, Greenway Program manager at Ontario Nature. ‘It stores and filters our water, helps to control floods, regulates climate, and provides habitat for wildlife as well as places for outdoor recreation.’

The reviews are seen as an opportunity to make sure these plans remain true to their intent – the ongoing protection, enhancement and restoration of southern Ontario’s natural heritage.

‘This review of the plans provides an opportunity to address activities like the dumping of contaminated soil, unmonitored water takings and sprawling developments that were approved more than a decade ago and still threaten this landscape,’ observed Josh Garfinkel, senior campaigner at Earthroots. ‘Our groups are working with community members to make sure a strong grassroots voice is heard throughout the review.’