



SIERRA CLUB ONTARIO

Dan McDermott
#22

SIERRA CLUB ONTARIO DEPUTATION SUPPORTING THE MARKHAM FOODBELT –
February 16, 2010

Presented by Sierra Club Ontario Director Dan McDermott

Good evening. My name is Dan McDermott and I'm the Director of Sierra Club Ontario. The Markham Foodbelt has evolved from just being an idea: it is a commitment that is well overdue. The Foodbelt is a long-awaited solution to the need for protecting our dwindling agricultural land base, meeting the rapidly expanding demand for locally produced food, addressing the challenge of climate change and saying no to more sprawl development.

As part of our work within the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, Sierra Club is proud to have sponsored an opinion poll that firmly establishes that the Foodbelt concept resonates with Markham residents. Conducted by Pollara Research, the poll found that 80% of respondents stated that it was important to them to protect local farmland and greenspace. 67% indicated that support for the Foodbelt could determine their choice for councillor. The Pollara poll also revealed that "Growth, development and transit issues were top-of-mind issues for respondents in Markham followed-closely by traffic and congestion." This level of concern is significantly higher for issues related to the Foodbelt than is concern related to taxes.

The message the poll conveys to Markham politicians is clear: the Foodbelt concept is important to Markham voters. They see a deterioration of the core of their community that they want stopped immediately. These voters will support forward thinking politicians who take decisive action now to support the Foodbelt and preserve Markham's remaining greenspace. These same voters are prepared to punish those candidates who favour the avarice of developers over the heartfelt desire of Markham residents to preserve the Markham they know and love.

Markham residents are looking for leadership on the key issues contained in the Foodbelt concept. This leadership is presently being supplied by Councillors Valerie Burke and Erin Shapero. The Ontario Greenbelt was considered to be a bold and controversial concept when first proposed and enacted, but quickly became the catalyst for Ontarians to protect the intrinsic beauty and environmental integrity of their province.

Public awareness of the need to preserve agricultural lands and natural areas has continued to escalate dramatically in recent years. The Markham Foodbelt is a product of that increased awareness; an initiative that says "no" to more sprawl and an emphatic "yes" to preserving threatened farmland and greenspace. The Pollara poll that Sierra Club and the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance have commissioned proves that Markham residents want the Foodbelt. Markham politicians should not risk the wrath of the Markham voters by failing to support the Markham Foodbelt.

Thank you

24 Mercer Street, Toronto, ON M5V 1H3
Ph: 416-960-9606 Fax: 416-960-0020
ontariochapter@sierraclub.ca
<http://ontario.sierraclub.ca>