



State of Large Parks in Ontario's Golden Horseshoe

Presented by: Deborah Martin-Downs and Jenn Court
Event: Latornell Conservation Symposium
Date: November 19, 2019

Outline

1. Intro to GIO
2. Overview of Green Infrastructure
3. Green Infrastructure and Parks
4. State of Large Parks in the Golden Horseshoe report



The Green Infrastructure Ontario (GIO) Coalition is an alliance of organizations that share a common vision for a healthy, green Ontario where the economic, social, environmental and health benefits of green infrastructure are fully realized.

GIO Coalition Members



GIO Steering Committee

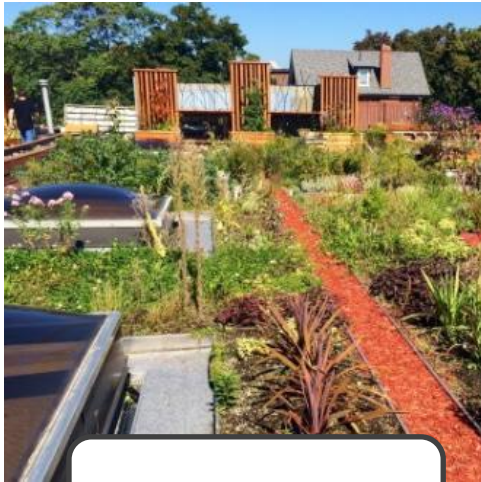
Over 40 general members:

- Businesses
- Industry and professional associations
- Municipal and Regional governments
- Conservation Authorities
- ENGOS



What is Green Infrastructure?

It encompasses:



Urban Agriculture

Green
Roofs/Walls



Urban
Forest



Stormwater
Systems



Parks and
Public Spaces

Natural
Heritage
Systems

Green Infrastructure Includes:



Green technologies
Eg. Permeable pavement



Soils

What is NOT Green Infrastructure?



Since 2014, green infrastructure has been included in:

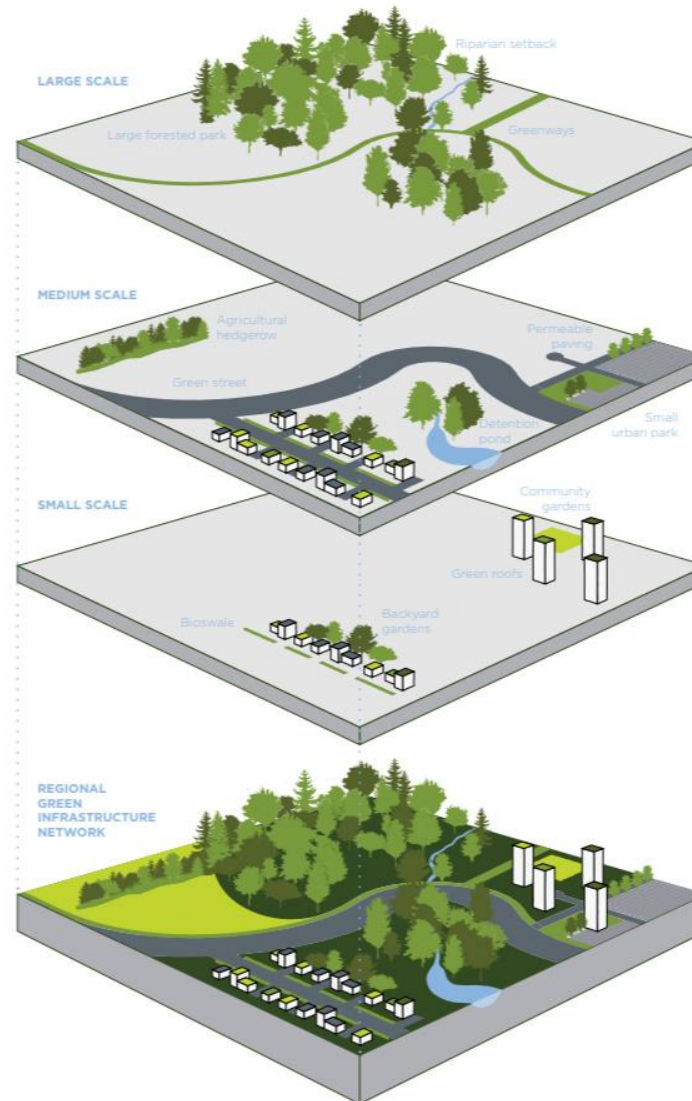
- O. REG. 588/17: Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure (2018)
- Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, 2017
- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe & Greenbelt Plan (2017)
- Wetland Conservation Strategy (2017)
- Federal Infrastructure Clean Water and Waste Water Fund (2016)
- Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change (2016)
- Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015
- Ontario's Climate Change Strategy (2015)
- Provincial Policy Statement (2014)

Communications & Other Activities



- Published :
 - The Case for Green Infrastructure In Ontario (2012)
 - State of the Urban Forest in the GTA (2016)
 - A Green Infrastructure Guide for Small Cities, Towns, and Rural Communities (2017)
 - State of Large Parks in Ontario's Golden Horseshoe (2019)
- Hosted workshops and sponsored conferences
- Publish Bi-monthly Newsletters highlighting green infrastructure policy progress and initiatives in Ontario and around the world.
- Participated in federal infrastructure roundtables with Minister Sohi & invite-only workshop with Deputy Minister Kelly Gillis
- Committee representation - 6
 - Ontario Biodiversity Council, Pan Canadian Expert Panel, Provincial Storm Water Guidelines, Greenbelt Council, Green Prosperity, Regional Public Works Commissioners Urban Forest subcommittee

Green Infrastructure is a Network



We frame green infrastructure around these key infrastructure concepts:

- **Assets**
- **Cost savings**
- **Secondary services**



CLIMATE CHANGE



ECONOMICS



STORMWATER



PUBLIC HEALTH



ECOSYSTEM HEALTH



COMMUNITY

Benefits of Using “Asset” Language

- Eligibility for federal and provincial infrastructure funding
- Improve the management of natural features
- Using financial language build the business case for green infrastructure



Green Infrastructure Asset Categories

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUS AREAS					
ASSET CATEGORY	Urban Forest	LID/Stormwater	Parks & Open Spaces	Agriculture & Urban Agriculture	Green Roofs/Walls
Biological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest/woodlot • Park tree • Street tree • Soil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural wetland • Natural watercourses • Lake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meadow • Soil • Natural open spaces • Valley land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural land • Community garden • Soil 	n/a
Mixed biological & engineered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil cell • Engineered soil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bioswale • Rain Garden • Constructed wetland • Dry/wet pond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park land • Trails 	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green roof • Green wall • Green roof garden
Engineered	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permeable paving • Rain Barrel • Infiltration trenches and chambers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports field • Playground 	n/a	n/a

Parks as Green Infrastructure



All parks are part of our green infrastructure network



Small and Large Public
Parks, Fields &
Playgrounds



Urban Woodlands &
Conservation Areas



Provincial parks &
National parks

STATE OF LARGE
PARKS IN
ONTARIO'S GOLDEN
HORSESHOE



State of Large Parks Report



Possibility grows here.



**Credit Valley
Conservation**
inspired by nature



Toronto and Region
Conservation
Authority



Report Purpose



- Regional scale analysis of park supply
- Benchmark the public park system in the Golden Horseshoe
- Assess current framework for funding, establishing, and managing large parks
- Evaluate current large park supply against anticipated population growth

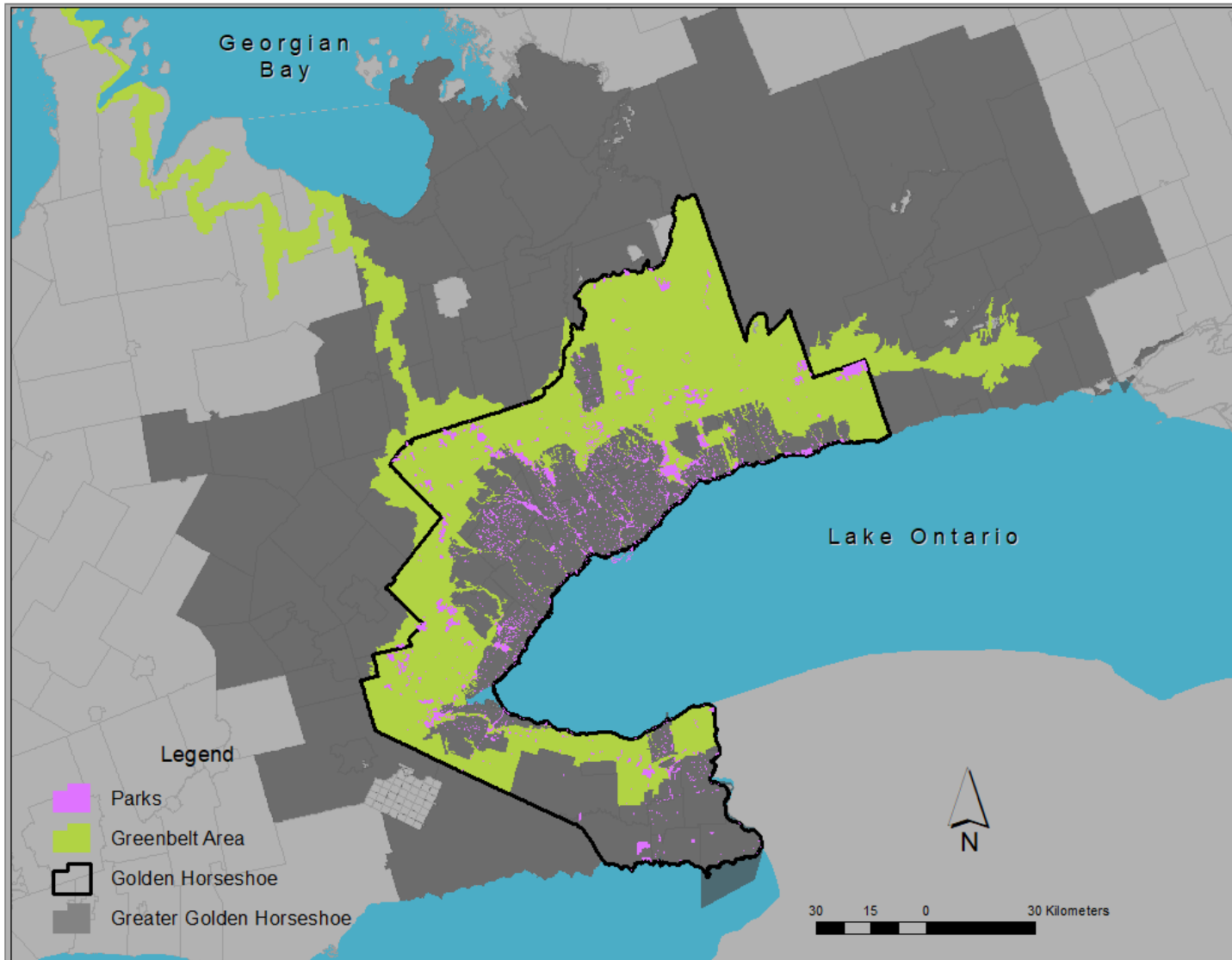
Benefits of Large Parks

- All parks contribute to human health and well-being
- Large parks have additional benefits:
 - More likely to be used for physical activity
 - Can allow for better nature appreciation and associated health benefits of reduced noise and visual stimulation
 - Contribute more ecosystem services, including cooling benefits and air quality improvements
 - Contribute more to climate change mitigation by sequestering more carbon
 - Often harbor more native species
 - Often forgotten in the discussion on parks in the GTA

Methodology

- Data collected in GIS format
- Parks: publicly owned and publically accessible piece of land that provides recreational and nature appreciation opportunities:
 - Municipal Parks
 - Conservation Areas
 - Federal Parks
 - Regional Forests
 - Provincial Parks
- 43 municipalities, 10 Conservation Authorities, federal and provincial park agencies, and the Niagara Parks Commission
- Large parks defined as ≥ 50 Ha

Study Area



In Ontario's Golden Horseshoe there are:

- 6,257 parks covering 54,000 ha
 - Smallest: St. Mary Street Parkette (0.005 ha)
 - Largest: Rouge National Urban Park (2,400 ha of rec. lands)
- 139 Large Parks (of 6,257 parks – 2.2%)
- 27,000 ha (of 54,000 ha – 50%)
- Some large parks already having capacity issues
- 'Recreational carrying capacity'

Georgian Bay

DURHAM

YORK

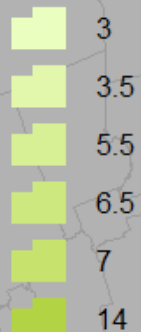
PEEL

TORONTO

Lake Ontario

Legend

Parkland by Region (%)



HALTON

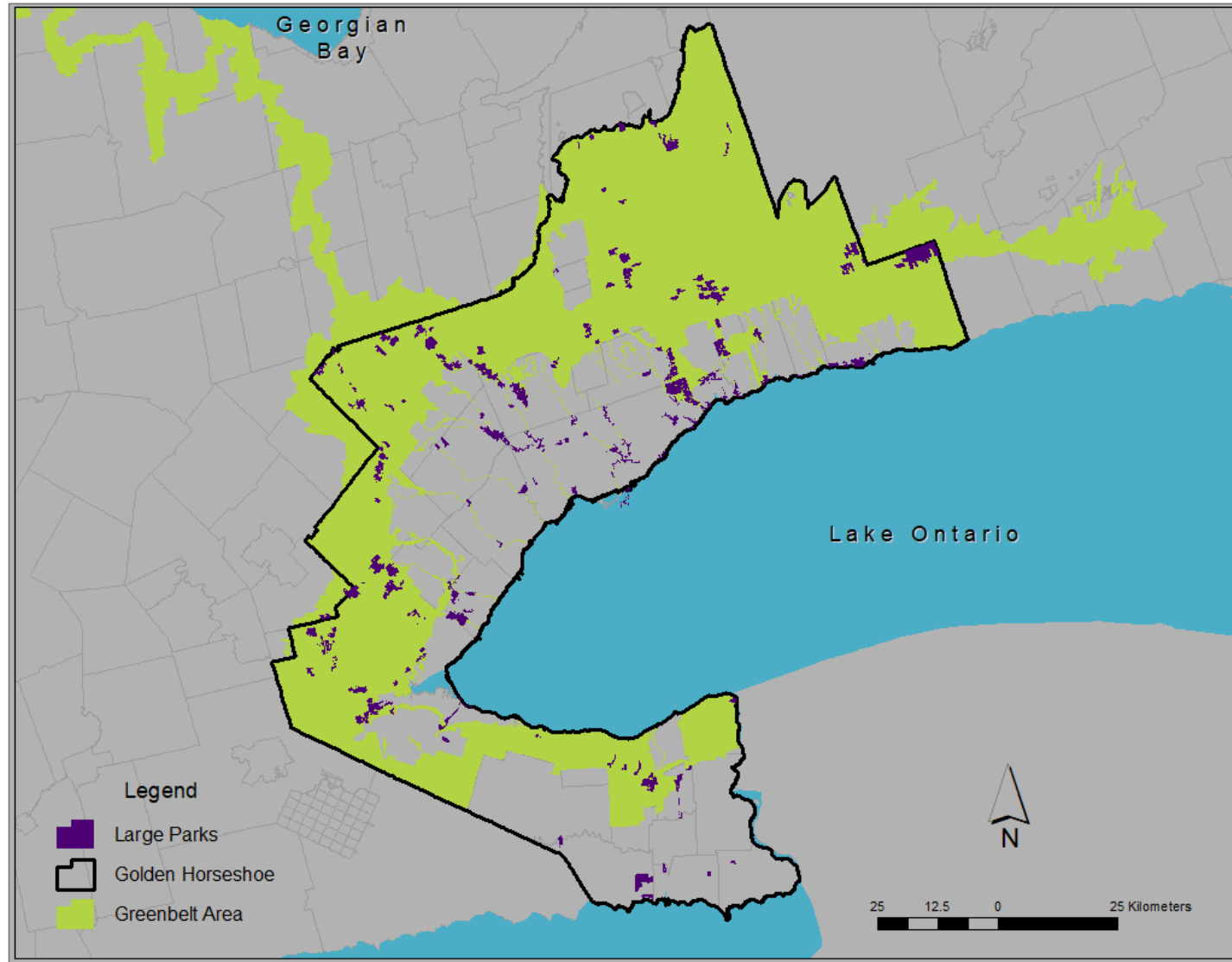
HAMILTON

NIAGARA

Golden Horseshoe



Current Large Park Distribution



Funding, Establishment, and Management

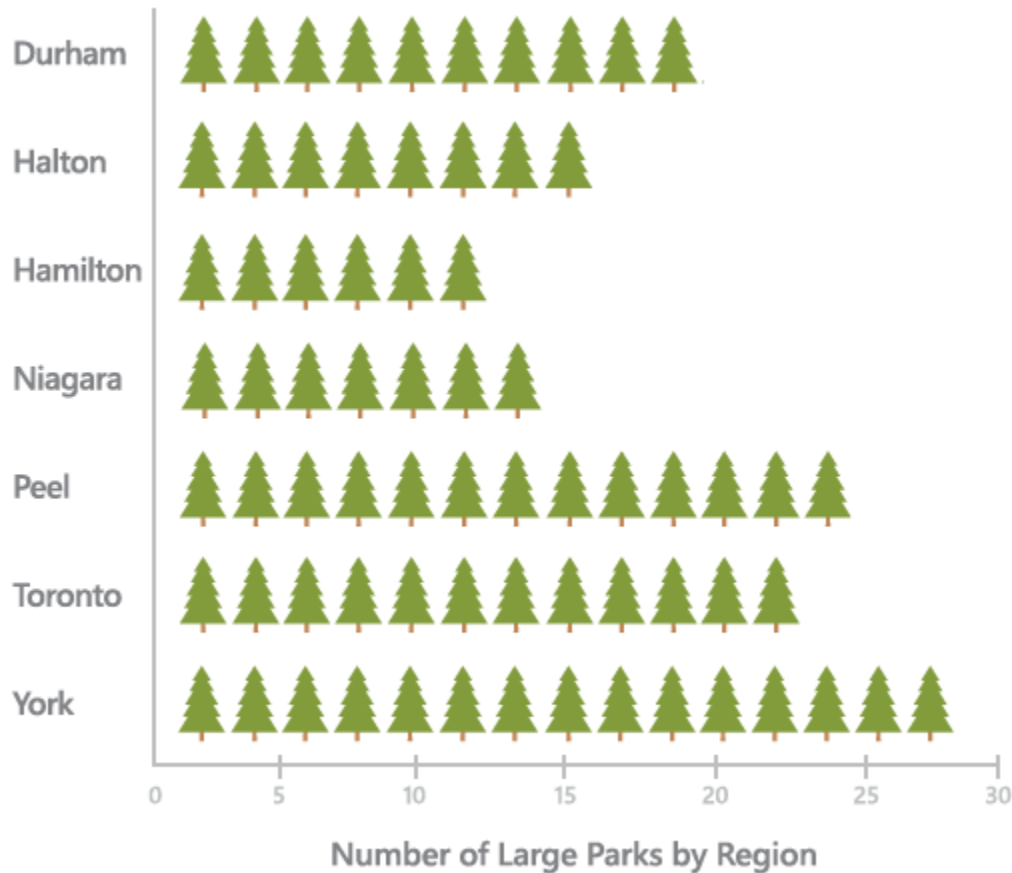
Park type	Main funding sources	Major driver of acquisition
Municipal Parks (Lower Tier)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General revenue • External revenue (e.g. grants, donations, cost-sharing arrangements) • Park land dedication that requires a portion of land used for development be set aside for park land or a cash-in-lieu payment • Park land has been excluded from development charges since 1997, but park infrastructure is eligible • Permit fees 	Recreational needs
Conservation Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly municipal levy funding, up to 50% contribution for land acquisition • Visitor fees 	Hazard lands, ecological significance
Regional Forests (Upper Tier)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General revenue 	Environmental protection
Provincial Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily visitor fees • Small portion from general revenue 	Environmental protection, cultural heritage
Federal Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General revenue • Some visitor fees 	Protection of representative natural areas across the country

Growing gap in capacity for planning, funding, establishing and managing large parks for regional recreation and nature appreciation in Ontario's Golden Horseshoe

- Lower-tier municipalities only level of government where park development driven by recreation (people focused); large parks not a priority.
- Province no longer matching Conservation Authority funds for land acquisition.

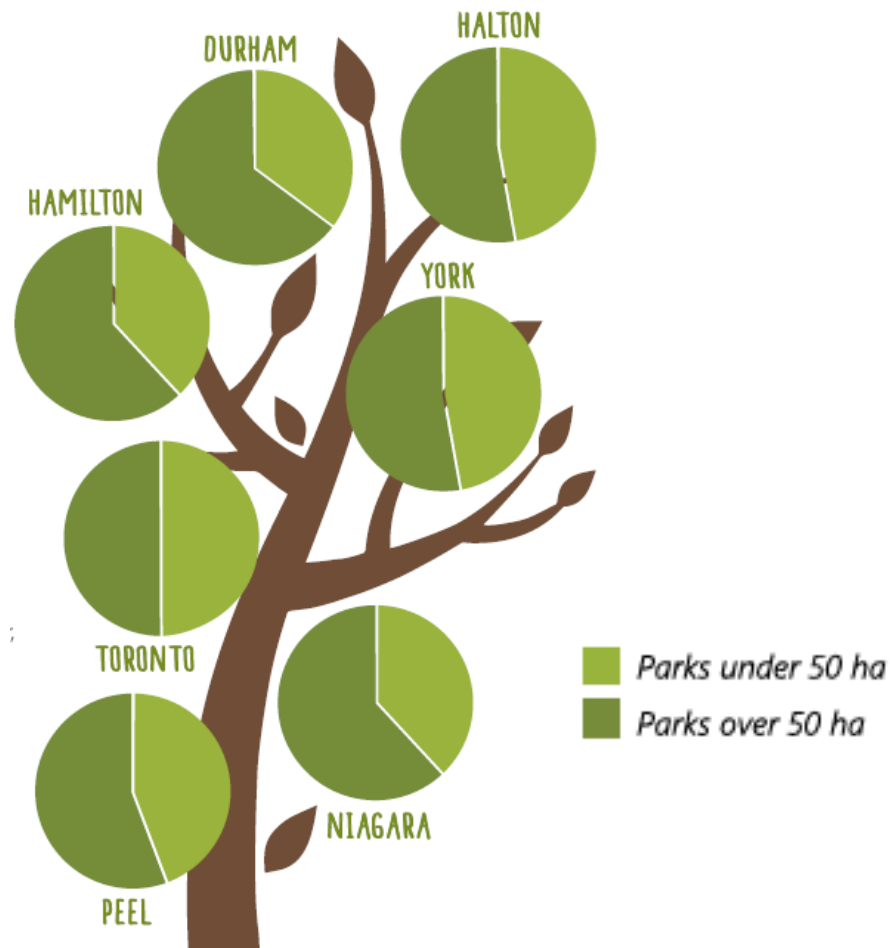
Large Parks by Region

Number of Parks



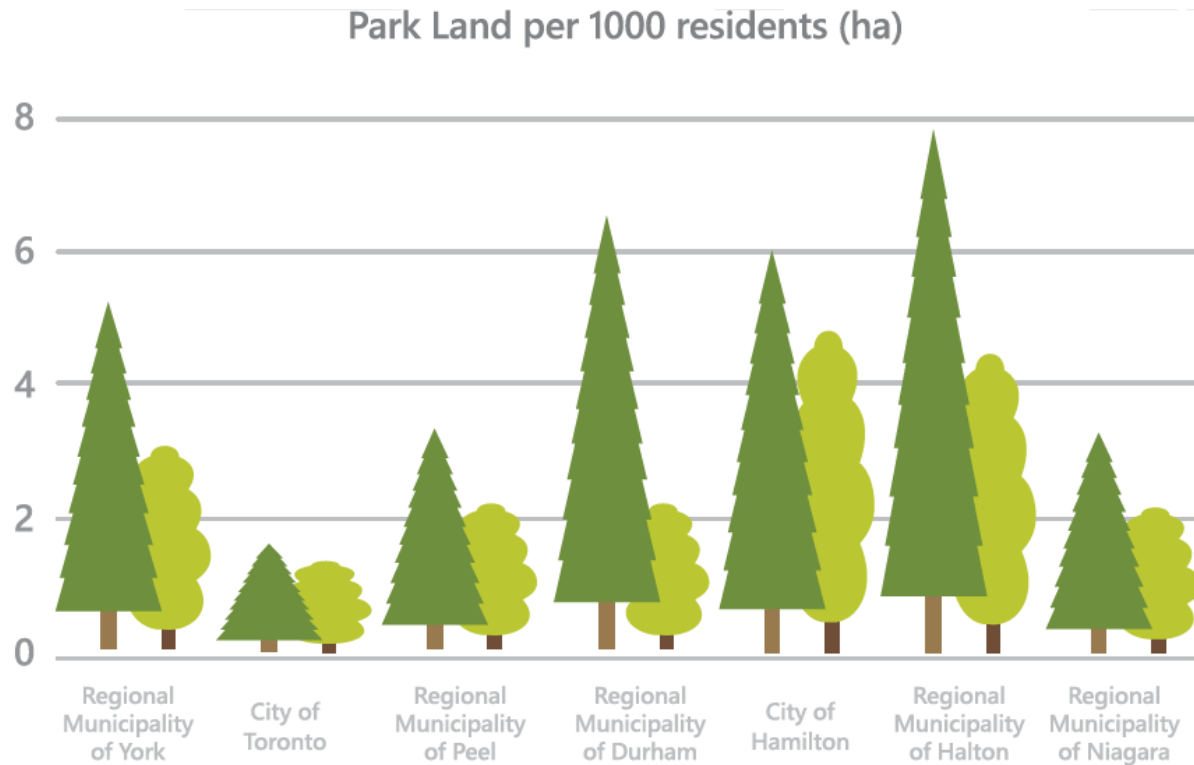
Large Parks by Region

Land Area



Large Park Size Distribution
(by land area)

Future Projections



- 2016 Parkland per thousand residents (ha)
- 2041 projected parkland per thousand residents (ha)

Conclusions

- Large parks are falling through the cracks
- Large park supply per capita will drop drastically with anticipated regional population growth
- Gaps exist in planning, funding, establishing, and managing large parks
- Need for policy and funding solutions to increase carrying capacity of existing large parks and to create new large parks

Infrastructure funding:

- The Federal government - \$120 billion over 10 years.
- The Province of Ontario - \$160 billion over 12 years.

For More Information:



www.greeninfrastructureontario.org

Follow us on twitter @GreenInfraOn

Consider Joining GIO

jcourt@greeninfrastructureontario.org

A colorful illustration of a sustainable city. In the background, there are modern buildings, a sun, and a blue sky with clouds. The middle ground shows a park with a river, trees, a playground, and people walking, jogging, and playing soccer. In the foreground, there are houses, a parking lot with cars, a car, a person pushing a stroller, and a person walking a dog. A white text box is overlaid on the scene.

Let's Make Green Infrastructure
the NEW NORMAL!