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CIELAP Report finds Ontario's 5 year old Greenbelt strongest in the world

(Toronto, March 1, 2010) – The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) today releases its report *Ontario's Greenbelt in an International Context*. The report looks at the experience of nine other greenbelts around the world and identifies lessons that will help ensure the permanence of Ontario's Greenbelt. It also makes recommendations on sustaining the Greenbelt into the future.

“Ontario's Greenbelt is the youngest of the greenbelts studied but is supported by the strongest legal protections,” says Maureen Carter-Whitney, CIELAP's research director, adding that “it has made significant progress in five short years and can continue to do so by learning from the successes and challenges of greenbelts that have existed for decades.”

Around the world, urban development is the biggest pressure and most consistent threat for greenbelts. The Ontario government has wisely paired the Greenbelt Plan with the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan and strong regional transportation planning, and should **continue efforts to contain urban sprawl** by making sure future growth is consistent with the Growth Plan.

Ms. Carter-Whitney also emphasizes the following advice to provincial and municipal governments that stems from her research findings:

- Effectively containing urban sprawl will allow governments to **take advantage of opportunities to expand the Greenbelt**. Stronger protection for existing environmentally sensitive lands, significant natural features and prime farmlands will maximize the benefits that greenbelts provide, such as clean water and air, fresher food produced near home, and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- **Provide support to near urban Greenbelt farmers** so that agriculture remains viable, and degraded natural areas can be rehabilitated and enhanced. Land use policies and plans are important but not sufficient on their own to fully protect the Greenbelt.

CIELAP's research shows that when earlier greenbelts were created many years ago, they were intended to preserve rural landscapes and separate urban areas from the countryside. Unexpectedly, these greenbelts also ended up protecting local water quality and quantity, biodiversity and food security for the future.

While our Greenbelt currently provides countless benefits that we are aware of, it has also given Ontario the potential to take care of future concerns that are not yet even fully understood including climate change impacts, water scarcity, rising oil prices, and food price inflation.

For further information please contact:

Maureen Carter-Whitney, CIELAP, 416-923-3529 ext 22; cell 416-997-2159; maureen@cielap.org

The full report is available on www.cielap.org

Founded in 1970, the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) is an independent environmental law and policy research and education organization.