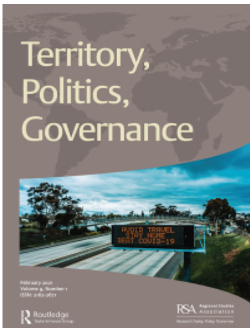

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Towards smart regional growth: institutional complexities and the regional governance of Southern Ontario's Greenbelt

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ABSTRACT
The task of developing regional greenbelts poses multidimensional challenges to policymakers. Unlike their early 20th-century predecessors, these greenspaces incorporate multiple functions including growth management, farmland and environmental protection, and increasing economic competitiveness. This regional and multifunctional approach to greenbelt management involves considerable governance complexities, as an increasing number of policy fields such as economic growth, agriculture, housing, nature conservation, different policy levels and various territorial jurisdictions become involved in policy implementation. However, institutional dimensions of contemporary greenbelt governance are hardly reflected within the literature. This is also the case for the Greater Golden Horseshoe region in Southern Ontario, Canada, where a regional Greenbelt Plan was implemented in 2005. By engaging with institutional perspectives on regional governance, we analyse how the governance of regional greenbelts and smart growth have been influenced by vertical, horizontal and territorial coordination challenges and politics at the provincial and local levels. We conclude that despite provincial government intervention in regional planning, the impact of market pressures, growth coalitions and institutional coordination problems prevent growth management policies from delivering the significant changes promised by the Ontario government.

KEYWORDS
greenbelts; smart growth; regional governance; institutions; Greater Golden Horseshoe

HISTORY Received 21 February 2020; in revised form 19 April 2021

INTRODUCTION

Greenbelts originated in late 19th- and early 20th-century efforts to preserve European urban greenspaces, spreading from England internationally after the Second World War. Such greenspace protections have since been established in other locations including Melbourne, Seoul,

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Copenhagen and Toronto (Sturzaker & Mell, 2017). While greenbelts were originally designed to maintain city–countryside divisions (Amati, 2008), over the past 30 years a new generation of greenbelts has emerged (Macdonald et al., 2021). These greenbelts are regional in scope and pursue more ambitious policy goals than did their predecessors, including protecting natural habitats and farmland, containing urban growth, and contributing to economic development through ecosystem services. Yet given the multiple objectives and the broad spatial scope of greenbelt policies, many more stakeholders are involved in policy implementation. Horizontally, effective greenbelt governance requires coordination across several policy fields such as agriculture, nature conservation, tourism and housing including public, private and civil society actors. Vertically, engagement with decision-makers at several policy levels is needed. Territorially, the regional scope of greenbelts involves coordination across numerous municipal jurisdictions within the greenbelt but also beyond its outer boundaries to avoid housing development leapfrogging this greenspace. The institutional complexities involved in vertical, horizontal and territorial coordination also make greenbelt policies particularly vulnerable to politics: greenbelt and, more broadly, smart growth policies challenge deeply entrenched development practices. The politics involved in effectively implementing these policies require balancing competing stakeholder interests, which can be difficult given the influence of powerful growth coalitions.

Despite the complicated nature of this new generation of greenbelts, academic debates have paid little attention to the governance processes after the policy formation stage. Instead, there is greater focus within the literature on the role of civil society groups in greenspace protection and stakeholders' reaction to the introduction of greenbelt legislation (Burton, 2016; Gopinath & Jackson, 2010; Macdonald & Keil, 2012). We address this literature gap by analysing how greenbelt governance is impacted by the institutional environment in which the greenbelt is situated. More specifically, we address how greenbelt and smart growth policies are coordinated between stakeholder groups across different policy levels (*vertical coordination*), across different policy fields (*horizontal coordination*), and across the territorial jurisdictions of multiple municipalities and across functional spaces (*territorial coordination*), along with the politics involved in these coordination processes. We take the greenbelt in the rapidly growing Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) region in Southern Ontario, Canada, as our empirical case study. Established in 2005, the GGH greenbelt was designed to preserve farmland and natural areas, contain urban growth, and provide recreational spaces. The greenbelt stretches across the GGH, a region characterized by its strong regional economy and intensifying suburban growth pressures. Given this context, we ask the following research questions: which are the challenges in governing regional greenbelts and smart growth initiatives across numerous municipal jurisdictions, policy domains and policy levels, how could their implementation be improved? what insights can be drawn for policymakers and, more broadly, for regional governance debates?

This article focuses on a 15-year period (2003–18) in Ontario's history under a Liberal government. This research is based on 43 interviews conducted in the GGH region between August 2014 and June 2019 with municipal and provincial planners, academics, and representatives from environmental, developer and farming organizations. Interviewees were selected through a snowball sampling method to include key stakeholder groups responsible for greenbelt management and experts in the fields of regional governance, growth management and suburbanization. The semi-structured interviews involved open-ended questions and focused on topics including how greenbelt and smart growth policy implementation has been influenced by coordination and political challenges between provincial and municipal governments, stakeholders and across multiple municipalities. Using our conceptual framework on three dimensions of institutional coordination, interview transcripts were analysed to identify how institutional arrangements impact greenbelt policy implementation. A range of empirical literature including provincial planning documents and media articles were also reviewed.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. First, we review the literature on regional governance and institutional debates, the politics of smart growth, and summarize the conceptual framework applied to this research. Following that, an overview of the GGH region, the greenbelt and the regional growth plan is provided. Next, through a discussion of vertical, horizontal and territorial institutional coordination, we analyse the challenges involved in Greenbelt and Growth Plan implementation. We conclude that in spite of increased provincial government involvement in regional planning, that uneven policy implementation, growth politics and institutional coordination problems prevent the Greenbelt and Growth Plan from delivering the fundamental changes promised by the Liberals.

AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Urban regions have become a key scale for policy interventions in recent decades, given the influence of globalization and neoliberalization (Galland & Harrison, 2020). However, governing urban regions is a complex process involving state, private and civil society actors in a multilayered institutional environment, requiring these actors' coordination to effectively address public policy issues that transcend municipal boundaries. We view regional governance as 'the vertical and horizontal coordination of regional transformation processes beyond administrative boundaries by state and non-state actors' (Willi et al., 2018, p. 12). Reflecting recent trends in state spatial reorganization, there has been a growing delegation of government responsibilities for public service delivery to the private sector, public–private partnerships and voluntary organizations (Brenner, 2004; Stoker, 1998). However, this outsourcing of responsibilities can increase regional institutional fragmentation, as it involves the creation of multiple authorities with often overlapping jurisdictions. At the same time, effectively addressing regional public policy issues requires actors' involvement at several policy levels. Therefore, regional policymaking and implementation necessarily occur within multilevel governance arrangements. Moreover, a key challenge of multilevel governance is that coordination costs rise significantly as the number of jurisdictions involved increases (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). Thus, given these complex conditions, policymakers face considerable challenges to effectively plan and govern urban regions.

Within regional governance debates, institutional development and change have long been at the centre with institutions being viewed as enabling, empowering or restricting the actions and decision-making processes of actors and thus shaping the outcomes of their interactions (Galland & Harrison, 2020; Hohn & Neuer, 2006). In line with debates on 'new institutionalism', we view institutions as rules and organized practices that are embedded within structures of meaning and resources, which are relatively stable in the face of changing circumstances.[1] Following this definition, regional institutions create order, distribute power resources and shape power relations within regional governance processes, affect actors' behaviour, and enable or constrain actors differently in decision-making processes (March & Olsen, 2011). While institutions structure the governance of urban regions, they typically do not determine political behaviour or outcomes in detail. As March and Olsen (2011) outline, there may be conflicting rules and competing interpretations of rules and situations, and actors can change institutions or design new ones. Within institutionalist debates on the governance of urban regions, there has been broad discussion on how to effectively design and change regional institutions with key approaches including the metropolitan reform model, the public choice school and new regionalism. The metropolitan reform model argues for government consolidation through amalgamation, and that overarching governments are better at delivering public policies (Nelles, 2012; Savitch & Vogel, 2000). The public choice school advocates that markets rather than governments should dictate regional forms and that institutional fragmentation and intermunicipal competition can create better public service delivery. In contrast, scholars of new regionalism argue that effective regional governance can be achieved through collaborative arrangements with public–private partnerships and

voluntary arrangements (Nelles, 2012). However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to institutionalizing urban regions, as local conditions and constraints can make only some of these models applicable in different contexts (Galland & Harrison, 2020; Nelles, 2012).

Analysing the institutional architecture of regional governance is not only essential to an understanding of how policies are designed and implemented, but also of the ways actors and policy levels are involved in governance processes, as well as the division of power resources (Lange et al., 2013). Within governance debates, institutions are thus seen as an essential component of urban and regional politics, as political behaviour, contestations and decision-making processes can be understood by examining the 'rules of the game' and the way that actors relate to them (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). The institutional architecture of governance shapes the ways multiple actors are involved in governance processes and organizes how power and authority is constituted and exercised (Lange et al., 2013; March & Olsen, 2011). Institutions embody power relations that tend to privilege certain courses of action and actors over others (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). However, while institutions may attempt to constrain certain actors, resistance from these groups often occurs (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013), and politics can lead to change in the institutional setting. Change is a constant feature of institutions and actors find themselves operating within increasingly complex institutional environments, which strongly shape politics and governance practices (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013; March & Olsen, 2011).

The politics of smart growth and greenbelt planning

Regional greenbelts are now embedded within complicated regional governance and institutional settings, with their governance and implementation involving a variety of stakeholders that place conflicting demands on these landscapes. As a key planning approach to growth management efforts in urban regions, greenbelts have become an essential component of smart growth agendas. In the past two decades, visions of smart growth emerged in North American planning practice as a reaction against low-density suburban development with the aim to reorient traditional development patterns and practices (Grant, 2009). Smart growth principles include mixed land uses, compact development, greenspace protection, transit-accessible communities and establishing multi-actor governance partnerships necessary for policy implementation which often reach across territorial boundaries (Krueger & Gibbs, 2008; Scott, 2007). While these have become popular, conflicts between local interest groups can significantly shape smart growth policy formation and implementation. As smart growth policies have substantial effects on redistributing the costs and benefits of land development, they often put economic interests in competition with smart growth advocates with interest groups significantly influencing policy outcomes (Hawkins, 2014). For example, environmentalists often have fewer power resources available to compete with local growth coalitions, including developers who have a greater ability to translate their goals into policy because of their considerable financial resources and access to political decision-makers (Hawkins, 2014; Logan & Molotch, 1987). In processes of smart growth policy formation and implementation, institutions play a key role in mediating competing demands in land use and in balancing unequal power relations among interest groups (cf. Ramirez de la Cruz, 2009). While the smart growth literature focuses on policy evaluation (Hawkins, 2014; Ramirez de la Cruz, 2009), some debate has been more critical about implementation of these policies (Filion & McSpurren, 2007; Grant, 2009). However, the institutional architecture and polity and politics of smart growth and greenbelts are hardly reflected within this literature.

In addition, as greenbelts are an important strategy to achieving smart growth practices, we aim to address gaps within the greenbelt literature. While the academic debates on greenbelts focus on the role of non-government actors in enabling their establishment (Burton, 2016; Gopinath & Jackson, 2010), less attention is given to governance practices after the policy formation stage and to what ensures these greenbelts' long-term success. Moreover, such debates

have examined the role that institutional settings play in influencing policy design and reform (Han & Go, 2019; Pond, 2009). However, these institutional approaches in the greenbelt literature rarely reflect upon the regional governance of these greenspaces. In this article, we address these theoretical gaps to explore the institutional and political complexities of regional greenbelt governance.

Conceptual framework: how institutional coordination shapes regional greenbelt governance

To analyse the role of institutions in greenbelt management, we identify three dimensions shaping the effectiveness of the governance of regional greenbelts: vertical, horizontal and territorial institutional coordination.[2] With the influence of state spatial reorganization and the growing importance of regions, regional governance involves the *vertical coordination* of public, private and civil society stakeholders at different policy levels – municipal, regional, provincial or federal.[3] These multilevel governance relationships are necessary to effectively address regional public policy issues, which requires the involvement of stakeholders at multiple policy levels (Alcantara et al., 2016). Greenbelt policy implementation also often occurs within multilevel governance arrangements, with the vertical coordination between stakeholders having a substantial impact on greenspace management. Greenbelt policies are usually set by senior levels of government and implemented by a lower government authority (Carter-Whitney, 2010). Often, uneven power relations between these policy levels result in coordination and implementation problems.

Within the literature, *horizontal coordination* often focuses on interactions between different government departments (Peters, 1998). However, our conceptualization of horizontal coordination goes beyond that to include interactions between public, private and civil society stakeholders within a municipal or provincial jurisdiction. In addition, with the growing complexity of public policy issues for governments to address, there is a need for horizontal coordination across government departments and multiple policy fields, along with their associated stakeholder communities. However, achieving effective intersectoral policy coordination is challenging because of increasing institutional fragmentation and the diversity of stakeholders involved in policy implementation (Stead & Meijers, 2009). In the case of greenbelt and smart growth governance, horizontal coordination includes various policy domains – land-use planning, tourism, economic development, housing, nature conservation and agriculture – as well as the communities shaping these domains including private stakeholders and citizen initiatives. Pro-growth interests such as developers often try to influence politicians, and given that these stakeholders tend to have access to considerable resources, they can significantly shape land management policies (Hawkins, 2014).

While interactions between municipalities are often discussed as horizontal coordination within governance debates, we characterize these interactions as *territorial coordination* instead. There are several benefits of intermunicipal coordination including fiscal incentives, addressing regional public service needs and controlling spillover effects into neighbouring jurisdictions (Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Spicer, 2014). However, municipalities often face high transaction costs when working with other local governments, which can reduce their incentive to cooperate (Spicer, 2014). Regional greenbelt and smart growth policy management involves coordinating across multiple municipal and special-purpose bodies' jurisdictions. However, administrative jurisdictions rarely match a greenbelt's boundaries, resulting in territorial coordination problems, and conflicts that influence effective policy implementation. These types of coordination are interrelated and contested by stakeholders amidst power dynamics. For example, tensions in the vertical interactions between stakeholders at different policy levels can translate into horizontal and territorial coordination problems between groups, which ultimately impacts policy outcomes. Bringing together these three forms of institutional coordination allows for an analysis

of the institutional complexities of greenbelt governance to examine the difficulties of managing new generation greenbelts, which we discuss below. Based on this framework for the institutional complexities of the governance of regional greenbelts, the next section provides an overview of the GGH region and the legislation related to its greenbelt.

KEY POLICIES OF THE LIBERALS' REGIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR THE GGH REGION

As one of the fastest growing regions within North America, the GGH region covers approximately 32,000 km^2 composed of a total of 110 municipalities (Figure 1) (Allen & Campsie, 2013). With a population of approximately 9 million people as of 2016, the region is predicted to grow to 14.87 million by 2051 (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2020). The GGH is institutionally complex, including the Ontario provincial government, a municipal-level divided between upper, lower and single-tier municipalities, and a range of special-purpose bodies.[4] Ultimately, this institutional environment creates coordination and governance challenges.[5]

Moreover, the establishment of the GGH region's greenbelt resulted from several planning and governance failures. Between the late 1970s and early 2000s, the Toronto region lacked a regional planning body and regional plan. Despite several task force and commission recommendations, the absence of a regional-scale organization responsible for regional planning was never

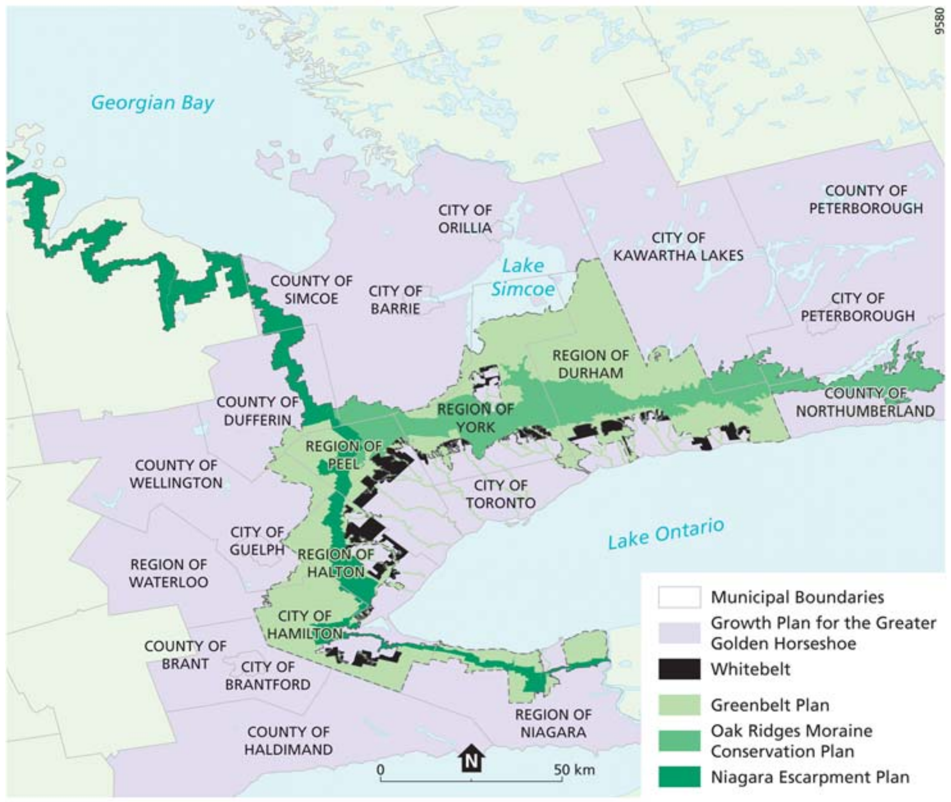

Figure 1. The Greater Golden Horseshoe region, Canada.
Sources: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (2020); and Ministry of Municipal Affairs (2017).

established within the GGH, which has significant governance implications (White, 2007). Given that the Conservative government at the time (1995–2003) had weakened planning legislation that ultimately encouraged suburban growth, residential development remained unregulated (Frisken, 2001). By the late 1990s, increasing public and political awareness of urban sprawl-related problems and development proposals in the Oak Ridges Moraine fuelled the creation of concerned citizen initiatives (Sandberg et al., 2013). These groups later became a driving force behind the greenbelt's creation. As these conditions intensified, the Conservatives protected the Oak Ridges Moraine and created a series of smart growth panels, inspired by American smart growth ideas (Taylor, 2013). In the 2003 provincial election, the Liberals proposed a greenbelt and rebranded the prior smart growth agenda as 'Places to Grow', in part to generate support in suburban electoral ridings. By winning the 2003 election, the Liberals received a strong mandate to pursue a regional planning agenda, providing a crucial opportunity for them to make significant changes to land-use and environment planning (Eidelman, 2010). Thus, the Liberals were able to do what no previous government had done in the past 40 years: they implemented a regional plan for the greater Toronto region (Taylor, 2013). In their first years in office, the Liberal government established an ambitious planning framework for the GGH designed to achieve their regional vision by introducing the Greenbelt and Growth Plans, creating a regional transportation agency known as Metrolinx, and strengthening planning laws.

Billed as the largest permanently protected greenbelt in the world, the GGH greenbelt spans approximately 720,000 ha and integrates areas that were previously preserved under the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2017). In 2005, the Greenbelt Act was passed by the provincial government (hereafter 'the Province'), allowing for the creation of a Greenbelt Plan, also released that year. The Greenbelt Plan addresses multiple policy fields including agriculture, nature conservation and infrastructure, and is designed to protect against the loss of farmland and natural areas, and to mitigate climate change (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2017). Developing strong stakeholder support is key to the long-term success of a greenbelt, which the Liberals facilitated by providing C$25 million for the creation of the Greenbelt Foundation to promote the greenbelt through education programmes. The Province also created a Greenbelt Council of stakeholder experts to provide guidance to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about plan implementation. However, the Liberals made a strategic political decision not to create a special-purpose body to oversee the greenbelt's management, which would create another organization they could not control and instead retained responsibility for the greenbelt within the Province (interview 1) (see Table A1 in Appendix A, Supplemental data). In the time since the greenbelt began, there has been a positive shift in discourse surrounding the greenbelt (interviews 2 and 3). Indeed, the greenbelt was initially contested by farmers, developers and municipalities, as the introduction of land-use restrictions had a significant impact on their livelihoods and development practices. The location of the greenbelt's boundaries determined if developers could build on their land or if farmers could sell their properties for new development. However, in most cases over the past several years, these stakeholders' initial objections have been replaced with acceptance and some groups have even embraced the opportunities provided by the greenbelt. Thus, this stakeholder acceptance represents an important achievement towards the effective governance of the greenbelt. The Greenbelt Plan has benefited from dedicated stakeholder support in addition to the foundation's activities, resulting in broad public support for the greenbelt.

From the beginning, the Greenbelt Plan was designed to work together with a regional growth plan. The Greenbelt Plan identifies where urbanization cannot occur to protect farmland and environmentally sensitive areas, while the 'Places to Grow' legislation designates how and where to accommodate urban growth. In 2005, the Province passed the Places to Grow Act as a foundation for preparing growth plans in Ontario. The first of these plans to be released

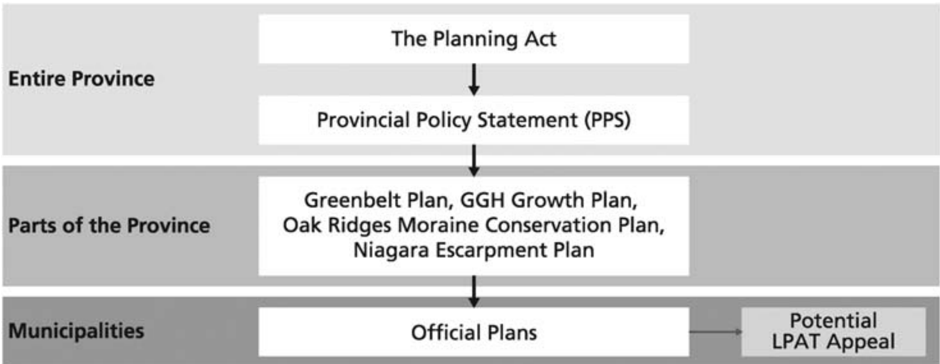

Figure 2. Ontario's land-use planning system.

was for the GGH in 2006. Based on smart growth principles, this 25-year growth plan was designed to manage the region's growth until 2031 (now extended to 2051), outline population projections, and encourage intensification in 25 urban growth centres (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2020).[6] Provincial staff review the Greenbelt and Growth Plans every 10 years to assess their effectiveness. Thus, the greenbelt is strongly protected because it is only during this review process that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can make amendments to protected areas within the greenbelt. However, such changes are not allowed to decrease the total area of the greenbelt (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2017). The Province launched a simultaneous review of the Greenbelt Plan, the GGH Growth Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan in 2015, with revised versions released in 2017. The institutional designs of the Greenbelt and Growth Plans are based on a vertical hierarchical structure that fits within Ontario's provincially led land-use planning system (Figure 2).

Through the Planning Act and the Provincial Policy Statement, the Province provides direction for land-use planning in Ontario. Within specific areas of the Province, provincial plans have more detailed policies to meet certain goals such as the GGH Growth and Greenbelt Plans. Municipalities must then implement these provincial policies through their official plans. In cases of disputes about municipal planning decisions, appeals can be made to the local planning appeal tribunal (LPAT).[7] As a quasi-judicial administrative tribunal that makes decisions about municipal land-use planning matters, the LPAT provides a dispute-resolution function in Ontario's land-use planning system. In the next section, we analyse the governance and institutional problems of GGH greenbelt implementation.

THE INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES AND TERRITORIAL POLITICS INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE GREENBELT PLAN

In this section we explore how greenbelt governance is coordinated between public, private and civil society actors at different policy levels in diverse policy fields and across jurisdictions within the GGH region. Through our analytical lens of vertical, horizontal and territorial coordination, we analyse the challenges faced during the first 15 years of greenbelt implementation in Ontario.

Vertical coordination: greenbelt development as an articulation of provincial–municipal relations

The Greenbelt Plan provides an excellent illustration of vertical institutional coordination. Indeed, the implementation of these policies can be seen as the geographical articulation of

provincial interests at the municipal level. Provincial–municipal relations in Ontario reflect complicated arrangements of shared responsibilities, power asymmetries and coordination problems that influence greenbelt implementation. During their time in office, the Liberal government tried to improve provincial–municipal relations, which was necessary for the success of regional planning policies. Indeed, provincial–municipal relations in Ontario are still strongly influenced by the legacy of 19th-century legislation that reinforces uneven power relations by limiting municipal authority, making municipalities subordinate to the Province. Since the early 2000s, provincial–municipal relations have evolved with updated legislation including the Municipal Act, 2001 and the City of Toronto Act, 2006, providing municipalities more autonomy and reflecting a less prescriptive provincial approach. The late 1990s and early 2000s marked a turbulent political period of municipal institutional reforms initiated by a Conservative government including amalgamations (Côté & Fenn, 2014). The Liberals sought to rebuild this conflictual provincial–municipal relationship that had been damaged by the territorially divisive politics of their Conservative predecessors which favoured suburban municipalities over the urban core (Addie & Keil, 2015). In contrast, the Liberals appeared to view local governments as partners, increasing provincial support for municipalities through municipal enabling legislation (Côté & Fenn, 2014; Henstra, 2017).

The institutional context under which the Greenbelt Act and Places to Grow Act were established were influential to the form this legislation took. Under Canada's Westminster government model, provincial governments have strong authority for land-use planning and private property rights are not constitutionally protected (Leffers, 2017). Thus, the Liberals faced no institutional barriers to establishing the greenbelt, had no legal obligation to compensate landowners, and could distance themselves from local politics as municipalities are responsible for implementation (Pond, 2009). However, while the provincial government has the authority to unilaterally impose a greenbelt, the Liberals invested significant resources to appease stakeholders and generate support for this greenspace. The Liberals used several institutional tools to build stakeholder support including establishing the Greenbelt Foundation, giving land trusts funding to negotiate conservation easements, and providing grants to protect natural heritage areas (Pond, 2009). Since the Greenbelt Plan was created, the Liberals also expanded the greenbelt to protect additional natural areas including 21 urban river valleys, with these protections gaining environmentalists' praise. Thus, these actions taken by the Liberals were an important part of the coalition building process, resulting in the greenbelt's broad public support.

An institutional weakness of the Greenbelt and Growth Plans, however, is that their effective implementation is dependent upon consistent provincial support, otherwise the politics of economic interest groups may undermine these polices. Moreover, Ontario has a history of fluctuating provincial political involvement in regional affairs. While the Liberals promoted a regional agenda, the provincial government had slowly retreated from playing a more engaged regional role during the latter half of the 20th century (Frisken, 2001). In contrast to the Liberals, a new Conservative government elected in 2018 under Premier Doug Ford has prioritized the greenbelt differently than did their predecessors.[8] In 2019, the More Homes, More Choices Act was approved, which has been criticized for sweeping changes to the province's land-use planning system that weakens environmental protections and encourages urban sprawl (Ryerson City Building Institute, 2019). The Ontario government's history of shifting involvement in regional affairs thus raises questions about the status of the Greenbelt Plan when provincial priorities' change, and how to ensure the long-term success of this plan, given this political context.

Also, there was a weak institutionalization of regional planning within the Toronto area for decades. With the establishment of the Growth Plan, the Liberals introduced a new policy level: the GGH, fixing regional issues at a new territorial scale.[9] However, the Liberals failed to create a formal regional government for the GGH, instead taking the role as the regional government in absentia, which has been common practice throughout Ontario's regional governance history

(Frisken, 2001).[10] While a regional government was a key recommendation of the 1996 report of the Greater Toronto Area Task Force studying regional governance reforms, since that time only the Greater Toronto Services Board was established in 1998 to coordinate regional services, yet was dissolved by 2001 (White, 2007). Due to this weak institutionalization, the provincial response has been to create numerous GGH-specific policies to direct municipal action, creating coordination problems and ultimately influencing policy implementation.

Despite the Liberals' efforts to improve municipal relations, the Greenbelt and Growth Plans reinforce traditional hierarchical provincial–municipal relationships of uneven power relations, which influences policy implementation. While some municipalities resent what they perceive as unfair provincial restrictions placed upon them, others blame the Province for problems that arise. Despite recent municipal legislative reforms, power asymmetries are evident as municipalities still operate in an uncertain political environment, with shifts in provincial interests altering local resources (Henstra, 2017). Thus provincial–municipal relations reflect a form of multilevel governance that privileges the strong authoritative role of senior governments with lower policy levels having limited leverage in decision-making processes (Alcantara et al., 2016). Coordination challenges between the provincial and municipal stakeholders involved in Greenbelt and Growth Plan implementation are reflected in municipal resistance to these provincial policies. With recent municipal legislative changes as well as inconsistencies in the initial policies, municipalities have freedom to pursue different strategies to achieve provincial policy goals, resulting in problems in the initial phase of Greenbelt and Growth Plan implementation. Therefore, in the 2015 policy review, for example, the ministry took a different approach according to a provincial planner:

> the Province took a lighter touch approach to implementing and seeing that first conformity exercise with the [2006] Growth Plan, policies and [intensification and density] targets. But this time around we were much more prescriptive, pedantic, and detailed on those targets what we want to see. … That has left upper tier municipalities with less flexibility and wiggle room to achieve the broad policy outcomes that we want … and so they're struggling. (interview 4)

Thus, while cooperation between the Province and municipalities has recently become the norm, the Ontario government remains firmly in control and will assert its authority to ensure municipal compliance, if needed (Henstra, 2017).

To conclude, at first sight it appears that the Greenbelt Plan's vertical institutional design is effective as the Province sets the planning framework that is implemented by municipalities. This comes with advantages as the Province has the strong authority to shape smart growth policies. Upon closer examination, however, we find that this vertical institutional design translates into considerable challenges of horizontal coordination at the local level influencing greenbelt implementation, which will be discussed in the next section.

Horizontal coordination: how politics and stakeholder self-interests undermine greenbelt implementation

Despite the benefits of the vertical institutional design of greenbelt and smart growth policies and improvements in provincial–municipal relations, trade-offs at the municipal level are a feature of this institutional context. Indeed, horizontal coordination at the local level is reflected through relationships between municipalities, developers and farmers, contributing to uneven Greenbelt and Growth Plan implementation. There have been diverse municipal reactions to these plans, reflecting the complexity of the GGH's municipal structures. With 110 municipalities including large cities and rural communities, municipalities have varying administrative capacities and development perspectives. Many municipalities such as Hamilton, and Lincoln have embraced the Greenbelt Plan by pursuing their own initiatives

with partners to further support policy goals (Hertel & Markovich, 2015). Thus, the Greenbelt Plan has become a mechanism to facilitate better governance practices. Similar to the argument of Mettler and Sorelle (2014) that the establishment of public policies can allow for the creation of new interest groups, the introduction of the Greenbelt Plan has led to the establishment of such new organizations including the Greenbelt Foundation. Through these organizations' programmes, it increases opportunities for stakeholder participation in implementation activities. Finally, the Greenbelt Plan has benefitted from committed leadership in all sectors that strongly defend this greenspace's protection. These leaders that facilitate stakeholder coordination can be considered as a key component to enhancing the greenbelt's governance capacity.

At the same time, however, the horizontal coordination between pro-growth stakeholders creates problems for greenbelt management, as economic self-interests can threaten effective policy implementation. Some municipalities view the greenbelt as 'strangling them' due to its land-use restrictions which could impede their economic viability to attract new residential development and hinder their reliance on revenue generating mechanisms including development charges (interview 2).[11] As these municipalities rely upon interest groups such as developers to generate economic growth, they may become accommodating to developers, creating political conditions that conflict with regional planning restrictions (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007; Eidelman, 2010). These municipalities can be seen as 'growth machines', which are influenced by the politics of local growth coalitions who dominate local decision-making processes (Logan & Molotch, 1987). In Ontario, developers significantly influence municipal politics by financing local election campaigns. The non-profit organization Campaign Fairness Ontario (2016) finds that the development industry is a major supporter of local political candidates.[12] For example, in the 2014 municipal elections, the development community strategically donated in specific ridings, particularly in areas outside the greenbelt such as Barrie and Aurora which have less development restrictions (Campaign Fairness Ontario, 2016). Through these donations, developers affect municipal election results, leading to the creation of local councils more favourable to economic development interests (Campaign Fairness Ontario, 2016; MacDermid, 2006). These practices highlight that powerful interest groups such as developers have considerable resources and ability to influence the selection of politicians, which provides them a greater opportunity to shape policy formation and implementation (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007; Hawkins, 2014). While these municipalities must adhere to provincial planning laws, they may not entirely accept these policies. For instance, during the initial phase of the Growth Plan's implementation, some municipalities were resistant to these policies and applied the lowest possible density targets for greenfield areas allowed by the plan. While this was not a widespread practice, some municipalities took flexible approaches in how they interpreted the policies, reflecting their interests in continuing greenfield development (interview 4). Thus, this pro-growth mentality of local councils in some municipalities creates conflicts with the advocates of the Greenbelt and Growth Plans including environmentalists and progressive planners. These business-as-usual development practices ultimately undermine the smart growth principles of these policies.

The above discussion highlights a key problem with the institutional design of the GGH's growth management policies, as they are vulnerable to being undermined by provincial or municipal politics. For example, the Liberals made a strategic political decision to leave land outside of the greenbelt to accommodate future urban development. With approximately 45,000 ha of land as of 2016, the 'whitebelt' refers to rural areas between the greenbelt's southern boundary and the outer edge of urban settlement areas adjacent to Lake Ontario (Figure 1).[13] Designed to relieve growth pressures, this area has fewer restrictions than land protected under the Greenbelt Plan, which can be re-designated as needed for urbanization in local planning processes (Tomalty

& Komorowski, 2011). As a planner stated, the Liberals' rationale behind the whitebelt can be viewed as a decision to appease developers:

> we're going to leave a huge chunk of prime agriculture [land], the best land, for future additional sprawl. … It's a very pragmatic way of doing a greenbelt right? You leave a whole bunch [of land] out, so that you know that you're not going to completely offend the development industry. They will still get to do business as somewhat usual for 30, 40, 50 years. (interview 5)

However, there is no immediate need to designate whitebelt lands for development, given the land already approved to accommodate urban growth until 2041. This example reflects that given importance of development interests in local economies, politicians can seek to gain developers' support by altering land-use restrictions, which influences policy outcomes (Hawkins, 2014).

In addition, greenbelt implementation has been impacted by problems of horizontal coordination across policy domains. The many land-use and transportation policies for the GGH region – including the Greenbelt Plan, the Growth Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the regional transportation plan – have created conflicts. In particular, inconsistent language between these GGH specific planning policies challenges implementation, given the varied land-use allowances and regulatory frameworks of each plan. Given the contradictions between these plans, local planners make their own judgements based on their municipal context (interview 6). Therefore, the situation creates difficulties for municipal staff, as a planner stated:

> we certainly sometimes find ourselves being the bearer of bad news and the focus of conflict. Because we are the ones having to impart this [information] to people who know nothing about the plan other than they've heard of it. … The documents are very vague, I think in general on purpose, because they're supposed to be generally high in the sky kinds of conversations. But they do end up having to trickle down to the practical application in some cases, [causing] a lot of frustrations for different people. (interview 6)

However, the problem with this more flexible municipal approach is that it results in inconsistent policy implementation, which can undermine achieving growth management policy outcomes.

In addition, Growth Plan implementation has been impacted by connections to other policy domains, particularly transportation. Provincial staff have tried to align land-use and transportation planning, as the Growth Plan encourages intensification around transit nodes. However, there is often a long transition period associated with developing new transportation projects. For example, while the regional transportation agency Metrolinx made investments to improve Toronto's transit in 2008, the subway to York University took almost a decade to complete, opening in 2017. Thus, while it is important for land-use and transportation policies to be aligned, it can take years to see results of infrastructure investments on the ground and for those projects to effectively support growth management goals.

As a result of horizontal coordination concerns, provincial staff attempted to harmonize the policies among the revised 2017 plans to reduce potential conflicts (interview 7). The Liberals also made changes to internal organizational governance to improve their role in policy design and implementation. While the Greenbelt and Growth Plans were initially located in separate ministries, both policies were later moved under the authority of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In addition, the 2015 policy review increased provincial staff collaboration between different ministries, translating into a more integrated policy-making process (interview 7), while the membership of the Greenbelt Council was expanded. Finally, ahead of the 2015 policy review, provincial staff established performance monitoring indicators for the Greenbelt and Growth Plans to evaluate their progress in achieving their goals.

The impacts of these horizontal coordination problems related to policy implementation are experienced directly by farmers, as they are most affected by the greenbelt. While protecting farmland is necessary to prevent its loss to development, the Greenbelt Plan alone is not enough to ensure a sustainable agricultural industry, given the constraints to Ontario's farms. Caldwell and Proctor (2013) find that farmers appreciate the benefits that the Greenbelt Plan offers in protecting farmland. However, policy complexities along with horizontal coordination problems at the provincial and municipal levels create landowner frustration. Farmers face difficulties navigating the many provincial and municipal policies applying to their land, including the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment Plans and the inconsistent interpretations of these policies between different authorities (Caldwell & Proctor, 2013). In addition, as a representative of an agricultural association said, farmers find it challenging to get correct information from municipal staff on allowable land uses:

> Planners who will tell farmers that you can't do that in the greenbelt and the farmers are saying I don't know why you say what you just said. Things like on farm value adding, maybe a roadside stand secondary uses are clearly permitted, but then you get municipal planners that say you can't do that in the greenbelt. (interview 8)

Thus, while the Greenbelt Plan provides an excellent basis for protecting farmland, other programmes to support the agricultural sector's viability are needed.

Overall, horizontal, and vertical coordination problems are strongly interrelated, as the vertical institutional design of the Greenbelt and Growth Plan creates considerable local coordination problems. The horizontal coordination challenges outlined here have resulted in uneven policy implementation between municipalities and landowner frustration, influencing the effectiveness of these plans to achieve the Liberals' vision.

Territorial coordination: how leapfrogging reveals unintended impacts of the Greenbelt Plan

The misalignment between administrative and functional spaces in Southern Ontario is problematic as a result of institutional misfits, creating territorial conflicts and influencing stakeholder collaboration (Young, 2002). Significant coordination problems for greenbelt implementation result from the overlapping territorialities and different spatial scopes of the numerous policies applied to the GGH region. Covering the entire GGH region, the Growth Plan has a larger spatial scope than does the Greenbelt Plan (Figure 1). However, the Greenbelt builds upon the Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment, and each has its own territorial scope and dedicated policies. The Growth Plan further divides the region into an inner ring (urbanized municipalities) and an outer ring (rural communities).[14] In addition, Metrolinx focuses on the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). There is also inconsistency regarding regional greenspace management: while conservation authorities are organized at a watershed scale, the greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine are managed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the escarpment is overseen by the Niagara Escarpment Commission, and parts of the greenbelt operate as municipal, provincial, or federal parks. These incongruent and partially overlapping territorialities create problematic implementation; some policies are organized for the whole province (the Provincial Policy Statement), others for the GGH region (Growth Plan), and many at functional sub-GGH regions (Greenbelt Plan). These multiple, partially overlapping jurisdictions create coordination problems, conflicts between stakeholders and challenge effective greenbelt management.

A more adequate institutional design to achieve smart growth would be to integrate the Greenbelt Plan into the Growth Plan, forming a cohesive regional policy framework, which did not happen with the first versions of these plans. In the 2015 review, while provincial staff

did not merge the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine, Niagara Escarpment and Growth Plans into an integrated policy framework, they increased the consistency between these plans to create a more unified policy design (interview 9). In addition, elements of the greenbelt, including natural heritage and agricultural systems, were added to the 2017 Growth Plan to better integrate these two plans (interview 9). Despite these promising efforts, the coordination of multiple territorial scopes of different GGH policies creates significant challenges for municipal implementation. While the Growth Plan allocates future municipal population growth, having the necessary infrastructure to support such growth has yet to be fully designed. For example, rapidly growing areas often lack adequate access to regional transportation networks. While Metrolinx has recently expanded regional transit service to communities such as Brantford and Niagara Falls, these infrastructure expansions can take years to achieve. Thus, these barriers must be overcome to ensure the necessary infrastructure service provision levels to properly support Growth Plan implementation.

In addition, smart growth policy implementation has been influenced by unintended, yet not entirely unanticipated outcomes produced by the Greenbelt Plan. The effect of the challenges of territorial coordination is that greenbelt legislation has apparently facilitated leapfrog development beyond its boundaries into the outer ring municipalities, which is further fuelled by developer-driven politics in these areas (Figure 1). This 'displacement of sprawl' is characterized by development 'leaping' over the greenbelt to occur on farmland on the other side (Sturzaker & Mell, 2017, p. 71). Since the greenbelt's introduction, scholars have warned about the risk of leapfrog development (Macdonald et al., 2021; Pond, 2009). The Greenbelt Plan has stimulated leapfrog development, according to environmentalists, farmers, and local planners (interviews 2, 5 and 10). However, our findings show that this situation is more complicated.

Leapfrog development might not be an unanticipated effect of growth management policies, as similar issues have occurred in other jurisdictions including England (Sturzaker & Mell, 2017). However, in Ontario, the greenbelt's introduction created unintended problems, as it has lengthened development time frames, pushed land speculation activities further out into the region and facilitated rapid growth resulting in negative impacts. Developers continue to speculatively buy farmland beyond the greenbelt with a segment of this activity driven by foreign companies, who pressure landowners to sell their properties creating problems such as conflicts between residents and agricultural infrastructure disinvestment (interview 10). Development companies can also have considerable influence in persuading municipalities to rezone their land to allow the infrastructure to support future developments (interview 10), highlighting the power of certain interest groups to translate their preferences into policy (Hawkins, 2014). However, while this land speculation may be common, there is little statistical data to confirm these practices, as governments are not required to keep these records. Urban sprawl has also been facilitated beyond the greenbelt due to Growth Plan implementation problems such as plan amendments allowing low-density development in Simcoe County (Tomalty, 2015).

Thus, while the Greenbelt Plan has been effective in directing development to cities and away from farmland within the greenbelt (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2015), unprecedented growth rates have occurred in some communities beyond the greenbelt. For example, Shelburne recently became the second fastest growing Canadian town, growing 39% from 5846 residents in 2011 to 8126 residents in 2016 (Gee, 2017).[15] However, Shelburne is a rural municipality with limited resources to handle rapid growth. This type of development causes significant problems as it imposes high infrastructure development and servicing costs on municipalities, puts pressure on watersheds, encourages car dependency in areas poorly served by transit and requires the roadway construction across the greenbelt, which fragments natural areas (Tomalty, 2015; Tomalty & Komorowski, 2011). In addition, leapfrog development causes territorial coordination problems as the costs of this growth are pushed onto neighbouring municipalities. For example, conflicts between municipalities can arise regarding who is responsible to

pay for the increased road maintenance costs resulting from higher commuter flows crossing the greenbelt (interview 6). Therefore, this shows the need for developing mechanisms to address the negative externalities associated with improper intermunicipal coordination (Spicer, 2014). All these outcomes undermine the Growth Plan's smart growth principles of encouraging compact communities. While the Liberals launched a consultation on expanding the greenbelt in 2017, the expansion of this greenspace alone is not enough to address the leapfrogging problem, as the region's growth machine continues to drive development within the urban fringe.

The problem of leapfrog development highlights the need to coordinate smart growth policies between inner and outer ring municipalities to effectively manage regional growth dynamics. These territorial coordination challenges show how the GGH's multilayered policy structure and overlapping territorialities creates collaboration problems influencing Greenbelt and Growth Plan implementation. Yet overcoming these problems are challenging in a region known for its fragmented regional coordination and weak levels of intermunicipal cooperation (Nelles, 2012).

The outcomes of coordination problems across municipalities, policy domains and policy levels are reflected in the GGH's development patterns. An initial purpose of the Growth Plan was to reduce regional land consumption compared to past low-density patterns. Indeed, the Neptis Foundation (2015) has found that urban expansion rates have slowed recently. However, the results of the first 10 years of Growth Plan implementation show that a large portion of the region's growth is still set to occur in areas beyond the greenbelt. Without significant changes, the region will continue the problematic suburban development patterns that the Greenbelt and Growth Plans were designed to tackle (Burchfield, 2016, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

This article explores how the GGH's institutional arrangements influence the governance and implementation of its greenbelt, which has been shaped by vertical, horizontal and territorial coordination problems. The greenbelt appears to have a functional institutional design with a clear vertical implementation structure managed by the Province and implemented by municipalities. However, further examination reveals significant institutional coordination challenges. Thus, the policy implementation structure reinforces traditional provincial–municipal relations, yet the Liberals were only willing to relinquish limited control in their efforts to re-engage with regional planning. The lack of a functional regional governance structure for the GGH region has been a problem for decades that would be politically difficult to resolve. With no administrative body responsible for this regional level, the response has been the development of GGH specific policies with overlapping functional and territorial jurisdictions creating difficulties for local implementation. While improvements were made in the 2015 policy review, provincial problems have been downscaled to the local level. Municipal implementation of the Greenbelt and Growth Plans are strongly affected by coordination difficulties with the often-competing policy fields related to greenbelt management, and the influence of local growth politics. Finally, while the Greenbelt and Growth Plans aim to restrict and regulate urban and suburban development, these policies can instead displace growth to rural areas within the region. We find that this leapfrog development has created significant problems that undermine smart growth policy implementation. However, introducing the Greenbelt and Growth Plans represented a tremendous achievement for the Liberals. Indeed, this regional planning framework has been positive, rather than allowing traditional land-use planning practices favouring low-density development to continue. In addition, we argue that the Greenbelt Plan has facilitated stakeholder collaboration and achieved some policy goals including halting development within the greenbelt. However, we conclude that the first 15 years of greenbelt management has resulted in institutional coordination problems, uneven policy implementation and leapfrog

development – all of which undermine effective greenbelt management and the fundamental changes promised by the Liberals' ambitious vision for GGH region.

Despite these problems outlined above, we find that our case reflects several good practices for new generation greenbelt planning. The GGH greenbelt is supported by strong legislation, a regional growth plan and transportation plan, and its policies are monitored and regularly updated by the Province. Also, organizations such as the Greenbelt Foundation were established by the Province to facilitate policy implementation. These organizations' activities, along with the commitment of civil society groups, have enabled the development of wide public support for the greenbelt. However, the greenbelt's implementation could be further improved, with the following changes being made to the current framework. First, additional initiatives beyond the Greenbelt Plan are needed to support farmers including prioritizing agriculture in planning policies, providing more flexibility with greenbelt policy implementation (Caldwell & Proctor, 2013), and increased training for municipal planning staff about agricultural issues (interview 8). Also, similar to Burchfield (2018), we argue for the creation of more formal collaboration structures for municipal politicians to address regional issues and partnerships to encourage consensus-building. Finally, the Province could ban or regulate the foreign ownership of farmland and land purchases by pension funds, as has happened in the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Such strategies could restrict some of the land speculation happening beyond the greenbelt, thus reducing suburbanization pressures beyond the greenbelt's boundaries. However, although it might prove difficult to achieve given the current political climate, institutional reforms are needed to achieve more effective Greenbelt and Growth Plan implementation. We argue that the creation of a regional agency at the GGH level could improve the confinement of urban and suburban growth within and beyond the greenbelt. Regional transportation planning could also be integrated into this regional agency, which would assist with partially reducing institutional fragmentation, as Metrolinx operates at a different territorial scale than the GGH region (i.e., the GTHA). To avoid the past problems that have afflicted similar agencies such as the Greater Toronto Services Board, this organization would have to be given the appropriate authority and funding to fulfil its mandate.

The case of the GGH greenbelt provides ample insights for the institutional dimensions and politics of greenbelt governance. Our research indicates that higher level government authorities are seen to be more effective at addressing regional problems and have the institutional capacity and resources to support policy implementation (Savitch & Vogel, 2000). However, as greenbelt and smart growth policies require coordination between public and private stakeholders at numerous policy levels, cooperation between these actors is key to effective policy implementation. While local authorities are often responsible for policy implementation, they can contest or even block top-down government interventions (Nelles et al., 2018), highlighting how government interactions significantly shape greenbelt implementation. Therefore, we argue that institutions alone cannot guarantee better policy outcomes, as effective implementation also depends upon other factors.

First, our case shows that the institutions safeguarding the greenbelt are vulnerable to shifting political agendas, as weak institutional designs can create opportunities for provincial and municipal politics to detract from policy goals. Second, growth management efforts often cannot outweigh strong market pressures and growth coalitions. Suburban land markets are driven by economic incentives linked to greenfield development, fuelling the creation of growth coalitions. These land markets are organized to provide significant economic benefits, as municipalities get taxes from new development and developers make large profits from buying and reselling land (Harris & Lehrer, 2018). In addition, as seen in our case, higher levels of government can also enable market pressures. Growth management policies can provide clearer land-use planning regulations for developers to operate within, as they can anticipate where future development is allowed or not allowed to occur, further facilitating the creation of growth coalitions. Given these

conditions however, we argue that effective growth management efforts would be even less likely to occur without strong higher level government interventions in regional planning. Therefore, while senior government involvement in new generation greenbelt planning is essential, political and economic interests are highly influential in shaping policy outcomes. Thus, there is often a disconnect between smart growth policies and development practices, as strong political and economic interests can undermine new generation greenbelt planning from achieving its ambitious policy goals.

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NOTES

1. Within institutionalism, a distinction is made between formal and informal institutions. Formal institutions refer to laws and regulations, and informal institutions consist of cultural values and traditions (Hall & Taylor, 1996).
2. For analytical categories that are comparable, see Young (2002).
3. As an alternative to multilevel and territorial relations, much of the geography and political economy literature frames similar relationships as ‘scalar’ (Brenner, 2004; Keil & Mahon, 2009). Similar to the literature on scale (Smith, 1995), we view multilevel and territorial relations as not fixed but rather socially reproduced and a product of political, economic and social processes. Analogously to Brenner (2004), we are interested in the upward and downward relations across policy levels (vertical coordination), and transversal relations across jurisdictions and across functional spaces such as greenbelts (territorial coordination).
4. There are 21 upper and single-tier and 89 lower tier municipalities in the GGH region, which divide responsibilities for municipal services between these levels of governments. Upper tier municipalities are usually counties or regions within which there are several lower tier levels of municipal government. Single-tier municipalities are usually large cities where services are delivered by that level of government alone (Allen & Campsie, 2013).
5. In our research, institutional arrangements or institutional environments refer to the formal institutions supporting greenbelts at all stages of the policy cycle including agenda-setting, formulation, adoption, implementation and evaluation. In Ontario, the institutions supporting greenbelt implementation include federal, provincial and municipal governments, the LPAT and provincial agencies.

6. Urban growth centres are in the downtown areas of the region's mid-sized cities and are the focus of public service investment, serve as employment centres and accommodate significant population growth (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2020).
7. Until 2018, the LPAT was previously called the Ontario Municipal Board, when the Liberals renamed it.
8. Further to this argument, there have been recent controversial changes made by the Ford Conservative government that could significantly threaten greenbelt implementation. On the one hand, the Province announced a proposed greenbelt expansion and providing C$12 million to the Greenbelt Foundation in February 20201. In contrast, however, through the Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act approved in December 2020, the Province reduced the power of conservation authorities to protect natural areas from development. Because of these amendments, many Greenbelt Council members resigned in protest (Mendleson & Javed, 2020). In addition, the Province is moving forward with the Highway 413 project that would run through parts of the greenbelt, despite opposition from municipalities and civil society groups (Winfield, 2021). Finally, through ministerial zoning orders, the Province has expedited several developments by overriding local planning rules, with these projects seen as favouring developers and undermining attempts by civil society groups to legally challenge these activities (Benzie, 2021).
9. The GGH has been recognized as a geographical region for decades, but was only established as a policy level in the 2006 Growth Plan.
10. A regional government refers to a formal level of government located between the GGH's municipalities and the Province.
11. Development charges, used by municipalities to pay for the capital costs of growth, are defined as 'a per-unit levy to cover the cost of municipal services to property and the neighbouring community in addition to the physical services developers install themselves' (Côté & Fenn, 2014, p. 49).
12. In Ontario, the development industry includes development companies that purchase land and supervise the development process, and development-related companies. Few developers conduct all aspects of land development (e.g., land assembly, building completion and sales), while much of the work is contracted out to construction or finance-related companies (MacDermid, 2006).
13. The whitebelt is not an official term used in provincial policies. Officially, all areas outside the greenbelt and settlement areas are termed agricultural and rural areas (Tomalty & Komorowski, 2011).
14. The inner ring includes the cities of Toronto, Hamilton and the regions of Halton, Durham, Peel and York. The outer ring includes the regions of Niagara and Waterloo; the cities of Barrie, Brantford, Guelph, Kawartha Lakes, Orillia and Peterborough; and the counties of Brant, Dufferin, Haldimand, Northumberland, Peterborough, Simcoe and Wellington (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2020).
15. This growth rate is based on Canadian census figures from municipalities with a population of at least 5000 residents located outside a major metropolitan area (Gee, 2017).

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