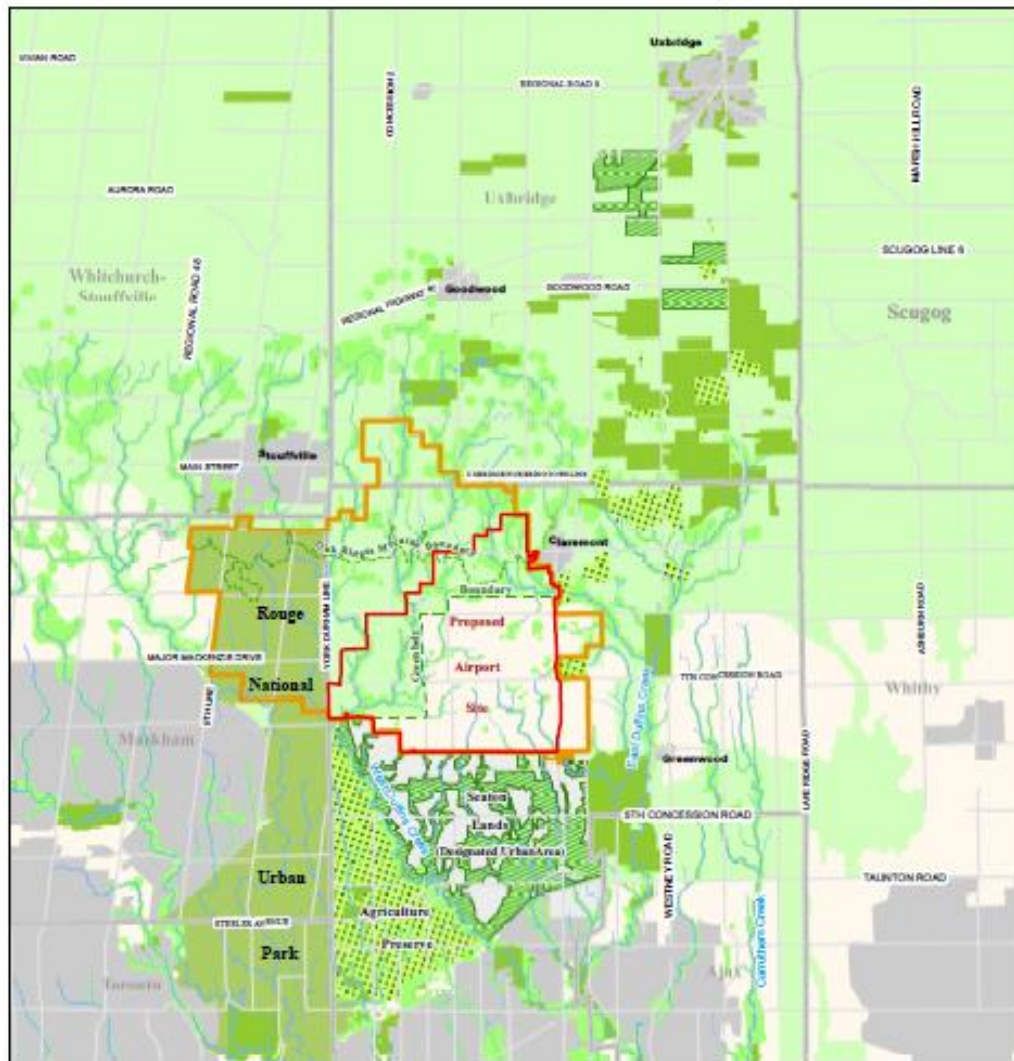


Presentation to Dr. Gary Polonsky Independent Advisor on the Development of the Pickering Lands

January 26, 2016



Green Durham Association and the Pickering Lands

Green Durham Association ([GDA](#)) is a not for profit registered charity dedicated to protecting, preserving and enhancing the forests, farmlands and natural areas which lie northeast of Toronto in Uxbridge, north Pickering and adjacent Greenbelt lands. GDA was created as a result of the amalgamation of *Green Door Alliance* and *Durham Conservation Association*.

GDA members have been very involved with the federal and provincial lands since their expropriation in 1972. Members were key players in the *People or Planes* organization in the 1970's and made presentations to a provincial cabinet committee and to then Premier Davis in the months preceding the provincial decision to withdraw infrastructure support and effectively halt airport plans in 1975. In 2003 members met with Minister Collenette to urge the permanent protection of the federal lands falling on the Oak Ridges Moraine which led to the federal commitment to protect what it called '*Federal Green Space Lands*'. A GDA member was also appointed to the Federal Advisory committee which developed a draft plan for these lands; a plan that was largely then not acted upon.

In recent years GDA has been highly involved in making further representations to government to protect lands that would never be needed for an airport. We commissioned a [video](#) outlining our views, worked with municipal councils and others to enlist the support of stakeholders who were pro as well as anti-airport, and met with federal and provincial officials and government members. GDA had the opportunity to speak with federal members and ministers, including former Transport Minister Lisa Raitt (refer to GDA's [2014](#) and [2015](#) submissions). We were pleased when the government announced the creation of the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) that included 4,722 acres of federal lands in Markham and delighted when in 2015 when the federal government announced its intention to add a further 5,200 acres to the RNUP (as recommended in our 2014 submission).

GDA is closely involved with the Greenbelt plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, and the Growth plan which are being reviewed by the province. GDA is also involved with municipal and regional land use plans and issues, including participation at OMB hearings with particular focus on Northwest Durham and environs. Green Durham has worked collaboratively with the various municipalities, conservation authorities and other like-minded partners, in the acquisition of public conservation lands, the creation of natural heritage and trail linkages between conservation lands and communities, and in the promotion of land stewardship on private and public lands.

For further information, please visit Green Durham Association's website at www.greendurham.ca.

Executive Summary

Green Durham Association (GDA) is pleased to be invited to participate in the consultation process to identify the potential future development opportunities of the federal lands that was initiated by former Transport Minister Lisa Raitt.

Please note that throughout our document the references to the various areas within the federal lands are identified in *Appendix A: The Federal Lands and Environs Map*.

In summary Green Durham Association's recommendations are as follows:

1. We understand why the federal government wishes to retain the option to build a major air carrier airport in Pickering, if needed in the future. However future projections of capacity at existing airports have risen so these airports will likely be able to accommodate forecasted traffic growth for the foreseeable future, thus Pickering will not be needed until at least the 2040's.
2. We do not believe building a General Aviation (GA) airport on the federal lands can be justified.
3. Uses and economic development opportunities on the federal lands should not be evaluated in isolation but in terms of the role they could play that would best support sustainable economic development and other priorities within the broader surrounding area including Seaton, Pickering Agricultural Preserve (officially known as the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve), Rouge National Urban Park, and Oak Ridges Moraine lands in Uxbridge Township (refer to Appendix A).
4. The federal government should further extend the National Rouge Urban Park to not only include the 5,200 acres announced in 2015, but most, if not all, of the adjacent 3,000-3,500 acres that fall within both the provincial Greenbelt and the airport site.
5. Unless or until the need arises for a major air carrier airport, the remaining lands in the airport site and the lands to the east of it, should be used for agriculture and overseen collaboratively between Transport Canada, Parks Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.
6. The federal government should take a leadership role with a study that focuses on the actual and potential agricultural production on the lands owned and controlled by governments, and more importantly focus on the links with the food and farming sector, related food processing, infrastructure, distribution, research and education opportunities.

The following provides details on GDA's position and rationale for our recommendations. Should you require further details or have any questions, please contact:

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- 1. We understand why the federal government wishes to retain the option to build a major air carrier airport in Pickering, if needed in the future. However future projections of capacity at existing airports have risen so these airports will likely be able to accommodate forecasted traffic growth for the foreseeable future, thus Pickering will not be needed until at least the 2040's.**

GDA has studied the issue of a Pickering airport for more than four decades (refer to our [2009 analysis](#) and [2013 video](#)). We have stated on many occasions and as time has clearly demonstrated, past government estimates of the urgency of the need for Pickering have been greatly overstated. In 1972 the federal government forecast that Pearson would need to handle 62 million passengers in 2000. In 2014 Pearson handled only 38.6 million, a far cry from earlier forecasts.

The government's projections of when Pickering would be needed have become more distant over the decades. In 1972 when we visited Ottawa, then Transport Minister Don Jamieson said there would be 'disaster in the skies' if Pickering wasn't built **within 8 years** before the end of the 1970's. In 2004, the GTAA Pickering Draft Plan Report was projecting an airport would be opened **within 11-15 years** (2015-2019). In the [2010 report](#) the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) was projecting Pickering would be needed **within 17-27 years** (2027-2037), recognizing circumstances could push these projections further into the future.

We gather that Transport Canada will be updating its forecasts over the next year or so but are under the understanding that Transport Canada will not have completed their study and provide you, Dr. Polonsky, with updated air traffic forecasts and forecasts of capacity at existing airports before your study is completed this spring.

GTAA President and CEO Howard Eng is now indicating Pearson could accommodate 70 million passengers annually, due in large part to projected increases in average plane size. This is a substantial increase from the GTAA's 50 million estimate in 2004. It is difficult to know what the need for Pickering might be in 20 or 25 years, given all the variables that are virtually impossible to predict so many years in advance, such as fuel prices, carbon taxes, changes in technology, further capacity improvements including pricing/time slot strategies, high speed rail alternatives, international economic and security issues etc. We understand why the Federal Government wishes to retain the option to build a major air carrier airport in Pickering if the need is justified. However it would be a great mistake to begin to take action in the shorter term based on any assumption that Pickering will be needed in the foreseeable future.

We are interested in knowing why the GTAA appears to be showing less interest in Pickering now than a decade ago. It also appears the federal government is not looking to the GTAA to plan and operate Pickering. This again suggests that any need for a major airport is still many decades away.

2. We do not believe building a General Aviation (GA) airport on the federal lands can be justified.

In 2014 GDA prepared a [three-page summary](#) on this subject, which is still very relevant today. The GTAA's 2010 report commissioned by Transport Canada concluded that within their planning horizon even with the closure of Buttonville, existing GA airports would “*fairly readily*” be able to absorb projected traffic. The 2011 study commissioned by the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA) in no way invalidates that conclusion. To our knowledge no proposal has been made to Transport Canada to proceed without significant subsidy to build a GA airport on these lands, subsidy which the previous government said it would not provide. No entrepreneur anywhere in the GTA has proceeded to build an airport to fill such a demand even though it would not be difficult to find a few hundred acres on which to build it upon, and [almost no law or regulation](#) that would get in its way. This strongly suggests a business case cannot be made.

As stated, if at some point there is a need for a major air carrier airport, federal responsibilities in the aeronautics area would trump provincial policy. Deciding to build a GA airport does not qualify as a priority within the National Airports Policy (NAP) which is directed at those major airports that serve the majority of passenger and cargo traffic in Canada. Even the previous federal government indicated its desire to support Ontario's Greenbelt and other policies, including the [2014 Provincial Policy Statement Under the Planning Act](#) which among other things calls for prime agricultural lands to only be used for non-agricultural uses “... *if there is an identified need within the planning horizon...to accommodate the proposed use*” and “...*there are no reasonable alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas*”. Clearly there are many alternatives, from expanded use of existing facilities to locating a new small GA airport on a few hundred acres of land that would avoid prime farmland.

If it could be justified financially to proceed with building a GA airport, the federal government would be showing little regard for provincial policy in order to pursue a minor priority. Such a move would require an expansive environmental assessment and invite considerable protest. Given all the other looming infrastructure priorities the federal government has indicated it wants to address, it is difficult to see why it is in the government's interest to pursue this initiative.

Without close provincial agreement and co-ordination with provincial land use policies, if the federal government were to proceed with economic development on these lands **in the absence of airport development or unrelated to it**, the federal government would be promoting sprawl and inserting itself in areas that fall under provincial jurisdiction.

Finally, unrelated airport development could interfere with the development of a major air carrier airport on these lands should a future airport be needed.

- 3. Uses and economic development opportunities on the federal lands should not be evaluated in isolation but in terms of the role they could play that would best support sustainable economic development and other priorities within the broader surrounding area including Seaton, Pickering Agricultural Preserve (officially known as the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve), Rouge National Urban Park, and Oak Ridges Moraine lands in Uxbridge Township (refer to Appendix A).**

GDA has been involved in the Seaton and Pickering Agricultural Preserve lands for over 40 years. The province has an interest in the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve and Seaton since they both fall within the framework of the Central Pickering Development Plan prepared under the [Ontario Planning and Development Act](#). This Plan calls for permanent protection of the prime agricultural lands within the Agricultural Preserve and for Seaton to be a compact, transit supportive, 70,000 resident/35,000 job mixed use community that includes thousands of acres of public conservation lands. Job creation and associated economic development is one of the key priorities of the provincial plan for Seaton. In addition to the many jobs to be accommodated in Seaton, there are 800-900 acres of commercial land slated for development in North Seaton, abutting the federal lands.

These lands will be cheaper to service than the Federal Lands. The first priority should be to ensure the success of the Seaton model, and not allow sprawl onto the federal lands to displace prime agricultural food land. These lands should not compete with development in Seaton, undermine the province's Places to Grow policies, or create an environment on the federal lands that could make Seaton a less desirable community to attract high quality jobs.

We are very enthusiastic about the economic impact the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) can have on tourism linking Toronto and other urban areas to the north in Uxbridge. To facilitate the linkages, GDA has been working with conservation and municipal partners in creating publicly owned nature and trail corridors extending directly north from RNUP to 7,000-8,000 acres of existing conservation land with links to the Oak Ridges Moraine and Trans Canada Trails and communities in Uxbridge.

Noise, air pollution, bird interference and other impacts make an airport a less than ideal neighbour of RNUP. It is one thing to argue that if a major air carrier airport is needed the economic benefits might possibly outweigh these negatives. It is quite another for the federal government to introduce such an incompatible use on RNUP's doorstep for what at best could be considered a minor priority, a GA airport. The government must consider and quantify the impact the uses would have on nearby lands.

- 4. The federal government should further extend the Rouge National Urban Park to not only include the 5,200 acres announced in 2015, but most, if not all, of the adjacent 3,000-3,500 acres that fall in the provincial Greenbelt and airport site.**

The Greenbelt acreage makes up over a third of the 8,700-acre airport site and includes agricultural and environmental lands, including the main branch of the West Duffins Creek. The remaining acres in the airport site would still be available for a possible future airport, an area

larger than Pearson. Furthermore, all of the Pickering airport layouts studied more than a decade ago by the GTAA avoided almost all of the Greenbelt lands.

The best use of the Greenbelt lands that fall within the airport site is to include them in the new RNUP. The RNUP vision is directed at promoting a vibrant farming community, visitor experience and trail connectivity, and ecosystem protection and enhancement.

Extending RNUP east to include the Greenbelt lands within the airport site will create a direct gateway between the NRUP and Seaton, to the Seaton Trail running south along Duffins Creek, as well as to many thousands of acres of provincially owned conservation land in Seaton. The Province of Ontario, the Region of Durham and the Conservation Authority have not been able to resolve how to care for these lands. We are very concerned that failure to resolve this use could negatively impact the attractiveness and vitality of Seaton, which in turn could have adverse economic impacts. It may be wishful thinking to hope these Greenbelt lands could be added to RNUP, as the economic as well as the environmental impact could be very positive. The further expansion of RNUP would add to the positive social, economic, tourism, and environmental impacts in North Pickering and around Claremont.

The Province of Ontario has a large and continuing stake in Seaton and the Pickering Agricultural Preserve, a stake that will be greatly impacted by what happens on the federal lands to the north.

5. Unless or until the need arises for a major air carrier airport, the remaining lands in the airport site, and the lands to the east of it, should be used for agriculture and overseen collaboratively between Transport Canada, Parks Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

The food and farming cluster in the Golden Horseshoe is the second largest such cluster in North America, employing more people than the auto industry, paying almost as much. The [2012 Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan](#) estimated it contributed \$35 billion annually to Canada's economy through the multiplier effect. The report states the key to its success is the area's superb agricultural land, moderate climate, and access to fresh water, combined with outstanding research capabilities, proximity to a huge diverse market and a large educated labor force.

The food and farming sector in Durham Region, the largest employer in Durham, is an important part of this cluster. Many thousands of acres of prime food land within the planned and as we have proposed further-expanded Rouge National Urban Park, as well as the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, will remain permanently in agriculture. Abutting these lands are thousands of acres of agricultural lands within the airport site and lands to the east of it. These lands should be retained in agriculture under multi-year leases unless or until an airport is needed. Even if our recommendations for these lands were not followed, and some development were to take place beyond the hamlet of Brougham, such development should take place over time, leaving the majority of these lands in agriculture for decades to come.

These land holdings provide in their entirety a unique opportunity as the largest publicly owned or controlled land holding in the Greenbelt. They are close to Toronto and urban centers in

Durham and York regions. They are adjacent to thousands of acres of publicly owned land set aside for conservation in Seaton, lands within the Duffins watershed which could become part of the RNUP, mirroring the urban/natural area link that occurs along southern sections of the Rouge within Toronto.

6. The federal government should take a leadership role with a study to focus on the actual and potential agricultural production on the lands owned and controlled by governments, and more importantly focus on the links with the food and farming sector, related food processing, infrastructure, distribution, research and education opportunities.

GDA and others have tried over the past few years to raise interest in defining and financing an agricultural study that would focus on the actual and potential agricultural production on these lands including diverse food and agricultural opportunities.

While we see the study focusing on food and farming as the primary object of study and economic benefit, it could also focus on the appropriate balance between agricultural, environmental, and social/health/tourism priorities and benefits.

We suggest it would be in the interest of both the federal and provincial governments to support such a study. The federal government owns most of the land central to the focus of the study and it would be in their interest to encourage land use on nearby lands that support RNUP while still leaving open the possibility of a future airport.

We note that the mandate letter for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada states “*where possible work with nearby communities to help grow local eco-tourism industries and create jobs*” and to “*Work with the Ontario Government to enhance the country’s first urban National Park – Rouge National Urban Park – including improved legislation to protect this important ecosystem and guide how the park will be managed*”.

The mandate letter of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada instructs the minister to “*Develop a food policy that promotes healthy living and safe food by putting more healthy, high-quality food produced by Canadian ranchers and farmers, on the tables of families across the country ... to invest in agricultural research to support discovery science and innovation*” and “*...invest in an Agri-Food value added investment fund to attract investment and create good jobs in food processing*”.

We applaud the federal government’s desire reflected in the above referenced letters to not only protect environmental values but to promote research and opportunities in agriculture and work with local communities to grow tourism. The proposal we have outlined to ask the government(s) to fund a study centered on these lands addresses these same objectives.

In August of 2015 the previous government announced an additional \$26.8 million investment over ten years in the Rouge National Urban Park to plan and manage the 5,200 acres it was adding to the park. A very small part of that money could provide ample funds to complete this study, a study which would seem to support the Park’s commitment to agriculture.

The Province of Ontario is in the process of reviewing its Greenbelt, Moraine, and Places to Grow plans and in ensuring its plans for Seaton and the Ag Preserve are well supported (refer to the [GDA submission](#) regarding these plans). The province has a strong interest in ensuring their policy vision, which is also focused on supporting agriculture, associated jobs, economic development, tourism, and environmental values, becomes a reality. The province owns 1,300 acres in Uxbridge, land that could provide essential and much needed stepping stones for a nature/trail/tourism corridor linking Lake Ontario and Rouge National Urban Park.

In Conclusion

Green Durham Association has more than 40 years' involvement with the lands under review. We are pleased that the Federal government has initiated a review of the potential use of these lands. There is a tremendous unrealized potential for agricultural use, protection of watersheds, and public enjoyment of natural spaces on these lands. These uses can co-exist peacefully and are investments which will become increasingly important for future generations.

We have not seen a case for a major air carrier airport nor a justification for a general aviation airport.

Within the Pickering lands we recommend the following:

- Transfer all or almost all of the lands which also fall within the provincial Greenbelt and the airport site to the Rouge National Urban Park.
- Maintain the remaining farmlands in sustainable agriculture unless or until the need arises for a major air carrier airport.

We further recommend:

- A study of the actual and potential agricultural production potential on the lands owned and controlled by the governments, on the links with the broader food and farming sector and related food processing, infrastructure, distribution, research and education, and other potential opportunities. Without government leadership these opportunities will be missed.
- Transfer the management and or ownership of the majority of the provincial lands in Uxbridge to conservation authorities to provide nature/trail corridors north from the Rouge National Urban Park and across the Moraine.
- Resolve the outstanding issues between Federal and Provincial governments to permit transfer of Provincial Rouge Park lands to the Rouge National Urban Park.
- Consider the transfer of the Provincial Conservation lands in Seaton to the Rouge National Urban Park.

We thank you for the opportunity to present our recommendations.

Brian Buckles on behalf of Green Durham Association

Appendix A: The Federal Lands and Environs Map

The Federal Lands and Environs - land classifications, uses and restrictions

