

## **Recommended Addition to the Rouge National Urban Park**

Green Durham Association (GDA) is a registered charity whose members have been deeply involved with the Pickering Airport Federal Lands and the Seaton Provincial Lands ever since their expropriation in 1972. GDA is primarily focused on protecting and enhancing the lands directly northeast of Toronto in Uxbridge, North Pickering and adjacent Greenbelt lands. For more information visit our website – [www.greendurham.ca](http://www.greendurham.ca) .

### **The RNUP: A Gateway to Communities in Durham**

---

We understand the rationale for why the Federal Government wishes to retain the option to build a major airport in Pickering, if needed in the future. We are grateful that 5,200 acres of the original expropriated lands in the west of Durham have been transferred to the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) as part of *Bill C-18: An Act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act*.

However, unlike the situation with the RNUP in York, the 5,200 acre RNUP extension into Durham does not connect the RNUP directly with any population centers. By amending the RNUP footprint with the addition of two small parcels of land, it would create two gateways to communities in Pickering which would be a major social, economic, and tourism stimulus to these communities and beyond.

### **Our Recommendations**

---

#### **1. Gateway to Seaton**

Of greatest importance is the connection to Seaton. A small southern addition to the 5,200 acres of approximately 601 acres would create a gateway between the RNUP and Seaton and to conservation lands within Seaton. Please refer to the map in Appendix 1, area A.

Seaton is being built as a model community of up to 70,000 residents and 35,000 jobs, and an essential element in its compact urban design is to interweave thousands of acres of green space within the compact urban areas. Connecting it directly to the RNUP would greatly enhance this critical “green” element, and add significantly to the quality of life, the value and attractiveness of the real estate, and the economic vitality of Seaton.

Once a green gateway between Seaton and the RNUP is established, it would be possible to explore with the Province of Ontario extending the RNUP further into Seaton on the provincial conservation lands. This would have an even greater positive impact, and also resolve serious and yet to be resolved issues related to funding and maintaining these lands.

Such a connection within Seaton would greatly benefit Pickering and Durham as well as Seaton itself while protecting the Reesor Creek.

## 2. Gateway to Claremont and Beyond

As identified in the attached map, if another small parcel (358 acres) of Federal land west and south of Claremont (as identified in the map in Appendix 1, area B) was added to the RNUP, the Park would be linked directly east to Claremont.

Claremont, its residents, and the broader area would benefit significantly from being directly connected to the RNUP. The lands recommended for addition would not utilize any lands necessary for a possible future airport, and would provide the community with access to the RNUP; provide a narrow buffer from the airport lands themselves; open up nature and trail linkages between the RNUP and conservation lands and trails including the Trans Canada Trail to the east of Claremont; as well as access through the Michel Creek corridor to thousands of acres of conservation lands, including lands within and to the east of Seaton, and to existing and possible future urban areas and communities in south Pickering as well as Ajax.

## 3. Flexible Zoning for Altona

The small hamlet of Altona falls within the 5,200 acre Durham parcel soon to be part of the RNUP. It is important to ensure that C-18 does not limit the RNUP's ability to pursue more flexible zoning in Altona to accommodate certain uses that would support the values in the RNUP but which may not be allowed in other areas of the Park.

## Conclusion

---

In summary, we are proposing that approximately 959 acres be added to the RNUP. We recommend further that active consideration should also be given to negotiating with the Province to evaluate the further addition at a later date of some of the Province's Seaton lands into the RNUP.

It should be noted that the areas shown for addition are "approximate" and in considering them, the Federal Government should "consult with tenants, adjacent landowners, stakeholders, Provincial Government and the City of Pickering."

When we presented our proposal to various stakeholders, we very much appreciated the assistance provided by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority in reviewing the boundaries of the proposed additions, but recognized that further "ground truthing" and consultation would be required.

None of these decisions would in any way preclude or complicate the possibility of a future airport. They would also result in significant economic benefits for Durham.

In her conclusions when presenting Bill C-18 in parliament Minister Catherine McKenna stated that the RNUP **"is a gateway to discovering nature for 20% of Canada's population."** That gateway would be a much better one for Durham if the RNUP was actually connected to communities within Durham.