

Newsletter to GDA Members and Volunteers February 2020

Greetings! We hope you have been enjoying all that winter has to offer – bird watching, skiing, shovelling and reading in front of the fireplace.

A few issues we are following:

Federal Lands in Pickering: In May 2016, Transport Canada awarded a contract to KPMG to undertake a Pickering Lands Aviation Sector Analysis. The study updated supply and demand forecasts for aviation traffic, developed options for the type and role of an airport in the regional airport system, and provided an assessment of the economic impact of these options. The final phase of the Aviation Sector Analysis was completed in Spring 2019. Next steps will be determined following the Minister’s review of the department’s advice; word was expected in late 2019 and so we are watching and waiting.

Attached is a recent news report about the issue: <https://oshawaexpress.ca/new-year-sparks-renewed-interest-in-pickering-airport/>. GDA’s position has always been that there has not been a compelling business case to date that this airport is needed. A recent GTAA study about Pearson appears to confirm that there is no immediate or medium-term need; we are hopeful that the KPMG study will come to a similar conclusion.

Veraine Development: A large “mixed-use master planned community” has been proposed in northeast Pickering by Dorsay Development Corporation. The Corporation owns 4000 acres bound by Highway 7 to the south, Westney Road North to the west, Concession Road 8 to the north, and Lake Ridge Road to the east.

The City of Pickering has supported the vision and principles outlined in this development proposal and has requested that the Region of Durham include these lands in the settlement area boundary during its current Municipal Comprehensive Review (read more in this news article:

<https://www.durhamregion.com/community-story/9745174-proposed-veraine-community-in-northeast-pickering-flies-into-the-development-radar/>)



These primarily agricultural and rural lands are sandwiched between the urban area and the more protected Provincial Greenbelt and so are called “Whitebelt” lands. You can look at a map of this part of the Greenbelt here: <https://files.ontario.ca/on-2019/mmah-greenbeltmaps-en-147-protected-countryside-sheet-11.pdf>. Whitebelt designation is similar in appearance and land use to the “Protected Countryside” component of the Greenbelt, but does not have the same level of protection from urban development. At present, these lands have not been designated for urban growth. Neptis Foundation, a charitable foundation devoted to urban research and analysis around the Greater Toronto area, states on its website “Given the large quantity of land currently designated for development, there is no immediate need for the Whitebelt lands to be designated for urban development at this time. The development community would like these lands to be made available

for future urbanization, while others would prefer to add the lands to the Greenbelt, create an agricultural land reserve, or put them to other non-urban uses” (<https://www.neptis.org/publications/story-so-far/chapters/note-about-whitebelt>).

Durham Region launched a comprehensive review of its Official Plan in 2019. You can follow this review here: <https://www.durham.ca/en/doing-business/envision-durham.aspx>. GDA has argued in the past that such development is not necessary, given the Seaton development and other options within existing urban areas. Durham Region attempted but failed in a previous review of its Official Plan to have these lands included in the urban area.

Miller Boyington Pit Site Plan Development Application: The Miller Boyington #3 Pit is located in Uxbridge Township on the east side of Concession 7, just to the north of Regional Rd 21. Miller Paving has submitted an application for a Site Plan Development Agreement, which if approved could include among other things:

1) of the roughly 500-acre land holding currently governed entirely by the Aggregate Resources Act, 91 acres would instead be placed under the site plan control provisions of Uxbridge Township.

2) importation of approximately 1,000,000 cubic metres of fill from Miller work sites to 60 of the 91-acre land parcel over a 10 year period. You can read more about what is being proposed here:

https://uxbridge.ca/development_services_planning_current_applications

Uxbridge Township is home to numerous licensed aggregate pits as well as a number of abandoned pits. Many are situated in critical locations where opportunities exist to establish or strengthen trail networks and nature corridors. A key interest of GDA for many years has been what happens to these pits when aggregate extraction comes to an end. Several years ago GDA partnered with Ontario Nature and the Ontario Trillium Foundation to explore this issue. We have been following the Miller Boyington proposal because it could set a precedent for what happens to other pits in the Township.

Importation of fill is a sensitive community topic given all the contaminated soil dumping which occurred over the last 10 years at the Earthworx site on Lakeridge Road, and at the Greenbank Airport site. Better control and monitoring measures of importation of fill have since been implemented. Uxbridge has a very strict importation of fill by-law, and policy changes have been made and are being phased in by the Province. But in January and February of this year, local residents have packed Uxbridge Council meetings with questions and concerns about the Miller proposal to import fill. Their concerns have included contamination of water, impact of truck traffic, effect on property values and controls on quality of fill. Given the proximity of Uxbridge to roads and construction projects in the GTA, there could be more such proposals in the years to come.

GDA is in a position to contribute to a better understanding of some of these complex issues and so will be sponsoring an information event:

March 12 from 7-9 pm
Uxbridge Seniors Centre
75 Marietta Street, Uxbridge (near Uxpool)

Speakers Andrew McCammon of Ontario Headwaters Institute and Ian Mclaurin of Ontario Soil Regulation Task Force will present information and answer questions about watersheds, importation of fill, recent regulatory changes, and best practices. We hope you will join us.

Conservation Authorities Act: The Province is undertaking consultations about proposed changes to Conservation Authorities Act regulations related to the mandate of conservation authorities. GDA has submitted comments at an earlier phase of the consultation process. Information on these consultations has been posted, as well as a survey: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/consultation-ontario-conservation-authorities>. GDA's concern with the proposed legislation is that conservation authorities will have their mandate and scope limited and their current role as part of the planning process removed. CA's play an important role in the planning process by ensuring that developments do not result in changes to the floodplain and the natural heritage that would put communities at risk of flooding. The lands owned and managed by conservation authorities are also critical resource for health; they protect our water supplies, clean our air, protect biodiversity, and a visit to the trails on these lands provides a respite from the stresses of urban living. GDA has advocated that the role of conservation lands as greenspace needs to be acknowledged, and adequate funds to manage these lands need to be made available.

Conservation authorities have been important partners for the work of GDA these past 20 years. A primer on the role of conservation authorities is available on the Conservation Ontario website. Click on their presentation when you visit this site: <https://conservationontario.ca/policy-priorities/conservation-authorities-act/>. **We encourage you to participate in the survey; the deadline is March 13, 2020.** You don't need to answer every question on the survey – not all of it will apply to you, but your participation will send an important message that you are interested. Section 5 of the survey offers an opportunity to express any concerns not prompted by the earlier questions.

Volunteers: Our first planning meeting was held outdoors in January. Pictured here are representatives from several organizations discussing the possible replacement of a boardwalk in Glen Major Forest. It takes time to identify the best method for the site, materials, costs and who can contribute what.

We'll start to work on trail maintenance and projects on Thursdays in May, depending on trail conditions and weather. We will send an update to volunteers once plans are firmed up.



Save the date: Saturday June 6 is our AGM. This coincides with a trails celebration in Uxbridge tentatively planned for 11 to 1pm that same day. We plan to hold a shorter-than-usual business meeting to permit participation in the larger trails event. We'll send update once we have more details to share.