



**Green Durham Association Presentation to Transport Minister Lisa Raitt
July 13, 2015**

We very much appreciated having the opportunity to present our views to you last summer, and are doubly pleased to have that opportunity again today particularly after your government's very much welcomed announcement this past weekend.

Our recommendations last year reflected our belief that the way forward on the Federal lands involved recommending an approach that stakeholders with varied interests could support. We were delighted with the July 11th announcement to add an additional 5200 acres to the Federal Rouge Park – action recommended by many stakeholders including ourselves, and as your recent invitation letter to this meeting points out, by Regional Chairs and Mayors.

We have the following initial comments in advance of today's meeting, and will no doubt modify them on further reflection after the meeting.

- We look forward with other stakeholders to working with Parks Canada as they develop a plan for the lands being transferred to the Park that best supports agriculture, and the related rural community including Altona, as well as environmental and nature and trail corridor priorities.

Our organization has over the past decade been very involved in the establishment of nature and trail links directly north of, and abutting these newly announced Rouge Park Lands, and in creating corridors north and east to other conservation lands and communities in Uxbridge, including links to the Oak Ridges and Trans Canada trails.

The addition of these 5,200 acres to the Federal Rouge Park will now result in the much-needed creation of a robust nature corridor and trail connect from the Moraine to the Lake. And agriculture both in the Park and nearby will benefit from being part of a much larger farm area.

- As we mentioned in our 2014 presentation, the 8,700-acre airport site is twice the size of Pearson – at least a third of it falls in the provincial greenbelt and at least part of this is environmentally sensitive land – land that includes the Mitchell creek corridor on the outskirts of Claremont, as well as a section of the main branch of the West Duffins. We understand that until possible future airport and related economic development

considerations are further evaluated, that this boundary is unlikely to be changed. However we would hope that after more study, further steps will be taken to permanently protect at least a significant portion of these environmentally sensitive corridor lands – lands which could also provide an important direct downstream green gateway along the Duffins between the Park, and Pickering’s Seaton lands, and thousands of acres of conservation lands within Seaton.

- The government’s own sponsored studies continue to indicate that given potential capacity at Pearson, Hamilton, and other existing airports, no additional airport is likely able to be justified for many years. And as we noted in our presentation to you a year ago, we also believe that these studies continue – as past studies have done - to overestimate that need.
- We were pleased with your reconfirmation that decision making around an airport *“requires thorough analysis and a sound business case.”*
- We would again stress that even if a decision were to be made, in the short to medium term to build an airport, any possible development would start small. And given as well that there are extensive development lands available in Seaton just south of the airport lands, extensive development on the Federal lands would be further slowed.
- Regardless then of whether or when an airport decision is made, the reality that needs to be taken into consideration is that for many decades to come, the highest and best use of the majority of lands in the airport site will be agricultural. Given the critical role agriculture and the food and farming sector plays in Durham’s economy, and in the broader Greater Golden Horseshoe, we would urge Government to thoroughly analyze these opportunities and take the steps necessary to best support this economic sector.

In conclusion we are delighted with the action taken by government to greatly expand the Federal Rouge Park lands into Durham. We look forward to continuing dialogue on matters dealing with both the Parks Canada and Transport Canada lands and respectfully ask you and your government colleagues to continue to give active consideration to the issues we have raised.

Sincerely

Brian Buckles, for the Green Durham Association

cc: Chris Alexander, Paul Calandra, Colin Carrie, Corneliu Chisu, Erin O’Toole