

**Delegation by Green Durham Association to Durham Regional Council**

**July 29, 2020**

**Subject:** Dorsay Development Corporation's request for a Minister's Zoning Order for Lands in Northeast Pickering

Mr. Chair, Members of Council,

GDA is a 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. We support the stewardship of healthy habitats for flora, fauna, wetlands and watersheds, the preservation of agricultural land, the development of trails for passive recreational use, and public access to these trail networks.

Since 1998 we have worked in partnership with municipalities, conservation authorities, private landowners, the aggregate industry and other partners to plan for, acquire and manage trail networks, nature corridors and conservation lands. Over this time we have also supported research about and have commented on policies and decisions affecting land use.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the recent Minister's Zoning Request regarding the Dorsay Development Corporation and lands in Northeast Pickering. Following the Pickering City Council motion to request a Minister's Zoning Request regarding Dorsay Development Corporation and lands in Northeast Pickering, we submitted a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing which included the following comments:

1) Land Use

- These lands have been identified by the Province as prime agricultural lands ([www.omafra.gov.on.ca](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca)), and although situated in a "whitebelt" area, are almost all Class 1 farmland.
- The Region of Durham is in the midst of a review of the official plan and is harmonizing the provincial agricultural and natural heritage maps with those of their Official Plan.
- The Ontario Farmland Trust estimates that over the past 30 years or so Ontario has lost 20% of its best, most productive farmland to development.
- The current pandemic has highlighted the importance of protecting local sources of food production.

- Agriculture is Durham's largest industry and it is vital that what is farmland today remains farmland for as long as possible.

## 2) Watershed Protection

- The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority recently completed the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan. The report shows that this watershed is stressed and that there is a serious problem with flooding and erosion. The report indicates that urbanizing the Carruthers Headwaters will dramatically increase flooding hazards (p 38, Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan 2020-2030, [www.trca.ca](http://www.trca.ca)). The TRCA Report makes it clear that under no circumstances should the Carruthers Headwaters be urbanized.
- Durham Region has identified flooding as a major threat from climate change and outlined numerous direct and indirect costs and disruptions to local governments and homeowners (Durham Community Climate Change Adaptation Plan, [www.durham.ca](http://www.durham.ca))

## 3) Planning concerns

- New development on this large scale should be informed by the most recent census numbers, and an up-to-date understanding of the capacity and needs of the entire region. The burden to the Region of Durham and to the municipality of providing a new suite of services to this proposed development including water, sewage, roads and schools needs to be carefully considered. The Dorsay project proposes inserting a new city into an un-serviced area.
- The Regional Official Plan is expected to be completed in 2022. Allowing completion of this review before approving such a large new development will ensure location of development around transit hubs, consideration of agriculture and preservation of natural heritage features, and prevent inefficient and costly expansion of municipal services. The impacts of COVID 19 are as yet unknown at this time but could also have the potential for significant changes to how we live, work and travel.

**In conclusion, we fully support the concerns and specific recommendations contained in the report submitted to Council by the Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development (#2020-P-15) regarding this request.** The report is comprehensive and outlines numerous concerns about this proposal; and the request for a Minister's Zoning Order.

Thank you

Elizabeth Calvin  
President, Green Durham Association