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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

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From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development  
Report: #2023-INFO-79  
Date: September 22, 2023

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**Subject:**

Rouge National Urban Park Study: Introduction and Status Update

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**Recommendation:**

Receive for information

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Regional Council on the release of the Terms of Reference that will guide the conduct of the Rouge National Urban Park Study being undertaken by the federal government.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 On March 21, 2023, the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change requested the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada to conduct a study of the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) and adjacent lands to understand the potential and cumulative effects of past, ongoing, and future nearby development projects on the integrity of the RNUP.

2.2 The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada released a report on May 30, 2023 on the [Comments to Date on the Rouge National Urban Park Study](#); and on August 15, 2023, the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change released the [Terms of Reference](#) to guide the RNUP Study.

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

3.1 There have been no previous reports or decisions on this topic.

### **4. Study Objectives and Scope**

4.1 The Terms of Reference include objectives and scope of the study, and identify parameters around the establishment, purpose and composition of the committee conducting the RNUP Study, including the committee's activities and requirements, the development and role of its Secretariat, and the participation of Indigenous communities.

4.2 The RNUP study will focus on:

- a. Future potential development activities in lands adjacent to the RNUP (the park), notably in the area formerly known as the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP), and its potential impacts;
- b. The ecological integrity of the park and the ability to meet its management objectives as described in the Park Management Plan, including:
  - Protecting biodiversity, natural resources, and natural process;
  - Enhancing ecological connectivity throughout the park;
  - Maintaining beneficial working relationships with Indigenous communities; and
  - Supporting a vibrant park farming community;
- c. Any other potential and cumulative effects, on areas of federal jurisdiction (e.g., species at risk, federal lands); and
- d. Consideration of how laws and regulations, including Indigenous laws, would apply to future potential development activities in lands adjacent to the park.

4.3 Attachment 1 includes a map of the Rouge National Urban Park Study Area, which comprises the urban park itself, the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, and the federal Pickering Airport lands.

4.4 The Terms of Reference indicate the committee carrying out the study will consist of three members appointed by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. A Secretariat will also be established for administrative and technical support, and funding will be made available by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada to facilitate the involvement of Indigenous communities and organizations, non-government organizations, and individuals in the study<sup>1</sup>

## **5. Indigenous Communities and Participation**

5.1 As a guiding principle, the committee is required to ensure that Indigenous engagement is maintained throughout the course of the study, including members of the Rouge National Urban Park First Nations Advisory Circle, as well as the Métis Nation of Ontario.

5.2 The members of the RNUP First Nations Advisory Circle include:

a. The seven signatories of the Williams Treaties Settlement:

- Alderville First Nation,
- Beausoleil First Nation,
- Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation,
- Chippewas of Rama First Nation,
- Curve Lake First Nation,
- Hiawatha First Nation,
- Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation;

b. Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, who have submitted an Aboriginal Title claim to lands in the Rouge River Valley Tract;

c. Huron-Wendat Nation; and

d. Six Nations of the Grand River.

## **6. Committee Activities and Required Action Items**

6.1 The Terms of Reference identify required action items to ensure Indigenous and public participation. They also set a standard to guide the use of information and procedures for analyses to support the study.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Notice, August 15, 2023, Rouge National Urban Park Study – Participant Funding Available, <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/document/152760?culture=en-CA>

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## **Indigenous and Public Participation**

6.2 The committee is required to develop an approach to Indigenous participation in collaboration with Indigenous communities, and ensure opportunities are available for meaningful participation by members of the public, industry, environmental and community organizations, and other interested persons or groups.

## **Information and Analyses**

6.3 Using publicly available information, the committee must:

- a. Identify, compile, review and present information on existing environmental, health, social, and economic conditions within the Study Area, including a brief overview on the need for, and alternatives to development activities in the DRAP;
- b. Describe potential development activities that may occur in the Study Area, including a range of plausible development scenarios under existing laws and regulations, including a scenario with no further development in the DRAP;
- c. Identify information, knowledge gaps, and uncertainties;
- d. Analyze potential effects, including an assessment of all physical activities that are certain and reasonably foreseeable as described in: Official Plans of the municipalities adjacent to the park, described in the Park Management Plan, planned on Seaton lands, enabled by Ministerial Zoning Orders (MZOs) by the Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and those that are likely to be induced by development in the DRAP;
- e. Identify conclusions on:
  - The magnitude of potential and cumulative effects of development activities on the ecological integrity of the park;
  - Key avoidance, mitigation, compensation, monitoring, or follow-up measures to address potential impacts of development; and
  - Whether action items should be applied under federal legislation to future proposed development activities; and
- f. Undertake administrative and reporting activities, including ensuring information and materials are publicly available through the Registry website and completing a workplan.

## **7. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

7.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: Environmental Sustainability – to protect the environment for the future by demonstrating leadership in sustainability and addressing climate change.

Goal 2: Community Vitality – to foster an exceptional quality of life with services that contribute to strong neighbourhoods, vibrant and diverse communities, and influence our safety and well-being.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 At nearly 80 square kilometres in size, the Rouge National Urban Park is the largest urban park in Canada. Parks Canada has an interest in ensuring the ecological integrity of the park in light of potential development activity which may occur within the former Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.
- 8.2 The committee is expected to complete the RNUP Study and report to the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change within 18 months of the public announcement of the appointment of its members.
- 8.3 Regional staff will keep Council apprised of the progress of the RNUP Study.
- 8.4 Participant funding is currently available by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada to support public and Indigenous Peoples participation in the RNUP Study<sup>2</sup>. The deadline to apply is October 16, 2023.

## **9. Attachments**

Attachment #1: Rouge National Urban Park Study Area Map

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE  
Commissioner of Planning and  
Economic Development

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<sup>2</sup> Public Notice, August 15, 2023, Rouge National Urban Park Study – Participant Funding Available, <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/document/152760?culture=en-CA>

**Attachment 1**

**Study Area (Ontario), Rouge National Urban Park Study**

