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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Community Growth and Economic Development Committee  
From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development  
Report: #2025-CG-1  
Date: January 7, 2025

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**Subject:**

Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Workplan,  
File:C07-02

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**Recommendations:**

That the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That Commissioner's Report #2025-CG-1 be received as the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee's 2024 Annual Report;
  - B) That the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee's 2025 Workplan and Terms of Reference be approved, as outlined in Attachment 1 and 2, to Commissioner's Report #2025-CG-1;
  - C) That a copy of Commissioner's Report #2025-CG-1 be forwarded to the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Durham Federation of Agriculture, the Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association, the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance and Durham's area municipalities.
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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC) Terms of Reference (ToR) requires the submission of an annual report to the Planning and Economic Development Committee summarizing the activities of the previous year. DAAC is

also required to prepare a proposed Workplan for the coming year and when necessary, recommend revisions to the ToR, for consideration and approval of the Planning and Economic Development Committee and Council.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to:

- a. Summarize the activities of DAAC from 2024; and
- b. Present the proposed DAAC 2025 Workplan – see Attachment 1; and
- c. Proposed refinements to the DAAC ToR – see Attachment 2.

## **2. Previous Reports and Decisions**

2.1 In April 2023, Council considered DAAC Membership Appointments through Commissioner's Report [#2023-P-11](#).

2.2 In June 2023, Council considered DAAC's 2023 Workplan and Terms of Reference through Commissioner's Report [#2023-P-16](#).

2.3 In January 2024, Council considered the 2023 Annual Report and 2024 Workplan of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee through Commissioner's Report [#2024-P-1](#).

2.4 In October 2024, Council considered the summary of the 2024 Farm Tour through Information Report [#2024-INFO-62](#).

## **3. 2024 Annual Report**

3.1 DAAC is composed of seventeen members, including one member of the Planning and Economic Development Committee.

3.2 At the January 16, 2024, meeting, Zac Cohoon was elected Chair, Bryan Smith was elected 1st Vice-Chair and Dave Risebrough was elected 2nd Vice-Chair.

3.3 Membership at the end of 2024 was:

- Zac Cohoon (Chair) (Member at Large – Farmer)
- Bryan Smith (1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chair) (Member at Large – Farmer);
- Dave Risebrough (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair) (Member At Large – Non-farmer);
- Neil Guthrie (Ajax);
- Tom Watpool (Brock);
- Tom Barrie (Clarington);
- Derrik Stevenson (Oshawa);

- Fuzz (Gord) Taylor (Pickering);
- Nicole Swain (Scugog);
- Bryant Hulshof (Uxbridge);
- Ronald Death (Whitby);
- Hubert Schillings (Member At Large – Farmer);
- Gerri Lynn O'Connor (Member At Large – Non-farmer);
- Matthew Sommerville (Member At Large – Non-farmer);
- Mark Shiers (Durham Region Federation of Agriculture);
- Jordan McKay (Durham Farm Fresh);
- Mayor Wilma Wotten (Planning and Economic Development Committee); and
- Councillor John Neal (Planning and Economic Development Committee - Alternate).

### **Major Activities**

3.4 The role of DAAC is to provide advice to the Region on agricultural and rural related planning matters. The Committee also has a role in implementing programs which enhance public awareness and knowledge of agriculture and rural related issues in the Region.

3.5 During 2024, DAAC fulfilled this role by:

- a. Expanding its knowledge of agricultural related issues by receiving presentations and engaging in discussions on the following:
  - Windfields Farm Project, Ontario Tech University was seeking a farmer for land owned by the University in Oshawa;
  - Skilled Trades Programs in the Region;
  - Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Easements;
  - North Durham On-Farm Diversified Uses Project undertaken between Scugog, Brock, Uxbridge and Regional Planning and Economic Development;
  - Independent Electricity Systems Operator Battery Storage Site Selection;
  - City of Pickering Urban Agriculture Project;
  - Farm Worker accommodation related by-law issues at farms in the Region;
  - Durham Strategic Plan consultation;
  - Natural Gas System Expansion proposed by Enbridge in Uxbridge and the importance of including agricultural properties in an expansion areas;

- Four Farms Market Garden Training Program, a local company that is training new farmers on how to operate a farm;
  - Sustainability initiatives in Durham Region;
  - Precision Agriculture Field Day;
  - Width of Culverts during road upgrades;
  - Envision Durham progress updates;
  - Apple Value Chain Campaign by Invest Durham;
  - Updates to Regional Roads and Infrastructure projects;
  - Proposed Provincial Planning Statement update;
  - Bill 186, Growing Agritourism Act, 2024;
  - Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority (HOPA) Grain Terminal update;
  - Water Testing Services for Private Drinking Water provided by the Province; and
  - Excess Soil challenges on agricultural sites.
- b. Providing advice on various Regional issues, including:
- Backyard chickens and Avian Influenza;
  - North Durham On-Farm Diversified Uses Project;
  - Stormwater Management fees on agricultural properties in Ajax;
  - The Durham Food Policy Council's Durham Food System Report Card;
  - Official Plan Amendment application to permit surplus farm dwelling severances (ROPA 2023-001); and
  - Official Plan Amendment application related to aggregate extraction (ROPA 2024-001).
- c. Organizing and/or participating in the following educational/outreach initiatives:
- Hosting the 2024 DAAC Farm Tour held on September 26 (see Commissioner's Report [#2024-INFO-62](#)). The farm tour was attended by over 130 participants.
  - Throughout 2024 DAAC members presented Agriculture 101 training to area municipal councils. The training covered a number of topics related to the agricultural industry and was well received.

#### **4. 2025 Workplan**

- 4.1 The proposed 2025 DAAC Workplan (Attachment 1), represents activities which are a priority, and achievable within the calendar year. The activities are divided into four categories:

- a. **Policy Development and Implementation** – Activities involve providing advice on the formulation and implementation of land use planning policies to the Planning and Economic Development Department, as well as Planning and Economic Development Committee;
- b. **Communication/Outreach/Educate** – Activities that support community knowledge and awareness such as farm tours or workshops (including the annual Farm Tour and Local Council Agriculture training);
- c. **Economic Development and Tourism** – Activities to encourage economic development research and implementation strategies to assist Durham’s agricultural sector; and
- d. **Issues of Interest** – Activities related to the monitoring of issues that DAAC deems significant and may require further consideration.

## 5. Terms of Reference

- 5.1 As mentioned, DAAC is guided by Council approved [Terms of Reference \(ToR\)](#). The ToR outlines the goal, mandate and scope of activities for the Committee. Proposed changes include changes to the scope of activities related to providing advice on Regional planning applications and matters as well as minor technical housekeeping matters, including the removal of references to providing advice on Regional Planning matters and updates to reflect name changes to the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee and Community Growth and Economic Development Department, as per Council’s decision on December 18, 2024, Report [#2024-P-17](#), as outlined in Attachment 2.

## 6. Relationship to the Strategic Plan

- 6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
  - a. Under Goal 3: Economic Prosperity, Objective 3.5 – Provide a supportive environment for agriculture and agri-food industries.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1 DAAC had many notable accomplishments in 2024, including hosting the Annual DAAC Farm Tour and completing Agriculture 101 training. Members should be commended for the time and commitment they have invested in the activities of the Committee. Michael Scott acted as the Planning and Economic Development Department staff liaison over the course of 2024.

7.2 It is recommended that:

- a. This report be received as DAAC's annual report on its 2024 activities;
- b. The proposed 2025 DAAC Workplan be approved (Attachment 1);
- c. The proposed Terms of Reference be approved (Attachment 2); and
- d. A copy of this report be forwarded to the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Durham Federation of Agriculture, Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association, the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance and Durham's Area Municipalities.

## 8. Attachments

Attachment #1: 2025 DAAC Workplan

Attachment #2: 2025 DAAC Terms of Reference

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE  
Commissioner of Community Growth and  
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer



## **Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC) Proposed 2025 Workplan**

### **1. Advice on Policy Development and Implementation**

#### **a. Provide advice on:**

- Agricultural and rural related community growth and economic development matters, with a view to:
  - sustaining the viability of farming;
  - protecting and preserving agricultural land as a first priority; and
  - ensuring adequate separation between agricultural land uses and activities and urban residential areas.
- Agriculture related transportation issues
- Area Municipal Official Plan policy.
- Provincial land-use planning policies, plans and regulations.
- Implementation of the Regional Broadband Strategy.
- Growing Agri-Food Durham implementation.
- Growing North Durham Plan implementation.
- On Farm Diversified Use and Agriculture Related Use policy and process.

### **2. Communicate/Outreach/Educate**

#### **a. Host the 2025 Farm Tour that will:**

- assist Local and Regional Councillors, Provincial and Federal government officials as well as Conservation Authorities (including staff), to understand the concerns, opportunities and challenges of the agricultural community;
- reach key industry partners whose mandate may impact the agricultural community; including the educational sector to understand opportunities and challenges of the agri-food industry;
- highlight the diversity of agriculture in Durham Region and the economic benefits across the agri-food value chain to support the broader Regional economy.

#### **b. Discussions on agricultural concerns to area municipal councils.**

#### **c. Encourage ongoing communication and identification of needs/opportunities**

within Durham's local agricultural societies.

- d. Continue to work with Regional Departments including Community Growth and Economic Development, Works, Finance and Police Services where necessary to ensure agricultural interests are considered.
- e. Encourage participation of the Durham agricultural youth organizations.
- f. Investigate other outreach opportunities as they arise.
- g. Municipal representatives on the Committee will continue to dialogue with their respective municipalities including presentations to area municipal Councils on matters of interest where appropriate.
- h. Continue working with the Durham Environment and Climate Change Advisory Committee and other Regional Committees.
- i. Participate in committees and working groups with local area municipalities and non-governmental organizations.

### **3. Economic Development and Tourism**

- a. Provide advice and feedback to staff on economic development and tourism activities pertaining to support and growth of the agri-food industry.
  - On an annual basis, assist with identifying priority projects that align with activities identified in the Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan (e.g. supporting the launch of an Agriculture Leadership Program).
  - Identify emerging trends and opportunities to grow the agri-food industry in Durham.
- b. Support the implementation of the Growing Agri-Food Durham Action Plan and Growing North Durham Plan.

### **4. Issues of Interest**

- Federal Pickering airport lands.
- Oshawa Port.
- Federal policies effecting agriculture (tariffs, carbon tax, etc.)
- Alternative energy (e.g. solar farms, biomass, wind).
- Farm safety.
- Municipal, Provincial and federal legislation and policy affecting agriculture (e.g. species at risk, provincial land use plans).
- Commercial fill, excess topsoil and excess soil
- Aggregate matters, including aggregate pit rehabilitation.
- Implementation of source water protections plans.

- Farmland assessment and taxation.
- Farm animal health and wellness (e.g. DRPS, Avian Influenza).
- Natural Heritage System protection and construction of new farm infrastructure.
- Minimum Distance Separation formulae.
- Water and wastewater.
- Biosecurity, trespassing and vandalism.
- Municipal Class EA's.
- Regional road projects.
- Conservation Authority matters.
- Energy-from-Waste implementation and monitoring.
- Region's waste diversion programs.
- Local food strategy.
- Agricultural training and employment, through continued work with the Durham Workforce Authority, Durham College, and Ontario Tech University.
- Activities of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance.
- Other matters affecting the agricultural industry (e.g. Municipal Fire Regulations, By-laws and Permits).
- Rouge National Urban Park.
- Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.
- Supportive agri-business in Durham, addressing local agri-food supply chain gaps.
- Agricultural worker mental health.
- Urban agriculture and vertical farming.

## **5. Meeting Schedule**

- a. DAAC has scheduled 10 regular meetings in 2025. An additional meeting may be held in August, at the call of the Chair. Resources (Community Growth and Economic Development and Clerks) will be provided to accommodate this schedule and workload.

- January 14, 2025
- February 11, 2025
- March 18, 2025
- April 8, 2025
- May 13, 2025
- June 10, 2025
- September 9, 2025
- October 14, 2025

- November 10, 2025
- December 9, 2025



## Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee

### Terms of Reference

January 2025

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#### 1. Goal

- 1.1 To provide advice to the Region of Durham on agricultural matters and rural matters as they relate to agriculture.

#### 2. Mandate

- 2.1 The Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC) is a volunteer Advisory Committee established by Regional Council in accordance with these Terms of Reference. Committee members are guided by these Terms of Reference.
- 2.2 The Terms of Reference provide for a balance between activities referred from the Community Growth and Economic Development Department or the Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Committee or Regional Council and an allowance for the DAAC to be proactive and advise on matters identified on its own initiative.
- 2.3 Matters may be referred to the DAAC from the Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Department, the Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Committee, or Regional Council. The DAAC may report directly to the Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Committee on substantive matters as determined by the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee. Otherwise, the DAAC shall report through the Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Department.

#### 3. Scope of Activities

- 3.1 The scope of the DAAC may include activities such as:
- a) Providing advice on issues and concerns of the agricultural community;
  - b) Providing advice on the implementation of Provincial and Federal legislation, policies, and guidelines related to the agricultural industry;
  - c) Provide advice on agricultural and rural economic development initiatives;
  - d) Providing advice on agricultural and rural policy directions pursued by the Region.

- e) Providing advice on the identification and implementation of programs which encourage public awareness and education of agricultural and related rural issues; and
- f) Providing advice on matters as they arise, at the request of the Region.

#### **4. Composition**

4.1 The DAAC will be comprised of seventeen members in total, as follows:

- Fourteen (14) members will be private individuals who do not represent their respective employers or advocacy groups in their capacity as a DAAC member. Of these fourteen members, eleven will be bona fide farmers who are directly involved in the agricultural industry<sup>1</sup>; and three will be residents who are not directly involved in the agricultural industry.
- One (1) member representing the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture who is a bona fide farmer directly involved in the agricultural industry.
- One (1) member of the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee whose role is to act as liaison.
- One (1) member representing the Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association.

4.2 Membership shall correspond with the term of Regional Council. However, members shall continue to serve until their replacements are appointed by Regional Council. If a member chooses to resign, the Region will seek a replacement in accordance with Section 5.

4.3 At the discretion of the DAAC, non-attendance of three consecutive meetings will be sufficient grounds for replacement.

#### **5. Membership Selection**

5.1 For regular members, Durham Region will place an advertisement seeking individuals interested in volunteering for appointment to the DAAC. Interested individuals will be required to submit an application form to the Regional Clerk outlining their interest and qualifications.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Where an interested bona fide farmer cannot be found to represent an area municipality, as an exception, a non-farm rural resident may be substituted.

- 5.2 The Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Department will review the applications received. Applications from qualified applicants will be forwarded to the respective area municipality with a request that the local Council nominate one representative from the applicants who are bona fide farmers directly involved in the agricultural industry. The Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Department, from the remaining applications received, will nominate three additional members at large who are bona fide farmers; and three members at large who are not directly involved in the agricultural industry, to bring the regular member complement to fourteen.
- 5.3 In nominating members to the DAAC, regard shall be given to achieving a diversity of members engaged in varied disciplines of the agricultural industry and members living in the rural community with knowledge of agricultural and related rural issues. Regard shall also be given to residency within the Region and availability to attend meetings. All residents of Durham Region are eligible for membership. An elaboration of the selection criteria is provided in Appendix 1 of the Terms of Reference.
- 5.4 The Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Department will formally request the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture (DRFA) to nominate one person to represent the DRFA.
- 5.5 The Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Department will formally request the Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association (DFF) to nominate one person to represent the DFF.
- 5.6 All members of the DAAC shall be appointed by the Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council.
- 5.7 Regional Council shall appoint a representative and an alternate to the DAAC from the members of the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee.
- 5.8 In the case of a vacancy, the approach described in Section 5 will generally be followed.

## **6. Officers**

- 6.1 A chair and two vice-chairs (first and second) will be elected annually by the membership of the DAAC. The Community Growth and Economic Development Committee representative will chair the inaugural DAAC meeting.

## **7. Support Services**

- 7.1 The Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development or designate, shall serve as staff liaison to the DAAC. The staff liaison will provide administrative, procedural and technical support to the DAAC.

- 7.2 The staff liaison will co-ordinate all requests for advice from the DAAC, through meeting agendas. DAAC responses to such requests shall be co-ordinated by the staff liaison to the Community Growth and Economic Development Department.
- 7.3 The Region will provide secretarial and other support services. Regional Council will provide a budget to cover the operational expenses of the DAAC, and this budget will be administered by the Community Growth and Economic Development Department.

## **8. Meetings**

- 8.1 Regularly scheduled meetings of DAAC will be held at the Durham Regional Headquarters, unless otherwise stated. The DAAC, will establish a meeting schedule taking into account the business needs and the schedule of Regional Council and the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee. Special meetings may be held at the call of the Chair.
- 8.2 All meetings will be open to the public. As a formal Advisory Committee to the Region, the DAAC is subject to the Regional Procedural By-law, unless otherwise specified in the Terms of Reference.
- 8.3 Quorum for DAAC meetings shall be a majority of the sitting members.

## **9. Delegations of Committee Meetings**

- 9.1 Any person(s) wishing to appear before the DAAC as a delegate must submit a request to [delegations@durham.ca](mailto:delegations@durham.ca), advising of the topic or item to which they wish to speak, which will then be forwarded to the staff liaison in the Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Department. All requests for delegations must be received at least one week prior to the meeting to ensure that the delegation is included on the agenda. Any person wishing to address the DAAC as a delegate, who has not previously arranged to do so, may be granted permission to do so only by Committee resolution.

## **10. Minutes and Agenda**

- 10.1 The minutes of each DAAC meeting will be amended as necessary and approved at the following meeting. The unapproved minutes will be circulated to members of Council as part of the Council Information Package (CIP) prepared by the Regional Clerk.
- 10.2 The DAAC agendas will be prepared by the staff liaison and the DAAC chair or vice-chair with input from other DAAC members. Agendas will be distributed the week prior to the meeting.

**11. Committee Resolutions**

- 11.1 The DAAC will seek to achieve consensus on decisions. Recommendations are “carried” if supported by a majority, unless otherwise specified in these Terms of Reference or Regional Council Rules of Procedure. Only resolutions as they appear in the adopted Minutes may be considered as officially representing the position of the DAAC.

**12. Annual Reports and Workplan**

- 12.1 An annual report summarizing the activities completed in the previous year shall be prepared by the DAAC. The annual report shall be forwarded to the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee.
- 12.2 An annual workplan with an estimate of the resources necessary and any suggested revisions to the Terms of Reference for the coming year shall also be prepared by the DAAC for consideration and approval by the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council.
- 12.3 An annual review of the DAAC by the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee will be completed to examine the effectiveness of the Committee and to ensure continued improvements.

## **Appendix 1: Membership Eligibility Criteria**

To facilitate the nomination and appointment of new members to the DAAC, the following criteria will be considered. The aim is to achieve a diversity of members engaged in varied disciplines of the agricultural industry and community representation with knowledge of agricultural and related rural issues.

### **1. Residency**

- 1.1 Members should reside in Durham Region. Where a person who resides in Durham cannot be found, a farmer who owns land in Durham Region may be substituted.

### **2. Agricultural Expertise and Knowledge**

- 2.1 Applicants engaged in the agricultural industry having the following attributes would be considered as an asset:

- Demonstrated knowledge of agricultural and rural land use issues;
- Relevant farm experience;
- Involvement with activities of the agricultural community;
- Technical training in an agriculture-based field; and
- Knowledge of properties and farm operations within Durham.

### **3. Rural Experience**

- 3.1 For applicants from the non-farm rural community consideration will be given to the duration of residency in the community and the individual's level of knowledge of agricultural related rural issues. The relevance of their interests to the mandate of the DAAC will also be an important consideration.

### **4. Availability**

- 4.1 It is important that an applicant be able to attend as many DAAC meetings as possible and undertake work outside of the regular monthly meetings. An applicant should be able to be contacted or reached during the day in order for meetings to be arranged.