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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

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From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development  
Report: #2025-INFO-74  
Date: September 19, 2025

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**Subject:**

Transport Canada Stakeholder Consultations on Pickering Lands

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**Recommendation:**

Receive for information.

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 Transport Canada has initiated stakeholder consultations on future plans for the Pickering Lands, formerly held by the federal government for a future airport in northwest Pickering. A letter from Transport Canada, announcing the initiation of the consultations, was sent to the Region's Community Growth Division on September 2, 2025 (Attachment #1).
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the structure of these consultations and outline the Region's approach to participation.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In 1972, the federal government acquired 18,600 acres of land in the municipalities of Pickering, Markham and Uxbridge for the purpose of developing a new airport. These lands are commonly referred to as the "Pickering Lands".
- 2.2 In 1975, the plan for a new airport was put on hold and the land was leased to residential, farm and commercial tenants.

- 2.3 Since its first Regional Official Plan adopted by Council in 1976, Durham recognized and protected the Pickering Lands for a potential future airport.
- 2.4 Between 2011 and 2017, approximately 9,900 acres of land were transferred to Parks Canada for the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP). Approximately 8,700 acres were retained for an airport and related uses (map shown in Attachment #2).

### **3. Consultations on a Land Management Strategy for the Pickering Lands**

- 3.1 In January 2025, the Minister of Transport and Internal Trade announced that the Pickering Lands would not be used for a future airport site. Instead, land deemed to have high conservation value would be transferred to Parks Canada for addition to the RNUP, and a land management strategy would be developed to outline land uses and the management approach for the remaining lands. Requirements for the Alto High-Speed Rail Project, the proposed dedicated rail network connecting Toronto and Quebec City, would also be considered.
- 3.2 On September 2, 2025, the Region received a letter from Transport Canada (Attachment #1) with a request to participate in consultations related to the development of the land management strategy and future of the Pickering Lands.
- 3.3 The current stage of consultation is focused on understanding the context of the Pickering Lands. The Region has been asked to provide information about planned infrastructure investments (roads, transit, water and sewer, etc.) in the vicinity of the Pickering Lands and will be meeting with federal staff in this regard. Federal staff are also meeting with other stakeholders, including the City of Pickering and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), to gather development, zoning, and environmental information.
- 3.4 Following this initial information gathering exercise, it is Regional staff's understanding that Transport Canada will be engaging in formal consultation with the public, province, municipalities, and current tenants and leaseholders on the proposed addition to the RNUP, requirements of the Alto High-Speed Rail Project, and potential uses of the remaining lands. In advance of these public consultations, a virtual information session will be hosted by Transport Canada (date to be determined).
- 3.5 Transport Canada has indicated that they are also engaging with Indigenous communities with potential interest in the Pickering Lands.

3.6 An Internal Working Group, comprised of Regional staff from Community Growth and Economic Development, Works, Finance, Durham Region Transit and the CAO's Office has been established to provide a coordinated response to these consultations. Regional staff will report to Regional Council on the progress and outcomes of these consultations.

#### **4. Previous Reports and Decisions**

4.1 An update on work to support the development of the potential future airport on the Pickering Lands was provided in Report [#2018-INFO-91](#) (dated June 1, 2018).

#### **5. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

5.1 This report aligns with the following Strategic Directions in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

a. Connected and Vibrant Communities

- C1. Align Regional infrastructure and asset management with projected growth, climate impacts, and community needs.
- C2. Enable a full range of housing options, including housing that is affordable and close to transit.
- C3. Improve public transit system connectivity, reliability, and competitiveness.
- C4. Improve road safety, including the expansion and connection of active transportation networks to enhance the range of safe mobility options.

b. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action

- E5. Respect the natural environment, including greenspaces, waterways, and agricultural lands.

c. Resilient Local Economies

- R4. Protect and strengthen the local agriculture sector and food supply chains.

d. Strong Relationships

- S4. Advocate to the federal and provincial government and agencies to advance regional priorities.

5.2 This report aligns with the following Foundation in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

- a. People: Making the Region of Durham a great place to work, attracting, and retaining talent.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 Transport Canada has initiated consultations on the future of the Pickering Lands. To support the development of a land management strategy for lands outside of those deemed conservation, Regional staff have been liaising with federal staff to provide contextual information related to Regional infrastructure in the vicinity of the Pickering Lands.

6.2 An Internal Working Group, comprised of Regional staff from Community Growth and Economic Development, Works, Finance, Durham Region Transit, and the CAO's Office, will work together to respond to future engagement opportunities, including potential uses for the lands, of which Regional Council will be kept apprised.

6.3 For additional information, please contact Amanda Bathe, Senior Planner, at [Amanda.Bathe@durham.ca](mailto:Amanda.Bathe@durham.ca).

## **7. Attachments**

Attachment #1: Transport Canada Letter (dated September 2, 2025)

Attachment #2: Pickering Lands Map

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Sandra Austin  
Commissioner of Community Growth and  
Economic Development



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September 2, 2025

Regional Municipality of Durham  
[planning@durham.ca](mailto:planning@durham.ca)

To the Regional Municipality of Durham,

In 1972, the Government of Canada acquired 18,600 acres of land, located 56 kilometres northeast of Toronto in the municipalities of Pickering, Uxbridge and Markham. Known as the Pickering Lands, these lands were acquired based on an anticipated need to develop a future airport. Over the years, the Government of Canada determined that not all the lands would be needed for a future airport, and Transport Canada facilitated the transfer of land to Parks Canada for the development of the Rouge National Urban Park. The first transfer of about 4,700 acres occurred in April 2015, and a second transfer of nearly 5,200 acres was completed in April 2017. Since 2017, Transport Canada has maintained approximately 8,700 acres of the remaining Lands.

In January 2025, the Government of Canada announced that the Pickering Lands will not be used for a future airport site. The Government also announced its intent to transfer lands with high conservation value to Parks Canada in support the mandate of Rouge National Urban Park. A land management strategy will be developed for the remaining lands, with a key consideration to be the requirements for the Alto High Speed Rail Project.

As the custodian of the Pickering Lands, Transport Canada is working closely with Parks Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada, Canada Lands Company, and Housing Infrastructure and Communities Canada to assess options for the future use of the lands.

As an initial step to inform this work, Public Services and Procurement Canada is seeking to collect information regarding existing development plans and planned infrastructure investments in the vicinity of the Pickering Lands. Public Services and Procurement Canada will be contacting you in the coming weeks to coordinate a virtual meeting to discuss subjects like zoning, transit, roads, infrastructure capacity, and other technical issues relevant to the future uses of the Pickering Lands.

Transport Canada, Parks Canada, and Public Services and Procurement Canada intend to lead formal public consultations on the future of the Pickering Lands in Fall 2025, including:

- the proposed addition to the Rouge National Urban Park
- requirements of the Alto High-Speed Rail project
- potential uses of the remaining lands (those not required for the Alto High-Speed Rail project or identified for the expansion of the park), including to support residential and commercial development.

We intend to engage a broad range of interested parties, including the province, municipalities, current tenants and leaseholders and the general public. As a prelude to formal public consultations, a virtual public information session will be held later this summer, with more information on this session to be shared within the coming weeks.

Transport Canada, Parks Canada and Public Services and Procurement Canada are also engaging Indigenous groups with potential interests in the Pickering Lands.

We look forward to a continued dialogue with the Regional Municipality of Durham regarding the future uses of the Pickering Lands.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [Farrah.fleurimond@tc.gc.ca](mailto:Farrah.fleurimond@tc.gc.ca).

Sincerely,



Farrah Fleurimond  
Executive Regional Director, Issues and Programs  
Transport Canada

Cc:

Parks Canada  
Public Services and Procurement Canada  
Canada Lands Company  
Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada

