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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: #2026-CG-11  
Date: April 7, 2026

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**Subject:**

Proposed changes to the Durham Climate Roundtable and Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Committee

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**Recommendation:**

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

- A) That the Region's collaboration agreement with Ontario Tech University governing the establishment and operation of the Durham Climate Roundtable not be renewed for another four-year term;
  - B) That the Durham Climate Roundtable and the Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Committee be transitioned to a new Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Table, effective for the next Council term, commencing in December 2026;
  - C) That the Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Committee be dissolved as an advisory committee to Regional Council effective November 14, 2026; and
  - D) That the proposed terms of reference for the Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Table, included as Attachment #1 to this report, be approved.
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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Regional Council endorsement of staff recommendations to:

- a. decline to renew the Durham Climate Roundtable Collaboration agreement with Ontario Tech University for another four-year term, and initiate an early termination of the existing agreement, to reduce costs amidst ongoing Regional budget pressures; and
- b. transition the existing Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Committee (DECAC) to a new Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Table (DECAT) with new terms of reference and membership structure that includes representation from individuals and organizations that are currently included in the Durham Climate Roundtable Leadership Committee.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The Durham Environmental Advisory Committee (DEAC) was established in 2003 to provide advice to the Region on environmental planning matters, as expressed in the Regional Official Plan, and to be proactive and advise on matters identified on its own initiative.
- 2.2 In 2009, Regional Council established the Durham Region Roundtable on Climate Change (DRRCC) to lead the development of the Region's first ever climate change plan. Released in 2012, ['From Vision to Action: Region of Durham Community Climate Change Local Action Plan 2012'](#) helped to position the Region of Durham as a leader in addressing climate change.
- 2.3 In 2022, Regional Council approved changes to these advisory committees, through [Report #2022-COW-28](#). Changes included dissolving the DRRCC, revising the name of DEAC to the Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Committee (DECAC) and expanding its mandate to include climate change matters.
- 2.4 DECAC has operated throughout the current term of Council, reporting through the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee.
- 2.5 In 2022, in addition to dissolving the DRRCC and revising the name and mandate of DEAC, Regional Council endorsed a collaboration agreement with Ontario Tech University to establish an independent multi-stakeholder entity, based within the University's Brilliant Energy Institute, the Durham Climate Roundtable (DCR). The DCR's mandate is to support leadership and coordination between the Region, area municipalities, the University, and other key organizations within the community on actions required to transition towards a net zero clean energy economy. Key functions of the independent DCR have included:

- a. monitoring progress towards GHG emission targets set by the Region and area municipalities through an annual GHG progress report;
  - b. maintaining a [website](#) and social media presence to communicate the DCR's objectives, program of activities, and project deliverables;
  - c. organizing an annual multi-stakeholder climate forum where organizations and community members can receive updates on progress toward GHG targets, share ideas and best practices, and celebrate success; and
  - d. establishing a Leadership Committee consisting of elected official representatives from the Region, area municipalities, the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, and representatives from academia, industry and community organizations in the Region.
- 2.6 The collaboration agreement was executed in January 2023 and runs until November 2026. As part of the agreement, the Region provides Ontario Tech University with an annual \$100,000 contribution to help fulfill the mandate and functions outlined above. The agreement includes a provision enabling renewal of the agreement for another four-year term subject to Council approval.
- 2.7 In alignment with the collaboration agreement, the University, through the Brilliant Energy Institute, has undertaken several activities in support of the DCR mandate, including:
- a. hosting semi-annual DCR Leadership Committee meetings;
  - b. producing an annual GHG progress report with regional-level emissions data for Durham Region; and
  - c. supporting the organization of the annual DCR Fall Forum, which has had growing attendance each year and features keynote presentations from Ontario Tech University academics, panel discussions, and exhibitor booths to help connect people to organizations working on climate solutions.

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

- 3.1 Changes to the DEAC and DRRCC were endorsed through [Report #2022-COW-28](#) in December 2022.
- 3.2 The 2025 Annual Report and 2026 Workplan for the DECAC was endorsed through [Report #2026-CG-2](#) in January 2026.

#### **4. Proposed Changes to Climate Advisory Bodies**

- 4.1 Important progress has been made through the collaboration agreement with Ontario Tech University. However, staff do not recommend renewal of the current agreement for another four-year term. Regional staff recommend that the current collaboration agreement be terminated before the end of the term. The agreement allows either Party to terminate the agreement upon sixty (60) calendar days prior written notice to the other Party.
- 4.2 There is an opportunity to strengthen resident and industry participation and achieve more impactful outcomes through:
- a. the establishment of a new advisory table to replace the DECAC with representation from residents and organizations currently included in the independent DCR Leadership Committee (see Attachment #1 for proposed terms of reference);
  - b. work with The Atmospheric Fund (TAF) to augment their [Annual Carbon Emissions Inventory](#) for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area to include a greater level of insight on area municipal and regional emissions data. Notably, TAF's annual inventory already includes some GHG data for each area municipality in Durham, as well as a policy tracker; and
  - c. using Regional staff resources to organize and host the annual Durham Climate Forum. This event has been hosted at Regional Headquarters for the past two years and involves considerable effort from Regional staff. Making this a Region-organized and hosted event leverages existing resources.
- 4.3 More broadly, the evolution of the Community Growth and Economic Development Department has brought climate change expertise into the department, creating the opportunity to combine the functions of the DCR and DECAC into an environment and climate advisory table. This will result in administrative efficiencies and strengthen the Region's environmental and climate-related work.

#### **5. Proposed new DECAT Terms of Reference**

- 5.1 The proposed terms of reference for the new DECAT is included as Attachment #1 to this report.
- 5.2 The existing DECAC is a formal advisory committee established by Regional Council with prescribed rules under the Municipal Act, including strict procedural and reporting requirements. The new DECAT is proposed to be an advisory table that will provide advice and peer review from Durham's diverse community to inform

community-wide implementation of Durham's environmental sustainability and climate action initiatives. The Region has established other bodies and working groups under this model, such as the Durham Local Immigration Partnership (DLIP) and the Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness (DACH).

- 5.3 The new DECAT will retain many of the existing DECAC's practices, such as the preparation of meeting agendas and minutes, but will allow more flexibility in the membership selection process and meeting quorum requirements, for example.
- 5.4 The current DECAC is comprised entirely of citizen members and a representative from the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee. Eight of these citizen members are area municipally appointed, requiring approval at area municipal Council meetings.
- 5.5 The new membership structure is proposed to be a minimum of 13, but not more than 17 members representing both Durham residents and organizations from sectors such as local building, transportation, energy, waste, etc. A member of the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee will also sit on the new advisory table. Regional staff will review and recommend membership for Regional Council endorsement. This change will facilitate greater efficiency and allow Regional Council to fill vacancies quickly.
- 5.6 Existing DECAC membership were consulted on the draft terms of reference for the new DECAT and provided their feedback to staff, which was incorporated into the proposed terms of reference included with this report.

## **6. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

- 6.1 This report aligns with the following Strategic Directions and Pathways in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:
  - a. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action
    - E2. Collaborate with partners on the low-carbon transition to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions across Durham Region.
  - b. Strong Relationships
    - S1. Enhance inclusive opportunities for community engagement and meaningful collaboration.
    - S5. Ensure accountable and transparent decision-making to serve community needs, while responsibly managing available resources.

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

- a. Processes: Continuously improving processes to ensure we are responsive to community needs.

## 7. Conclusion

7.1 The changes proposed in this report will enhance critical engagement with organizations and individuals with diverse perspectives to advise Regional staff and Council on how to achieve climate and environmental objectives. A revised structure will also maintain important community engagement initiatives like the annual climate forum and Environmental Achievement Awards, all while achieving financial efficiencies in the context of Regional budget pressures.

7.2 For additional information, contact: Ian McVey, Director Environment and Climate, at [Ian.Mcvey@durham.ca](mailto:Ian.Mcvey@durham.ca).

7.3 Report and attachment prepared by Amanda Bathe, Principal Planner, [Amanda.Bathe@durham.ca](mailto:Amanda.Bathe@durham.ca).

## 8. Attachments

- Attachment #1: Draft Terms of Reference for the Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Table.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Sandra Austin  
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 Environment and Climate Advisory Table**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **1. Mandate**

- 1.1 The role of the Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Table (DECAT) is to provide advice to Regional staff from Durham's diverse community to inform community-wide implementation of Durham's environmental sustainability and climate action initiatives, as expressed in Regional policies and plans.
- 1.2 DECAT helps mobilize sectors and communities to move toward our shared goal of a zero-carbon, healthy, equitable, prosperous, and resilient Durham Region.
- 1.3 DECAT is established to act in an advisory capacity and may not direct Regional staff or make binding decisions on the municipal government. Any advice or recommendations that require formal action or implementation by Regional staff must be considered and approved by Regional Council.

#### **2. Scope of Activities**

- 2.1 The scope of the DECAT's activities include:
  - provide advice to the Region on effective implementation of new or existing programs, approaches, or policies relating to the natural environment and climate change adaptation and mitigation within Durham;
  - provide advice in identifying and implementing community outreach activities which support the growth of environmental awareness and appreciation in Durham;
  - provide advice on environmental data and the state of natural heritage features and water resources within Durham;
  - share information with, and mobilize, their organizations and/or communities to move forward with the coordinated implementation of environment and climate change initiatives;
  - identify emerging issues and topics for discussion and at the request of Regional standing committees or departments, provide advice on miscellaneous matters as they arise; and
  - review DECAT accomplishments and deliverables annually.

### **3. Membership**

- 3.1 The DECAT will be comprised of thirteen to seventeen members, including one Regional Councillor appointed from the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee. The final number of members will be determined by the Region based on the representation of key sectors, and other factors such as geographic (i.e., area municipal) and demographic representation.
- 3.2 The DECAT will be comprised of representatives of organizations as well as individual members. Organizational representatives will represent sectors such as building, transportation, energy, and waste, etc. The Region will prioritize the inclusion of representation from Indigenous communities, youth and other groups that experience barriers to participation.
- 3.3 Resident applicants with academic qualifications and/or work experience in environmental and climate change-related disciplines will be an important consideration. Experience in a range of professional contexts including public agencies, academia, small business, labour, food systems, professional and industry associations, and community and socially focused organizations, is also encouraged, to bring a diverse range of perspectives to DECAT.
- 3.4 Durham Region will place an open call for individuals interested in appointment to the DECAT, in accordance with the Advisory Committee Recruitment and Selection Policy. Interested individuals will be required to submit a completed application form to the Regional Clerk outlining their interest and qualifications.
- 3.5 The Regional Community Growth and Economic Development Department will review the applications received and nominate members for appointment by the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council.
- 3.6 Membership term shall generally correspond with the term of Regional Council. If a member resigns, Regional staff may seek a replacement from the pool of existing applications, with a view to ensuring that the new member represents a similar constituency, focus area, and/or demographic to the departing member. If a suitable replacement cannot be found, a call for applications will commence.
- 3.7 At the discretion of the DECAT, non-attendance of three consecutive meetings may be sufficient grounds for replacement.

#### **4. Officers**

- 4.1 A Chair and a Vice-Chair will be elected annually by the membership of the DECAT. The Community Growth and Economic Development Committee representative will chair the inaugural DECAT meeting.
- 4.2 The role of the Chair/Vice-Chair is to be the primary contact for the DECAT Staff Liaison (see Section 5), preside over meetings, and ensure all members have an opportunity to share input and contribute during meetings.

#### **5. Support Services**

- 5.1 A staff liaison from the Community Growth and Economic Development Department will provide administrative, procedural, and technical support to the DECAT. Day-to-day activities of the staff liaison will be supported by Community Growth and Economic Development Department.
- 5.2 Regional staff will attend DECAT meetings to receive advice and feedback on programs and services, as needed.

#### **6. Meetings**

- 6.1 The DECAT will meet six (6) times per calendar year and the DECAT will establish a meeting schedule at its inaugural meeting that considers the business needs and schedule of Regional Council and Committees.
- 6.2 Special meetings may be held at the request of the Chair, Vice-Chair, or the Community Growth and Economic Development Department, as required. The staff liaison shall give notice of a special meeting at least 48 hours before the time appointed for such meeting.
- 6.3 Meetings may be held in an electronic or hybrid meeting format with electronic and in-person participation. Committee members may participate electronically using an approved platform. In-person or hybrid meetings will be held at Regional Headquarters, unless otherwise stated.
- 6.4 Meeting attendees are limited to group members and Regional staff. DECAT may invite presenters and observers to attend and/or participate in its meetings, where appropriate.

## **7. Agenda and Minutes**

- 7.1 The DECAT meeting agendas will be prepared by the staff liaison, with input from Regional staff, DECAT members, and the DECAT Chair.
- 7.2 Public notice for regularly scheduled DECAT meetings shall be deemed to be given by making the agenda available from the Community Growth and Economic Development Department one week prior to the meeting.
- 7.3 The minutes of each DECAT meeting will be prepared by Regional staff from Legislative Services and will be submitted for approval at the next regular meeting. The unapproved minutes will be circulated to members of Regional Council as part of the Council Information Package (CIP) prepared by the Regional Clerk.

## **8. Decision Making**

- 8.1 Decisions made by DECAT include, but are not limited to, recommendations to Regional staff regarding environmental and climate change related policy directions, programs and initiatives and/or advice to Regional Council.
- 8.2 The DECAT will seek to achieve consensus on decisions. If a consensus cannot be obtained, the Chair, at his or her discretion, may ask the members of DECAT to vote. Decisions will be reached by majority. In the case of a tie-vote, the Chair of DECAT shall have the deciding vote.
- 8.3 Quorum must be met to facilitate a vote, representing at minimum, a majority of DECAT members.

## **9. Sub-Committees/Working Groups**

- 9.1 DECAT will have the opportunity to create sub-committees/working groups to help undertake activities that fulfill its activities, with approval from the Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development or designate. Any sub-committee or working group will be made up of members from DECAT and community volunteers, as needed.
- 9.2 Establishment of a sub-committee or working group will require DECAT members to submit a proposal to the staff liaison describing the proposed mandate, resources required, proposed membership and objectives.

9.3 Working groups will self-organize to hold meetings and select Chairs if deemed necessary. Working groups will inform the staff liaison of all meetings and invite them to attend.

9.4 Working groups will be added as a standing item to the DECAT meeting agenda in order to facilitate updates and reports.

## **10. Reporting**

10.1 Advice from DECAT will be considered and incorporated by Regional staff in reports to Council, where applicable, through the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee.

10.2 An annual report summarizing the activities completed in the previous year shall be prepared by the DECAT staff liaison and forwarded to the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee.

10.3 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 DECAT staff liaison for consideration and approval by the Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development or designate. To avoid duplication, the DECAT shall ensure that the workplan is co-ordinated with other environmental initiatives in the Region.