



October 29, 2021

Lakeridge Health Site Selection Committee

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of Ontario Nature and North Durham Nature to express our opposition to the City of Pickering's proposal to site Lakeridge Health's new hospital on prime farmland within the environmentally sensitive Carruthers Creek headwaters. To be clear, we recognize that an additional hospital is needed in the Region of Durham, but we urge you to choose a different location for the hospital, for the reasons outlined below.

Ontario Nature is charitable conservation organization that protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. Established in 1931, we represent over 155 member groups and more than 30,000 individual members and supporters across the province.

North Durham Nature is a group of nature enthusiasts serving Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge Townships. Established in 2013, we are dedicated to fostering awareness and appreciation of nature and promoting the protection and conservation of the environment through community activities.

The City of Pickering's proposed location for the new hospital lies within the boundaries of the headwaters of the Carruthers Creek watershed, an environmentally sensitive area, and is adjacent to the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System. Development at this site would result in the loss of prime farmland, worsen water quality, flooding and erosion, and further threaten an endangered species, the redbelt dace.

As evidenced in the *Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan, 2021-2031*, endorsed by Durham Region Council on June 23, 2021, urban development is driving land use change and negatively impacting the health of the watershed. The aquatic ecosystem is already close to the level of land use and development it can sustain; natural cover is insufficient to maintain ecosystem resilience; water quality is impaired; and waterflow is

out of balance, resulting in flooding and erosion issues. As indicated in the scenarios tested by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, further development in the headwaters of Carruthers Creek will lead to further decline in watershed health, including increased flooding issues and declining aquatic functions and habitat quality.

The City of Pickering's proposed location for the hospital is neither zoned nor serviced for development; it has no sewer, water or proper road infrastructure. Locating the hospital at this site would open the door to development and land speculation, putting additional surrounding farmland at risk from future development as Pickering seeks to maximize the value of the new municipal infrastructure that would need to be installed.

In an era of ongoing biodiversity loss and climate change, society must do its utmost to protect near-urban natural areas and farmland and enhance our climate resiliency. For the sake of current and future generations, we strongly recommend that the Lakeridge Health Selection Committee choose a different location for the hospital, one that is already zoned for residential and employment land development and will not compromise the health of the watershed.



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