

FRIENDS OF THE ROUGE National Urban Park

Hon. Pauline Browes, P.C., Chair

January 3, 2023

Peter Bashaw

Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building

Hon. Michael Chong, P.C., M.P.

Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Hon. David Crombie, P.C., O.C., OOnt.

Via email: premier@ontario.ca

Glenn DeBaeremaeker

Dear Premier;

Hon. Peter Kent, P.C., M.P.

Marlaine Koehler

Keith Laushway

Ted Matthews

Heather Moeser

Larry Noonan

The Friends of Rouge National Urban Park is writing to urge the Government of Ontario to incorporate the **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP)** into the Rouge National Urban Park, Canada's first National Urban Park and the only national park to include a mandate for regenerative agriculture.

Our organization's members have played a long-standing role in the protection of the Rouge Valley. For 30 years we, along with many other dedicated conservationists and environmentalists, called for conservation and protection of the Rouge watershed lands including productive farmland as a national treasure. A major accomplishment of our decades long advocacy is the establishment of the Rouge National Urban Park. As part of Parks Canada, a significant portion of the Rouge watershed, its valley and farmlands finally had the institutional and legislative framework needed for its protection.

However, the Rouge National Urban Park's boundaries did not include the 4,950 acres of neighbouring lands now known as the **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP)** because we understood that it was already protected. Both the governments of Premier Mike Harris and Dalton McGuinty recognized importance of protecting the **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP)** as an agricultural preserve.

This past November, your government surprisingly repealed the **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve Act** and removed protections from development citing the need to address Ontario's housing supply shortage.

Concerning the housing issue, according to the Province's own blue ribbon Taskforce on Housing and many other expert studies, **there is nothing about the current housing supply situation that requires more land**—especially the **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP)** land that has been protected since 2005 after years of dedicated advocacy by community leaders and residents.

According to the CBC story run on November 12, 2020, collectively municipalities in the GTA have identified and approved over 14,000 acres of land for urbanization. Another analysis conducted by the Friends of the Golden Horseshoe say municipalities have approved over 200,000 acres, enough to accommodate over 2.5 million more people in Ontario.

We agree with the Rouge National Urban Park's letter to you dated November 29, 2022 that indicates development of the **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP)** will risk irreversible harm to the ecosystems and agricultural production that are in the Rouge National Urban Park.

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We point out to you that many local residents of Pickering are most concerned. The residents who participated in a special meeting of City Council on December 5, 2022 that lasted 6 hours into the early morning hours, voiced their very strong opposition to removing protections from the **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP)** for housing. Council heard their voices, and voted unanimously to reject the removal of **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP)**.

Those residents are not alone. There is a growing alliance of leading organizations, thought leaders and concerned citizens speaking out against the Province's legislation that would sacrifice protected greenspaces and roll back years of watershed planning.

One of the special things about the Rouge National Urban Park is that it is located within easy and affordable reach of the Greater Toronto Area, one of the Nation's most culturally diverse and densely populated centres. It provides beautifully scenic recreational opportunities that give people an opportunity to enjoy our natural, cultural and agricultural heritage. As Ontario's population grows and as we welcome newcomers, these protected areas will become more even more valuable and important for their contribution to the health and wellness of our ecology, well-being, and economy.

We strongly advocate that the Provincial Government preserve the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP) by restoring the original protective legislation and easements to these lands, and use other mechanisms available to you to protect these lands from urban development, and work with the Government of Canada to make these lands part of the Rouge National Urban Park in order that they will be protected in perpetuity.

As part of the Rouge National Urban Park, the **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP)** can become part of the Park's innovative mandate, where it will contribute to the Park's ecosystems and farmland production.

We know that it is possible to effectively address the housing crisis and still protect our natural spaces.

We have written to the Federal Government to ask them to work with Ontario Government to incorporate the **Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP)** lands into the Rouge National Urban Park. A copy of this letter is enclosed.

We look forward to your response, and would be happy to meet with you to further discuss this proposal. Marleine Koehler can be reached at 416-520-4205 and mk@wrtrust.com to make arrangements.

Sincerely,



Pauline Browes
Chair, Friends of the Rouge National Urban Park

cc: Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance
Hon. David Piccini, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Patrice Barnes, MPP Ajax
Lorne Coe, MPP Whitby
Todd J. McCarthy, MPP Durham
Kevin Ashe, Mayor of Pickering
John Tory, Mayor of Toronto
Frank Scarpitti, Mayor of Markham
Dave Barton, Mayor of Uxbridge
John McKenzie, TRCA