



March 21, 2023

Terence Hubbard  
President  
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada  
terence.hubbard@iaac-aeic.gc.ca

Dear M. Hubbard:

I am writing to you regarding the decision of the Government of Ontario to remove protected lands adjacent to the Rouge National Urban Park (the Park). As you know, the Park protects and offers potential to restore natural areas, to enable people to discover and connect with Canada's natural heritage, and to sustain the value of protected areas in fighting climate change, protecting species at risk, and generating tourism and economic opportunity.

I have heard from numerous Canadians about the potential consequences of removing conservation protections for these lands on the ecological integrity of the Park and on lands adjacent to the Park, including the area known as the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, as well as impacts on other management objectives of the Park that have been established through extensive collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders, multiple levels of government, and the public.

In addition, Indigenous groups have raised concerns over threats to their cultural heritage associated with the prospective development of the lands. They have stated that they have not been adequately consulted on these changes and have highlighted that there is an unextinguished title claim on some lands that overlap the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

There is also public concern over potential effects to biodiversity, species at risk, and fish and fish habitat; as well as negative impacts on the ecological integrity of the adjacent wetlands within the boundary of the Park.

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In light of these concerns, I am requesting that the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada work with Parks Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada to carry out a study of the potential impacts of removing the protection status of these lands on the Park.

The objectives of the study are to understand the potential effects, including cumulative effects, of past, ongoing, and potential future development on the Park. Potential effects should include those under areas of federal jurisdiction, including species at risk within federal jurisdiction, as well as consideration of how provincial laws and regulations would apply to such developments. The study will also help to inform the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada's consideration of, and my decisions on, potential future requests for designation of projects in the surrounding area under the *Impact Assessment Act*.

Please work with Parks Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada to develop the proposed approach and scope for how this study will be undertaken, and provide this approach to me by the end of June 2023. The approach should outline next steps for the study, and include a targeted completion date. Please ensure that the study takes into account the following elements and implementation requirements:

- The potential effects, including cumulative effects, of past, ongoing, and potential future development on the management objectives of the Park, including: the protection of biodiversity, natural resources, and natural process; enhancement of ecological connectivity throughout the Park; maintaining beneficial working relationships with Indigenous communities; and supporting a vibrant park farming community;
- Any other effects on areas of federal jurisdiction that may have implications within the park;
- Provincial laws and regulations;
- Conducting the study in a transparent manner with information accessible to the public and opportunities for the public to participate;
- Taking into account scientific information and Indigenous Knowledge;
- Reflecting the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples; and
- Completing in a timely manner while enabling a comprehensive study of the impacts of potential cumulative effects to the Park.

Parks Canada has worked tirelessly to establish the Rouge National Urban Park, which is now the largest urban park in North America. This study is an important part of the federal government's commitment to ensuring that ecological integrity is the first priority in managing the Park.

I look forward to hearing about progress on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

<Original signed by>

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P. (he/him, il)

c.c.: Ron Hallman, President and CEO, Parks Canada Agency

Chris Forbes, Deputy Minister, Environment and Climate Change  
Canada