

## Section I – Items for Board of Directors Action

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Executive Committee  
Friday, October 6, 2023 Meeting

**FROM:** Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

**RE:** **DISCUSSIONS ON POTENTIAL TRCA LANDS TO BE INCLUDED IN UXBRIDGE URBAN PROVINCIAL PARK**

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### **KEY ISSUE**

Approval to enter discussions with the province and initiate required public consultation on potential conveyance of certain Toronto and Region Conservation Authority-owned lands, in the municipalities of Uxbridge and Pickering, for inclusion in the proposed Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park (UUPP).

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**WHEREAS TRCA has received a request from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) to contribute potential lands and provide ongoing support for the proposal to create Ontario's first urban provincial park within the Township of Uxbridge - Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park (UUPP);**

**AND WHEREAS MECP has requested to enter into discussions regarding TRCA-owned lands in the municipalities of Uxbridge and Pickering that are suitable for inclusion in a future expansion of the UUPP as well as local and regional trail connections;**

**THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT TRCA staff be directed to engage in discussions with MECP, Parks Canada, the Regional Municipality of Durham, the Township of Uxbridge, and the City of Pickering to determine which TRCA lands could be conveyed to MECP subject to the following conditions;**

- a) Land transferred to MECP must achieve a net ecological and community benefit, including additional investment and sustained maintenance by the province;**
- b) Access to the future UUPP should be provided at low or no cost;**
- c) Consideration is to be the nominal sum of \$2.00 where TRCA acquired the lands for nominal consideration;**
- d) MECP is responsible for all legal, survey and other costs related to the land conveyance;**
- e) Conveyance by TRCA of lands and/or easements for municipal infrastructure to the Regional Municipality of Durham, Township of Uxbridge and City of Pickering, if requested by the municipality and subject**

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to concurrence by MECP;

f) MECP is to fully indemnify TRCA from any and all claims from injuries, damages or costs of any nature resulting in any way, either directly or indirectly, from this conveyance and future use of the lands;

g) Any additional reasonable terms and conditions as deemed appropriate by TRCA staff or its solicitor;

**AND THAT TRCA enter into discussions with MECP and that staff report back to Board of Directors with recommendations on specific lands to be conveyed once determined;**

**AND THAT upon identification of the lands to be disposed of, public consultation and notification to the Minister of MECP occur in accordance with the requirements of Section 21 of the Conservation Authorities Act, as applicable;**

**AND THAT TRCA continue discussions with the province including MECP and Infrastructure Ontario and Federal Government including Parks Canada on government-owned lands that could be conveyed, restored and activated in support of TRCA's Regional Trail Strategy, Natural Heritage Strategy, and TRCA's partner municipalities' objectives that achieve a net ecological and community benefit**

### **BACKGROUND**

TRCA has received a request from the MECP to provide land contributions and ongoing support to the proposed Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park (UUPP), as shown in Attachment 1 Correspondence from Minister of MECP.

TRCA appreciates the opportunity to participate on the Uxbridge Partners Network that is exploring the creation of UUPP. MECP is asking to identify land parcels that are owned or managed by TRCA, within or adjacent to the general study area of the park, that could potentially be added to the proposed park boundary. Through this initial request, MECP has asked that TRCA identify any specific information that would be needed to develop proposals and identify any needs or dependencies associated with the transfer of such lands to the province for the establishment of the UUPP. If additional lands are chosen to be added to the park boundary, the ministry will ensure there are opportunities for public and Indigenous consultation.

Over the years, TRCA has secured 1,680 ha of land in the Township of Uxbridge. These lands contain important headwater areas and regionally significant forests while also providing vital trail linkages that are a focus of stewardship and land management activities involving volunteer organizations, the Township of Uxbridge, Regional Municipality of Durham, and TRCA. Important considerations and ongoing work on TRCA lands within MECP's catchment area include the following:

#### Trails:

Uxbridge is the Trail Capital of Canada with over 300 km of trails in southern Uxbridge

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that are managed by local (Uxbridge) and regional (Durham) governments and Conservation authorities (TRCA, Lake Simcoe Region CA) in partnership with local conservation and trail organizations (e.g., Durham Mountain Biking Association, Green Durham Association, and Oak Ridges Trail Association). TRCA currently manages around 130 km on TRCA lands in the Duffins Creek headwaters, and TRCA has identified the headwaters of the Duffins Creek in Uxbridge and Northern Pickering as one of ten (10) significant regional destinations connected by the proposed regional trail network. These areas provide the essential combination of conservation area properties, regional trails, places of interest, amenities, and transit access. Regional trails in the area include the Trans Canada Trail, Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, and the Northern section of the main trail through the Rouge National Urban Park.

### Ecology:

Key ecological points within the UUPP catchment area include the largest forest patches of natural cover that are of high quality within TRCA's jurisdiction. There is also high biodiversity and headwater wetlands including seepage swamps. Furthermore, there exists approximately 700 plant species with around 200 of these species being of conservation concern and seven species that have not been found anywhere else in the region, as well as 130 vertebrate fauna with approximately 60 species of concern. Species at Risk in the catchment area include the Acadian flycatcher, Canada warbler, Bobolink, Golden-winged warbler, Whip-poor-will, Common Nighthawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, ginseng, butternut, and black ash.

TRCA also has long-term monitoring stations set up within these areas. The existing monitoring began in 2008/2009 and includes stations monitoring forest birds (5 stations), meadow birds (2 stations), wetland birds (1 station), frogs (1 station), and forest vegetation (1 plot).

### Real Property Agreements:

TRCA has a variety of residential and commercial leases within the catchment area, as well as license trail agreements for the use and maintenance of specific trails. In addition, TRCA is party to a Memorandum of Understanding with Uxbridge on a pilot project for parking permits to generate revenue to contribute to the sustainability of trails in the area.

### Infrastructure:

In terms of flood control infrastructure, TRCA owns the Osler Dam within the catchment area. The dam was built in 1934 as a private fishing pond, and TRCA purchased the property in 1991.

### Encumbrances

Upon further refinement with MECP regarding potential lands for consideration, TRCA will then work with the Land Registry Office to identify any further encumbrances that may be registered on title to the selected properties (ex/easements; restrictive covenants etc.).

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It is important to TRCA that any conveyance of TRCA lands in Uxbridge to the province is contingent upon achieving a net ecological and community benefit, including additional investment and sustained funding by the province. TRCA is also interested in working with the province and partners in advancing the TRCA Board endorsed Trail Strategy for the Greater Toronto Region through the UUPP initiative and Infrastructure Ontario managed lands in Uxbridge and Pickering.

Additionally, as reported to the Board of Directors on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Parks Canada and TRCA have initiated discussions on conveyance of additional TRCA owned lands to Parks Canada for inclusion in Rouge National Urban Park, with a particular interest in TRCA's westernmost parcels in Uxbridge and Pickering. Parks Canada and TRCA are targeting to have a land transfer agreement in place by December 31, 2024 or earlier if possible. Accordingly, TRCA shall work cooperatively with Parks Canada and MECP to identify land conveyances that achieve a net ecological community benefit and other shared objectives most effectively.

### **RATIONALE**

With the abovementioned considerations and contingences being accounted for in further discussions with the province, this new urban provincial park presents an opportunity to provide the Township of Uxbridge and surrounding communities with more natural spaces close to home and recreational activities for families to enjoy now and in the future. To ensure this provincial park will also help protect vulnerable ecosystems and promote biodiversity in southern Ontario's greenspaces, it is appropriate that the park is regulated under the Provincial Parks Conservation Reserves Act, 2006.

### **Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan**

This report supports the following Pillars and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

#### **Pillar 1 Environmental Protection and Hazard Management:**

1.2 Leadership in greenspace conservation

#### **Pillar 2 Knowledge Economy:**

2.4 Integrate environmental considerations and science into decision making

#### **Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:**

3.1 Connect communities to nature and greenspace

### **FINANCIAL DETAILS**

MECP will be responsible for all survey, legal and other costs associated with the contemplation and completion of any land transfers. A further assessment of the financial impacts surrounding agreements and leases will be completed and included in the report back the Board of Directors.

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**Report prepared by: Brandon Hester**

**Email: [brandon.hester@trca.ca](mailto:brandon.hester@trca.ca)**

**For Information contact: Alex Schuler, (437) 880-1950**

**Email: [alex.schuler@trca.ca](mailto:alex.schuler@trca.ca)**

**Date: September 20, 2023**

**Attachments: 3**

Attachment 1: Correspondence from Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Attachment 2: UUPP Study Area Township of Uxbridge and City of Pickering Site Plan

Attachment 3: UUPP Study Area Township of Uxbridge and City of Pickering Orthophoto