



**NORTH PICKERING
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION**

**Annual Report
2005-2006**

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**TO THE HONOURABLE JOHN GERRETSEN,
MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING**

MINISTER:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present to you the Annual Report of the North Pickering Development Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

John S. Burke
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Chair, North Pickering Development Corporation

Attachment

**TO THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
OF THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO**

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR HONOUR:

For the information of Your Honour and the Legislative Assembly, we have the privilege of presenting the Annual Report of the North Pickering Development Corporation for the year 2005-06

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. John Gerretsen
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

ROLE OF THE NORTH PICKERING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The North Pickering Development Corporation was created by statute in 1974, under the *North Pickering Development Corporation Act, 1974*, to be responsible for community planning and development of the North Pickering Land Assembly. The directors are senior civil servants from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal. The Corporation's mandate is to promote business growth, leverage private investment and enhance job creation by marketing the provincially owned land for development and facilitating the land use planning process. Administrative and support services are provided to the Corporation at no charge by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Background Information

In the early 1970s, the provincial government acquired approximately 8,100 hectares of land – which became known as the North Pickering Land Assembly – through expropriation and purchase. The original intent was to develop a community of approximately 250,000, in conjunction with a proposed federal international airport to the north. However, plans for the airport were discontinued and the Province did not proceed with development.

Parts of the original land assembly have since been allocated for the Rouge Park, the community of Cornell (located in the Town of Markham), and the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve. The Seaton lands – approximately 2,800 hectares located in the City of Pickering – continue to be owned by the Province (see map entitled North Pickering).

In 1989, the Corporation was established as a Schedule II agency and was designated in the year 2000 as an Operational Enterprise agency. Funding for the Corporation was made possible through a loan from the Province of Ontario that was repaid on March 31, 2005.

In 2001, the Province acted to protect natural and water resource features on the Oak Ridges Moraine, preserve agricultural land and focus development in approved settlement areas. Following stakeholder and public consultation, the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001* was introduced on November 1, 2001 and received Royal Assent passed on December 14, 2001.

While the legislation was being developed, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing asked David Crombie to mediate an agreement between private landowners and the Province to protect key lands in Richmond Hill and Uxbridge that were subject to development applications and an Ontario Municipal Board hearing.

The resulting agreement protects certain sensitive lands on the Moraine through future land exchanges for provincially owned lands in North Pickering. To facilitate this exchange of lands, the Province created the North Pickering Land Exchange Team (NPLET) as part of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Negotiations between the Province and the landowners took place throughout 2002 and 2003. On November 4, 2003, the newly elected Liberal government sought a moratorium on further development on the Oak Ridges Moraine Richmond Hill lands until November 20, 2003. During this period a new agreement was negotiated with certain Richmond Hill landowners to protect additional Richmond Hill lands on the Moraine for a new park. This subsequent agreement would ensure that the Moraine lands are linked in a continuous corridor with lands to the east and west and create better protection of environmentally sensitive lands around kettle lakes, including Phillips Lake.

To acquire these additional lands in the Richmond Hill area, the government agreed to exchange additional lands in North Pickering.

On September 23, 2004, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced that the government and the Richmond Hill landowners had signed an agreement that would result in the exchange of 1,057 acres of moraine lands for 1,275 acres of provincially owned lands in Seaton. Fairness Commissioner, Justice Lloyd W. Houlden stated, "The process used to reach the agreement was fair and appropriate; and the agreement constitutes a fair and reasonable outcome from the perspective of the taxpayers of Ontario."

Ministry staff continued to meet representatives of the Uxbridge landowner during 2005-2006, with the intent to try and conclude a fair and reasonable land exchange. As of March 31, 2006, no final agreement had been reached on a land exchange with this landowner.

In 2004, the Ontario Realty Corporation initiated a Category "C" Class Environmental Assessment for the acquisition of lands in Richmond Hill and the disposition and severance of lands in Seaton. This process will, once complete, facilitate the land exchange. This process has been supported throughout 2005 by the North Pickering Land Exchange Team's oversight of consulting work dealing with archaeological investigations of the Seaton lands, land surveying and refinement of Seaton's natural heritage system.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing continued its work on the preparation of a proposed development plan for Seaton and the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve throughout 2005. This proposed plan, which was released for public comment on July 14, 2005, is being prepared under the authority of the *Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994*.

Following an extensive 60-day consultation, Ministry staff and their consultants reviewed and analyzed numerous submissions from members of the public, local municipalities, various ministries and agencies and non-government organizations. Based on that

review, the Ministry released a series of proposed modifications to the original draft plan on February 1, 2006.

This additional consultation lasted for 30 days. A final copy of the proposed development plan was being developed for the Government's consideration at the close of fiscal year 2005/06, which will address both the long-term stewardship and protection of the natural heritage system while at the same time supporting a strong competitive economy. This will be achieved by optimizing areas long designated for growth to create a compact, vibrant sustainable community.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- **Proposed Central Pickering Development Plan** – In April 2004 the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing retained a consulting team to prepare a proposed development plan under the *Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994* (OPDA). The plan would cover the lands in Pickering known as Seaton and the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

Key Elements of the Proposed Central Pickering Development Plan

The key elements of the proposed Plan are:

Environmental Protection: The proposed Central Pickering Development Plan would protect significant natural features, functions and systems intended to sustain a viable and permanent natural eco-system. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the Seaton lands are designated as Natural Heritage System (NHS). In addition, there are extensive public open space lands (parks, school playing fields, health care facilities public grounds and historically significant sites) located in Seaton, and together with the NHS, the community is comprised of 60% greenspace.

Sustainability: The proposed Central Pickering Development Plan provides the framework to develop a model sustainable community. Policies direct that the preparation, review and approval of development applications within Seaton follow a distinct set of principles that are reflective of strong sustainability practices and include fostering a healthy natural environment; encouraging a healthy built environment; ensuring economic health; creating opportunities for education and public awareness; fostering social and cultural well-being; and providing appropriate measures for monitoring and measuring success. Allowing renewable energy projects to locate in both the Agricultural Preserve and Seaton's Natural Heritage System is consistent with the Province energy strategy.

Transit-supportive: The proposed Central Pickering Development Plan's policies emphasize a sustainable, transit-supportive community with a transportation system that would establish transit lines, park-and-ride facilities, pedestrian trails and bicycle networks early on and as development occurs. The Seaton community would be planned so that approximately 90% of residents will be

within a five-minute walk of a transit route, and, as Seaton's population grows, the Plan anticipates the expansion of transit corridors and facilities over time to support transit services levels.

Employment: Balanced residential and employment growth is intended to create an economically and fiscally sustainable Seaton community in the long term. Responding to ever-changing business preferences and methods of production, the proposed plan encourages flexibility with respect to the built form and range of employment uses in identified employment areas. The proposed Central Pickering Development Plan would also accommodate the early servicing of Prestige Employment areas along Highway 407 so employment opportunities would be permitted in conjunction with the development of the residential neighbourhoods.

Cultural Heritage Protection: The proposed Central Pickering Development Plan would reinforce the protection of cultural landscape features and aboriginal cultural heritage. Throughout the development of the Central Pickering Development Plan, MMAH has consulted with First Nations and local residents, including those of the Hamlet of Whitevale, to ensure their concerns are integrated into the plan. The Province will retain ownership of lands that are determined to be unsuitable for development or disposition based on assessments of the lands' archaeological potential.

Housing and Mixed Uses: The Seaton community would have a full range and mix of housing types with no less than 25% of housing to be affordable to low and moderate income households. The Plan would strengthen the provision of affordable housing by directing that higher density and affordable housing would be constructed early in the community's build out

Agriculture: The proposed Central Pickering Development Plan directs that the Duffins Rouge Agriculture Preserve be identified to remain a thriving agriculture community. The Preserve is included in the Greenbelt Plan, where these lands are designated as protected country-side and are comprised of prime agriculture lands (predominately Class 1 and 2 farm land).

The proposed plan was initially released for public comment on July 14, 2005 as part of a 60 day consultation. Based on an analysis of submissions received by the Ministry, a proposed modified development plan was released as part of a 30-day consultation on February 1, 2006.

- **Land Surveying** – Throughout 2005/06, five survey firms continued the surveying work required to delineate the boundaries of potentially developable lands in Seaton and the Duffins Heights Secondary Plan area from lands to be included in a Natural Heritage System.
- **Archaeological Assessments** – The archaeological assessments for approximately 3,100 acres of land in Seaton and the Duffins Heights Secondary

Plan area were completed in 2005. This represents all of the provincially owned lands in Seaton that may be disposed of, except for lands that have previously undergone archaeological assessments (these assessments were completed in the last 20 years). The results of the archaeological assessments demonstrated the presence of both aboriginal artifacts (including village sites) and early European homesteads. The Ministry will continue to work closely with the Ontario Realty Corporation and the Ministry of Culture in regard to the protection of these cultural heritage elements.

- **Cultural Landscape Assessment** - The purpose of this assessment, carried out by an external consultant, was to identify and document the significant cultural heritage landscapes; assess their significance and develop guidelines for future conservation approaches for their maintenance and management. This work was undertaken as part of the OPDA planning and class environmental processes. The assessment showed that many of the changes seen in rural Ontario in other parts of the Province, either in terms of increased mechanization and growth of the corporate farm or new suburban residential development have not occurred in central Pickering. As a result, the integrity of the cultural landscape features is very high and worthy of integration into future plans for the area.
- **Class Environmental Assessment** - The Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC) has responsibility for conducting a Category "C" Class Environmental Assessment (Class EA). The Class EA commenced in April 2004, and covered both the acquisition of the Richmond Hill lands and the disposition and severance of provincially owned Pickering (Seaton) lands. Given the importance of the land exchange, ORC voluntarily chose not to complete a lower level Category "B" assessment, instead choosing to carry out a more comprehensive assessment - the Category "C" Class EA undertakes a higher level of public consultation and study of the undertaking.

Throughout 2005, ORC continued with its extensive public consultation process. A third set of public meetings were conducted in December 2005 in both Richmond Hill and Pickering. Consultations continued with First Nations representatives in order that aboriginal concerns related to the Seaton lands would be addressed in an appropriate manner.

The Notice of Completion of an Environmental Study Report (ESR) was posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry on January 7, 2006, and advertised shortly thereafter (January 11, 2006) in local and large circulation newspapers and on the ORC website. The 30-day period for public comment on the ESR ended on February 10, 2006. At the end of fiscal 2005/06, the Ministry the Environment was reviewing the results of the ESR and numerous requests to "bump-up" the assessment to a full environmental assessment.

- **Water Balance Evaluation Study** - In the Spring of 2005 a decision was made to undertake a water balance analysis in support of the OPDA planning exercise and the Ontario Realty Corporation's class environmental process. The proposed

work involves a multi-season monitoring program of eight representative wetlands within Seaton, with specific attention to water budget analysis for the wetlands being monitored. By establishing baseline (pre-development) conditions and monitoring inflows and outflows, air and water temperatures, water level fluctuations and associated impacts on vegetation, the work will assist in the sizing, location and control features of storm water management elements associated with the implementation of the OPDA plan.

- **Transportation Modeling Study** - As a result of proposed modifications to the proposed development plan for Central Pickering, and in response to requests from the Ministry of Transportation, the Region of Durham and the City of Pickering, a technical assessment/analysis of the revised land use plan (in particular, revisions to population and employment estimates) in terms of the adequacy of the proposed internal Seaton transportation network and inter-regional transportation connections was undertaken.
- **Oak Ridges Corridor Park and Trail** - In 2004/05, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) agreed that management of the lands in Richmond Hill that are part of the land exchange would become the responsibility of TRCA following the land exchange. As part of this management role, the TRCA agreed to assume responsibility for completion of a master environmental plan for the park, which would allow for the construction of a trail by the current landowners and regeneration and other improvements to the lands over the long term.

In 2005/06, a proposed management plan was developed after considerable discussion with representatives from government, non-government organizations and private citizens. Numerous Advisory Committee and public meetings were held between June 16, 2005 and mid-January 2006, during which time a vision for the park and east-west trail alignment was established. Finally, a competition was initiated in the Spring of 2006 to provide an appropriate name for the park and trail system. Trail construction/development was started in January 2006.

- **Freedom of Information Requests** – the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)* provides individuals with a right to access certain records and personal information under the custody or control of institutions covered by the Act. In 2005/06, the North Pickering Land Exchange Team (NPLET) received and responded to six requests for information under the Act.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Funding for the NPLET's 2005/06 fiscal year's activities, in support of the North Pickering Development Corporation's mandate, was provided directly by and through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. A similar financial structure will be used to finance fiscal 2006/07 activities. For the 2005/06 fiscal year the North Pickering Development Corporation was financially inactive. As a result, the Auditor General of Ontario has concluded that an annual audit is not required.