



January 16, 2025

Kendra Couling  
Park Planner  
Ontario Parks – Southeast Zone  
Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks  
300 Water St., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor N.  
Peterborough, ON, K9J3C7

Dear Ms. Couling:

**Re: Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority comments on Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park Preliminary Management Plan (Environmental Registry of Ontario #019-9209)**

In response to ERO 019-9209, we thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park Preliminary Management Plan and submit the following for your consideration.

As a local watershed management organization, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (Conservation Authority) is dedicated to conserving, restoring and managing the Lake Simcoe watershed. Through collaboration, our mission is to protect and restore the Lake Simcoe watershed with innovative research, policy and action. We congratulate the Province of Ontario for engaging with community partners and stakeholders to establish a new Urban Provincial Park in the Township of Uxbridge that will maintain and expand protection of critical natural heritage features in the headwaters of Uxbridge Brook, while providing opportunities for passive recreation, education, and scientific research that contribute to watershed health.

## **1. Purpose, Vision and Objectives**

The Conservation Authority shares the purpose, vision and objective of the Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park and supports efforts to connect people and nature through promoting biodiversity, enhancing ecosystem services and protecting and restoring lands. We support the planned initiatives to maintain and grow working relationships with diverse partner and stakeholder groups to achieve natural ecosystem restoration and sustainable recreational use, building from long-standing initiatives at Durham Regional Forest and other neighbouring public lands (e.g. closing unsustainable and redundant trails, creating meaningful trail connections, and creating wildlife areas by consolidating disturbance). We support scientific research objectives aimed at studying the transition of land at different time scales and recognize an opportunity to promote forest succession in degraded areas resulting from conifer plantations

that were once established within park boundaries and adjacent lands. To this end, Parks Ontario may consider facilitating active management activities and detailing “forest succession” as an example of the “change over time” bullet point in Section 3.3, Scientific Research.

## **2. Restoration Opportunities and Ecological Integrity**

The Conservation Authority recognizes that Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park lies within an important source water protection area atop the Oak Ridges Moraine. We foresee restoration opportunities in the park with specific interest in zone D1 given its proximity to the headwaters of the Uxbridge Brook and are pleased to see consideration has been given for the restoration of sand barrens identified in zone NR2. Additionally, we foresee an opportunity to preserve the property’s ecological integrity through the development of an active management plan which would allow Ontario Parks to readily address pest and disease outbreak, invasive species establishment and address hazard trees near trails and infrastructure.

## **3. Invasive Species**

The Conservation Authority is pleased with the planned efforts to control and treat invasive species on the park property. We recognize value in conducting baseline invasive species reporting and would recommend the development of a control plan and prioritization framework to support the actioning of invasive species management. We also recognize the heightened importance of invasive species management given the connectivity with adjacent lands through multi-use recreational trails. We welcome collaborative efforts on invasive species management to reduce consistent re-introduction of invasive species and increase efficacy of applied treatments.

## **4. Natural and Cultural Heritage Values**

Active engagement with Indigenous community partners and efforts towards incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing into planning and ongoing management will be critical for Park success and will contribute to the maintenance of Indigenous cultural heritage. The Conservation Authority foresees ample opportunity for knowledge sharing and land management aligning with cultural values as well as opportunity for community education advancement.

## **5. Trails and Recreation**

The Conservation Authority appreciates the outlined efforts to establish and enhance new and existing trail connections to neighboring networks. We encourage that a second reference map be available to further highlight trail connection opportunities across the larger landscape. We support the intention that no more trails will be developed in zone NR1 and are enthusiastic

about plans for establishing accessible trails elsewhere on the property. Engagement with local, well-established and long-standing community partners and stakeholders, such as hiking, mountain biking and naturalist groups, provides an opportunity to call on many community champions to aid in trail status reporting and maintenance efforts. We support the prohibition of motorized vehicles on the trail network and encourage Ontario Parks to clearly define “motorized vehicles”, clarifying rules and regulations for the use of e-bicycles.

## **6. Policies**

The Conservation Authority recognizes the limitations on commercial timber harvesting under the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. We recommend exploring and considering the benefits of timber harvesting as a periodic intervention tool to continue ecological restoration. This is a proven approach for restoring natural cover and promoting forest succession, particularly in the conifer plantations such as those within the Provincial Park boundaries that were established to arrest soil erosion and re-establish natural forest cover. It is important to consider that unmanaged conifer plantation stands tend to senesce, fail to support development of a diverse understory, and may pose safety risks for trail users.

## **7. Pressures**

The Conservation Authority recognizes that the Greater Toronto Area is a densely populated region and high visitation rates are likely to pose pressures on the trail network and ecological integrity of the property. In addition to carrying capacity pressures, we anticipate pressures placed on the property through forest pests (e.g. spongy moth, hemlock woolly adelgid, emerald ash borer, etc.) and disease (e.g. beech bark disease, beech leaf disease, armillaria root rot, white pine blister rust, etc.). We recommend amending Section 5. Pressures on park values to include risks for introduction of forest pests and disease.

## **8. Naming and Land Ownership Corrections**

A correction in section 4.3 of the management plan should be made to reflect Durham Region as the adjacent landowner, not Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (e.g. “lands owned by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Durham Region (e.g. Durham Regional Forest managed by Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority) and Township of Uxbridge”).

Corrections in section 7.1.11.1, 7.3.4 and 10 of the management plan should be made to reflect the accurate name of the Conservation Authority as ‘Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority’. We also recommend placing Durham Region ahead of Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (e.g. Region of Durham/Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority).

A correction in section 6.3 A1 Park Access Zone should be made to correctly reflect the name and spelling of the 'Timbers Tract' as this tract was named by Durham Region in honour of a member of the Timbers family.

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority remains committed to working with the Province and other community partners towards the development and establishment of the new Uxbridge Urban Provincial Park.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RB/C', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Rob Baldwin  
Chief Administrative Officer