



Sent by email

January 26, 2024

Minister Paul Calandra
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay St., 17th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3
minister.mah@ontario.ca

Subject: Durham Live
- Minister's Zoning Order (MZO)
File: A-1000-002

Dear Minister Calandra,

As Mayor of the City of Pickering, I am writing in regards to the proposed Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) Amendment for a portion of the Durham Live lands. We appreciate the diligence of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) in reviewing and considering the proposed amendment to Ontario Regulation 607/20.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the context, I wish to emphasize Pickering City Council's position on this matter. On May 13, 2020, Pickering City Council passed Resolutions #293/20 to #295/20, affirmatively requesting the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to utilize their authority in passing an MZO on the Durham Live lands. This formal request was made with a vision to accommodate additional permitted uses, including the Film Studio proposed by Durham Live.

As outlined in your memorandum, the proposed amendment aims to remove approximately 2.3 hectares of land from the existing MZO. The subject lands, owned by Pickering Developments (Bayly) Inc., were originally intended for a Film Studio, as per the initial MZO issued on October 30, 2020, which was subsequently amended by Ontario Regulation 515/21.

However, as a result of numerous, unforeseen and far-reaching challenges, including the lingering impacts of COVID-19, the Hollywood writers' strike, and escalating construction and supply chain costs, the business case to construct brand new film studios wasn't as strong. Fortunately, Pickering Developments, the owners and developers of Durham Live, had already renovated 200,000 square feet of existing industrial buildings located at 915 Sandy Beach Road in Pickering to accommodate film and television production. Not only was this a more cost effective measure, but it was more

timely in order to meet the needs of film and production studios once projects resumed after the writers’ strike.

With the new film studios in operation at 915 Sandy Beach Road, the lands at Durham Live could be reimagined for another use that could be more aligned with the overarching tourism and entertainment vision. As such, I am pleased to inform you that LaunchPad Golf has signed a Letter of Intent in November 2023 to bring its fun, innovative, exciting, and immersive experience to Pickering. In fact, this will be the first location in Ontario and only the third in all of Canada.

This reimagined use, along with the upcoming Porsche Experience Centre and ongoing development of hotels, retailers, restaurants, and designated indoor entertainment spaces, underscores the transformative nature of Durham Live. The interconnectedness of these developments creates synergies, fostering increased interest, attendance, and revenue for both the private and public sectors.

Moreover, I wish to underscore the significance of Pickering Casino Resort as the anchor of the Durham Live entertainment tourism initiative. To date, Pickering Casino Resort has contributed over 38 million dollars in hosting casino revenues to our city. These funds have been instrumental in supporting important key capital projects and have played a pivotal role in our local community through the Community Grants program.

In addition, we are sharing casino revenues of up to 6 million dollars annually with the Region of Durham. As you can see, these shared casino revenues are making a tremendous impact in Pickering and beyond. Given this success, it is our collective responsibility to do everything within our means to bring more people to Durham Live and Pickering Casino Resort, ensuring sustained economic growth and community development.

On a final note Minister, since you are revisiting this MZO, and thus are considering amendments to it, I would be appreciative if you would consider a significant increase to the maximum number of residential units at Durham Live. The City feels that residential is an important component of the project, and as one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada, there is an acute need for more housing units in the city. As you are fully aware, we are in the midst of an unprecedented housing crisis across the province and nationwide, and fully serviced urban land, such as this property, is best suited to meet this demand.

Another suggestion is to increase the maximum building heights to accommodate these additional housing units. Currently, it is set at 35 stories, which can no longer be considered ‘landmark’ status. For example, in our downtown core, we have approved buildings in excess of 50 stories in height. And close to Durham Live, Ajax has green lit a 62-storey tower just south of the Ajax-Go Station. As Durham Live does not have any residential neighbours, I feel there is an opportunity to establish a new landmark height in excess of 60-stories, which would help strengthen its status as one of Ontario’s premier entertainment and tourism destinations.

In closing, I express my gratitude for your consideration of this matter and emphasize the importance of preserving Durham Live’s existing MZO for the benefit of our community. We remain open to further discussions and collaboration to ensure the continued success and growth of Durham Live, Pickering, and the Province of Ontario.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Ashe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin Ashe
Mayor, City of Pickering

Copy: Peter Bethlenfalvy, MPP Pickering - Uxbridge
Patrice Barnes, MPP Ajax

Members of Council
Marisa Carpino, Chief Administrative Officer