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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development
Report: #2026-INFO-035
Date: May 8, 2026

Subject:

Submission of Durham Region Comments to the IESO – GTA East Regional Electricity Planning Process

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Regional Council that the Region of Durham is submitting comments to the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) as part of the GTA East Regional Electricity Planning process.
- 1.2 The Region's submission provides input on electricity system needs, planning considerations, and potential solutions to support long-term growth and decarbonization objectives.
- 1.3 A copy of the Region's submission is included as Attachment #1 to this report

2. Background

- 2.1 The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) is undertaking a regional electricity planning process for the GTA East region, which includes Durham Region.
- 2.2 As part of this process, the IESO is engaging municipalities and stakeholders to provide feedback on:

- a. Forecasted electricity needs
 - b. Consideration of “wires” (transmission and distribution infrastructure) and “non-wires” (e.g., energy efficiency, distributed energy resources) solutions
 - c. Evaluation criteria and planning assumptions
- 2.3 A regional planning webinar was held on April 20, 2026, and written feedback was requested by May 11, 2026

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 Durham Region has previously adopted strategic plans and initiatives that support climate action, economic development, and integrated energy planning, including:
- a. [The Durham Community Energy Plan \(DCEP\)](#)
 - b. [Ready Set Future: Durham’s Economic Development and Tourism Strategy](#)
- 3.2 These documents inform the Region’s position on electricity system planning and the transition to a low-carbon energy system

4. Durham Region Submission to the IESO

- 4.1 The Region’s submission reflects Council-endorsed priorities related to climate action, energy, and economic development.
- 4.2 Key positions outlined in the submission include:
- a. Support for considering both wires and non-wires solutions to meet future electricity needs
 - b. A strong preference for low-carbon and non-GHG-emitting solutions where feasible
 - c. The importance of prioritizing energy efficiency, demand-side management, distributed energy resources, and district energy systems
- 4.3 The submission also emphasizes the need for:
- a. Transparent evaluation of electricity planning options
 - b. Consideration of lifecycle costs, ratepayer impacts, and system flexibility
 - c. Alignment with municipal growth planning and land-use decisions

5. Planning Considerations and Municipal Role

- 5.1 The Region highlights the importance of integrating electricity planning with municipal priorities, including:

- a. Growth management and strategic growth areas
- b. Economic development and investment readiness
- c. Climate mitigation and greenhouse gas reduction

5.2 The submission identifies current policy and regulatory challenges that may impact implementation of non-wires solutions, including limitations on municipal authority related to green development standards.

5.3 The Region recommends continued collaboration between the IESO, municipalities, utilities, and other levels of government to ensure coordinated planning and delivery of energy infrastructure.

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Direction(s) and Pathway(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

- a. Connected and Vibrant Communities
 - C1. Align Regional infrastructure and asset management with projected growth, climate impacts, and community needs.
- b. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action
 - E2. Collaborate with partners on the low-carbon transition to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions across Durham Region.
 - E3. Prepare for and respond to severe weather impacts.
- c. Resilient Local Economies
 - R1. Attract and retain quality employers that strengthen key economic sectors, including energy and technology.
- d. Strong Relationships
 - S3. Collaborate across local area municipalities, with agencies, non-profits, and community partners to deliver co-ordinated and efficient services.
 - S4. Advocate to the federal and provincial government and agencies to advance regional priorities.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The GTA East Regional Electricity Planning process represents an important opportunity to shape long-term electricity infrastructure and energy solutions in Durham Region.
- 7.2 The Region's submission to the IESO reflects Council's priorities for reliable, affordable, and low-carbon energy systems that support economic growth and community well-being.
- 7.3 Staff will continue to monitor the planning process and engage with regional and provincial partners as it advances.
- 7.4 For additional information, contact: Ian McVey, Director Environment and Climate, at [REDACTED].

8. Attachments

Attachment #1: Durham Region Submission to the IESO – GTA East Regional Electricity Planning Process (May 2026)

Prepared by: Ian McVey, Director Environment and Climate, at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Sandra Austin
Commissioner of Community Growth and
Economic Development

Feedback Form

Regional Electricity Planning in the GTA East Region – April 20, 2026

Feedback Provided by:

Name: Ian McVey

Title: Director of Environment and Climate

Organization: Regional Municipality of Durham

Email: [REDACTED]

Date: May 8, 2026

To promote transparency, feedback submitted will be posted on the GTA East [engagement webpage](#) unless otherwise requested by the sender.

Following the GTA East regional planning webinar held on April 20, 2026, the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) is seeking feedback on the identified electricity needs and initial screening of potential options. A copy of the presentation as well as recording of the session can be accessed from the [engagement web page](#).

Please submit feedback to engagement@ieso.ca by May 11, 2026.

Topic	Feedback
What feedback do you have on the wire and non-wire options that will be	The Region of Durham appreciates the IESO's engagement and supports the screening-in of both wire and non-wire options to address the GTA East region's

Topic	Feedback
<p>considered to meet the region's electricity needs?</p>	<p>electricity needs. Durham sees itself as Canada's Clean Energy Capital, driven by both climate leadership ambitions and economic development strategies. Consistent with the Council-adopted Durham Community Energy Plan (DCEP), and Ready Set Future: Durham's Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, the Region's preference is for solutions that are non-GHG-emitting wherever feasible. The Region encourages the IESO to ensure that the planning process explicitly prioritizes low-carbon and zero-carbon pathways and avoids locking in emissions-intensive infrastructure. Accordingly, Durham strongly supports a robust and transparent evaluation of non-wires alternatives, including energy efficiency and demand-side management, distributed energy resources and storage, and low-carbon thermal solutions such as district energy, where these can reduce system impacts while supporting long-term affordability and resilience. While wires solutions will continue to be required in some circumstances, Durham encourages the IESO to identify where non-wires and non-emitting solutions can defer, downsize, or phase traditional infrastructure investments to support both affordability and decarbonization objectives.</p>
<p>What additional information should be considered in the evaluation of wire and non-wire options?</p>	<p>The Region recommends that the evaluation framework explicitly consider: (i) alignment with climate objectives and community GHG reduction targets; (ii) Whether options introduce reliance on fossil fuel supply or increase long-term emissions; (iii) alignment with Ready Set Future: Durham's Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, including investment readiness, workforce development, and enabling infrastructure for growth; (iv) Lifecycle costs, ratepayer impacts, and system flexibility over time; (v) Implementation readiness, delivery risks, and scalability under varying growth scenarios; (vi) Community and land-use compatibility, particularly in strategic growth and employment areas.</p> <p>The evaluation should also consider implementation feasibility in the current policy context. Recent provincial policy changes, including those introduced</p>

Topic	Feedback
	<p>through Bill 98, have reduced municipal authority to require certain green development standards, creating uncertainty around the delivery of demand-side and non-wires solutions. The Region recommends that the IESO work with relevant provincial ministries to identify policy, regulatory, or legislative mechanisms that would enable municipalities, local electricity distribution companies, and other local actors to effectively implement non-wires solutions and achieve sustained demand and usage reductions.</p>
<p>Are there other types of information that would be helpful for us to provide in future engagements to enhance understanding of community perspectives and insights?</p>	<p>Future engagement would benefit from more geographically specific information on where non-wires solutions are feasible versus where wires solutions are likely unavoidable, greater transparency on how greenhouse gas impacts and fossil fuel reliance are factored into option selection, and Ontario-relevant case studies illustrating successful deployment of non-wires alternatives. Engagement on integration with municipal priorities around electrification, growth management, and district energy would also enhance understanding. Given that Durham Region’s area municipalities are currently undertaking Official Plan updates that identify future growth areas, early and direct engagement with lower-tier municipalities would help ensure that anticipated growth patterns and land-use decisions are appropriately reflected in electricity demand forecasts and options assessment.</p> <p>- Future engagement would also benefit from the inclusion of information related to major land-use changes currently under consideration within the region. In January 2025, the federal government announced that the Pickering Lands would no longer be used for a future airport, and consultations led by Transport Canada are underway to determine potential residential, employment, agricultural, and conservation uses. Engagement with the federal government on the future development of these lands would help ensure that any resulting changes in long-term electricity demand are appropriately reflected in regional planning. In addition, the Region of Durham is undertaking the development of a District Heat Master Plan to identify priority areas focused in the Region’s</p>

Topic	Feedback
	<p>Strategic Growth areas where district energy systems and waste heat recovery opportunities could be leveraged. This work is intended to support low-carbon growth while reducing peak electricity demand, alleviating constraints on the electricity grid, and potentially deferring or downsizing traditional electricity infrastructure investments. Consideration of this work within the regional planning process would support a more integrated and system-wide assessment of both wires and non-wires solutions.</p>

General Comments/Feedback

Durham Region appreciates the opportunity to provide early input into the GTA East Regional Electricity Planning process and acknowledges the complexity of meeting growing electricity demand in a rapidly urbanizing region. As Canada’s Clean Energy Capital, Durham’s long-term prosperity depends on electricity solutions that are reliable, affordable, competitive, and aligned with climate leadership objectives. The Region emphasizes the importance of a coordinated, integrated planning approach that aligns provincial, federal, and municipal land-use and energy planning initiatives with electricity system decision-making. Early and ongoing engagement with municipalities and other orders of government will be critical to ensuring that regional electricity planning supports planned growth while enabling the deployment of low-carbon, non-wires solutions where feasible. Durham Region looks forward to continued collaboration with the IESO, transmitters, local distribution companies, and government partners as planning advances, and to ensuring that the GTA East Regional Electricity Plan reflects both long-term system reliability needs and community priorities for sustainable, low-carbon growth.