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### FAZIO - THE LEGEND DIES...

#### WHO WILL BE NEXT?

By Joe Ingino BA. Psychology  
Editor/Publisher Central Newspapers  
ACCOMPLISHED WRITER/AUTHOR OF OVER 800 ,000  
Published Columns in Canada and The United States

It is a sign of the times. One after another local downtown businesses closing. Just recently it was announced that the famous 'Fazio's', subsequently 'The Legend of Fazio', had it's last serving. Once a mighty hot spot. A hub for politicos, society butterflies and the like. It was a place to be seen. This was during the good times of our core. Today our core looks and feels more like a battle ground than a welcoming place. Riddled with pot shops, questionable entities. I have seen administrations come and go. I can tell you first hand. Municipal government have become ineffective. Made up of people that only care about either pensions, pension cushioning and or the un-employable that got lucky during an election. We do not have leaders... we have opportunists. As a local long standing business man and consultant based downtown. I can tell you that the decay of our core is the responsibility of the two elected downtown core council members. Neither of them have any business experience. Neither of them ever had a business in the core. Then how are we the taxpayers expecting them to know what is needed for the success of the core. I tried working with Rick Kerr, I offered my experience and connections in the core. He only came in once. When I spoke with him it was like i was speaking some foreign language. The other local elected scoundrel... could or will never be hired by anyone to hold a position of responsibility as that of which he has been elected. So what is he doing representing the downtown business community? He has never once visited my office as his local media and city newspaper. Instead this character, has attacked my local business and other downtown businesses. He has been known to waste tax payers dollars and resources on political vendettas hearings. In my opinion a punk with luck. I can't understand how voters allowed him a second term. I know that if I was in office. My first thing would be to meet with all the local downtown businesses and land owners. Come up with special constituency plans addressing rents. The core will only come to life is we drop rental rates. Create parking and rid of the crime. I would assure that all downtown merchants received special hydro/gas cut rates. We can't expect change with punks and dream catcher at the helm. I surely ask all reading this that during the 2026 we get rid of the deadwood and bring in some real business leadership.



### We scrutinize Rouge Park land. Why not golf courses the size of airports?

by Maj (ret'd) CORNELIU, CHISU, CD, PMSC  
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In the Greater Toronto Area, few debates have been as intense—or as politically charged—as the future of farmland and green space around Rouge National Urban Park. For years, governments, environmental advocates and local communities have contested every hectare. The objective is clear: protect prime agricultural land, preserve ecosystems and manage the pressures of relentless urban expansion. Now, with the federal government stepping away from the long-proposed Pickering airport on lands held for decades by Transport Canada, the debate has entered a new phase. Thousands of acres of publicly owned farmland—adjacent to Rouge Park—are once again open to policy decisions.

What should be done with them?

It is an important question. But it is also an incomplete one. Because while we scrutinize every acre of public land in Rouge and Pickering, we continue to ignore a far larger reality—one that sits in plain sight across Durham Region and the eastern GTA.

Golf courses.

The land we choose not to see

In Durham Region alone, golf courses occupy an estimated eight to 10 square kilometres of land. That is not a marginal figure. It is comparable to the footprint of Vancouver International Airport and not insignificant relative to Calgary International Airport or Edmonton International Airport.

If a proposal were brought forward today to build an airport of that size on prime land in the GTA, it would trigger years of environmental assessments, legal challenges and public consultations.

Yet that same scale of land already exists—distributed across golf courses—and it is almost entirely absent from serious policy discussion.

This is not an oversight. It is a contradiction.

A double standard

The case for protecting Rouge Park and the Pickering lands rests on the value of Class 1 farmland—some of the most productive soil in Canada. This is a compelling argument. Food security, climate resilience and long-term economic sustainability depend on preserving such land. However, many golf courses sit on the same class of land.

They are often former farms, converted over time into low-density recreational spaces serving a relatively small portion of the population. They occupy large, contiguous tracts—exactly the kind of land policymakers now argue is too valuable to lose.

Yet, unlike farmland, golf courses are rarely subjected to the same scrutiny or policy pressure. If the principle is that prime land must be protected for the public good, it cannot be applied selectively.

The Pickering paradox

The cancellation of the Pickering airport proposal has created a rare opportunity. For decades, these federally owned lands were effectively frozen, reserved for infrastructure that never came. Now, they can be reimagined. Some argue they should remain entirely agricultural. Others propose integrating them into Rouge Park. Still others see an opportunity for carefully planned development to address the region's housing shortage.

All of these positions are valid.

However, they also reveal a deeper inconsistency.

We are prepared to debate publicly owned farmland hectare by hectare, while ignoring privately held land of comparable scale that could offer greater flexibility. It is as if one category of land is considered strategic, while another is simply beyond discussion.

Housing and hard choices The GTA's housing shortage is no longer theoretical. Governments are under pressure to increase supply, accelerate approvals and identify land for development. At the same time, there is strong resistance—rightly so—to building on protected farmland or environmentally sensitive areas.

This is where the silence around golf courses becomes consequential.

These lands are: · already cleared and serviced · often located near existing infrastructure · large enough to support meaningful development Even partial repurposing—10 to 20 per cent of golf course land—could support tens of thousands of housing units across the region, while preserving recreational use. This is not about eliminating golf. It is about acknowledging that land use must evolve.

Why the silence persists

The answer is straightforward.

Golf courses are politically comfortable. They are established, familiar and rarely controversial. They do not generate the same level of opposition as new development or infrastructure projects. In short, they are easy to ignore. However, good policy is not about avoiding difficult conversations. It is about confronting them—especially when they involve trade-offs of this magnitude.

A question of fairness

Public lands like Rouge Park and the Pickering lands are subject to intense scrutiny because they are meant to serve the broader public interest. Their use must be justified in terms of environmental value, agricultural productivity or public access. Golf courses, by contrast, are typically: · privately owned or membership-based · accessible to a limited segment of the population · maintained with significant resource inputs

This is not an argument against golf. It is an argument for consistency. If one category of land must justify its use in terms of public benefit, then all categories should be held to a comparable standard.

Time for a coherent strategy

The real issue is not golf courses—or even the Pickering lands. It is the absence of a coherent, region-wide land-use strategy. What we have instead is fragmentation:

· intense scrutiny of public land · relative silence on large private land uses · reactive decisions driven by pressure rather than planning A serious strategy would apply consistent criteria across all land uses, evaluate them based on long-term public benefit and explore multi-use models that integrate recreation, housing and green space.

The broader test The debate over Rouge Park and the Pickering lands is necessary. However, its credibility depends on its scope.

If we are willing to scrutinize public farmland hectare by hectare, we must also be willing to examine other large-scale land uses with equal rigour.

Because in a region where land is finite and growth is inevitable, what we choose not to debate matters just as much as what we do.

And silence, in this case, is not neutrality.

It is a policy choice.



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**JOE INGINO IS A PROFESSIONAL JOURNALIST & ACCOMPLISHED WRITER/AUTHOR OF OVER 800,000 Published Columns in Canada and The United States**