



Environmental Services Department

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee of the Whole  
FROM: Erin Mahoney Commissioner Environmental Services  
DATE: May 14, 2015  
RE: Rouge National Urban Park Update

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Parks Canada has been continuing to advance the Rouge National Urban Park initiative. York Region participates, along with the Province of Ontario, City of Markham, City of Toronto, Durham Region, City of Pickering and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, on a Parks Canada Landholders Table Committee to provide input and advice and receive updates.

Bill C-40, an Act respecting Rouge National Urban Park, received Royal Assent on April 23, 2015 and is now law. The *Rouge National Urban Park Act* is a stand-alone Act which establishes the Park, a new type of federal protected area, the first of its kind in Canada. The Bill moved through Parliament over the past year, with support and input from the Landholders Committee and other stakeholders. Ian Buchanan, Manager Natural Heritage and Forestry Services, was asked to participate as a witness at the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in November 2014, and subsequently invited to speak at The Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources in March 2015.

The Region's comments were well received. Members understood and recognized York Region Council's interests in growth management, infrastructure delivery, agriculture and the natural environment. The Region's contributions (i) raised the understanding of the need for an integrated, balanced and collaborative approach to decision making, and (ii) heightened the recognition of the sensitivity of a Park being established in an existing urban area, with present and future needs of communities reliant on supporting infrastructure (e.g. roads, water and wastewater). Senate appreciated our input and also acknowledged that all Landholders had signed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Parks Canada respecting advancing development of the Park and transfer of lands (including York Region and City of Markham).

Other important updates include:

- Parks Canada became a landowner in the Rouge Park as Transport Canada formally transferred 4,722 acres (north of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue) to Parks Canada on April 1, 2015. These lands represent 38 per cent of the proposed Park area.
- The Provincial government has signed the MOA to transfer their significant land holdings (44.1 per cent) in the Park to Parks Canada but continues to hold out on their land transfer commitment. The Province is seeking 'higher' environmental protection provisions for the Park, suggesting an 'environment first' approach to decision making.
- Parks Canada continues to revise the draft Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan to include comments from the Landholders, other stakeholders and the public.
- City of Markham with input from York Region staff is pursuing a Supplemental Agreement to cover a variety of outstanding concerns relating to preservation of heritage buildings, Associated Municipal Greenspaces, community assets, public recreational interests, payment in lieu of taxes and compensation for municipal services.
- A positive Markham Rouge Park Implementation Task Force meeting chaired by Regional Councillor Heath with Parks Canada occurred on April 29, 2015 to advance the Supplemental Agreement.

York Region staff will continue to work closely with Parks Canada and City of Markham on advancement of the Park, development of the Supplemental Agreement and any required service agreements. A report will be brought to Council this fall on updates including any agreements with Parks Canada.

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Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.

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