



## **APPENDIX A**

### **THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF MARKHAM**

#### **EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON Dec 16, 2008 REPORT NO. 63 - DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE (November 25, 2008)**

##### **(1) ROUGE PARK IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE REPORT (10.0)**

That the presentation by Deputy Mayor Jack Heath regarding Rouge Park Implementation Task Force Report be received; and,

That the Rouge Park Implementation Task Force Final Report be received; and,

That Council allow the circulation of the Rouge Park Implementation Task Force Final Report as a basis for discussion and negotiation; and,

That staff be directed to provide comments on the Rouge Park Implementation Task Force Final Report; and,

That Council invite comments from agencies, boards, adjacent municipalities and the Provincial and Federal Governments; and,

That Council endorse the Signage proposal, #3 b from the Rouge Park Implementation Task Force Final Report; and further,

That two working groups and a staff liaison committee be established in consultation with our partners, one to review governance and one to review the other recommendations outlined in the Rouge Park Implementation Task Force Final Report.

**CARRIED**



## **ROUGE PARK IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE**

Chair, Deputy Mayor Jack Heath  
Mayor Frank Scarpitti  
Councillor Logan Kanapathi  
Councillor Erin Shapero  
Councillor John Webster

### **FINAL REPORT**

November 25, 2008

Note: this report goes to Development Services Committee on November 25, 2008 and Council after that. If adopted as is or with changes, it will become an approved Town of Markham position paper. Chair Jack Heath

# **ROUGE PARK: A PARK IN PROGRESS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Markham is undertaking a review of its relationship with Rouge Park (RP). Council established a committee in March 2008, the Rouge Park Implementation Task Force (RPITF), to bring forth recommendations on the subject.

Markham's vision is of a very large park in the east end, one that is contiguous with, and integrated with, similarly named parks in Toronto and Pickering.

RPITF recommends that significant portions of the park should remain natural, or become re-naturalized, especially in the large core areas along the Little Rouge.

The task force supports RP as a significant green space corridor offering the prospect of natural restoration, continued agricultural use, first class cultural heritage protection, and nature-based recreation. RPITF views Rouge Park as an extremely important publicly owned amenity; it believes there is an opportunity to provide more activities for individual, family and community enjoyment, and is convinced that a fully established and well-funded Rouge Park will have the capability and land resources to fulfill all of these objectives.

The committee's first challenge was to suggest boundaries for the park that are sensible and fit within the context of Markham's green space management system. The main recommendation is to establish a park in Markham called "Rouge Park", as none formally exists at present, and then to develop it east of 9<sup>th</sup> Line.

The second was to evaluate the public uses contemplated for Rouge Park and to determine whether there were others that could be accommodated within the park and its mandate. Recommendations include an area for group picnics, an outdoor activity centre, and a detailed master trail plan.

The third was to analyze some of the infrastructure pressures in and around the park and present practical solutions that would work for both Markham and Rouge Park. The committee recommends a higher standard of evaluation for any rail, road and sewer proposals in the future, proper protection for heritage buildings, development of an agriculture master plan, and privatization of all buildings in the park under strict controls.

The last challenge was to examine the governance structure of Rouge Park and offer ideas for the next step. Here RPITF recommends a follow-up committee involving the municipalities in which the park is located to determine a future governing structure. The task force looked carefully at one model, a super-municipal park. Finally, RPITF proposes that Markham and York should fund part of the annual operating costs of the park.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TASK FORCE**

On March 4, 2008, Markham Council created a working committee to explore opportunities relating to Rouge Park in relation to the Town. One objective was to look at the possibility of a "second" Milne Dam Conservation Area. Other issues were raised, including expanded recreational uses. Councillors asked, "When will Rouge Park, a park in name and concept, become a park in reality?"

The Rouge Park Implementation Task Force included Mayor Frank Scarpitti, Deputy Mayor Jack Heath, Councillor Erin Shapero, Councillor Logan Kanapathi,

and Councillor John Webster. Deputy Mayor Heath was Chair and wrote this report. Staff, including the Clerks Department, provided much appreciated support.

At the time of establishing the task force, Council endorsed "in principle" the Little Rouge Corridor and Bob Hunter Management Plans but withheld final approval pending the RPITF report and the discussions to follow with Council, York, the Rouge Park Alliance (the park's managing body), the public, and others.

The Committee met on March 27, 2008, April 17, May 28, July 8, September 2, and October 3.

On June 11, York Region Council deferred recommendations on both the Little Rouge Corridor and Bob Hunter Management Plans until the RPITF process concluded. The Region has been appraised of its progress and a York staff member attended the last two meetings.

Chair Heath developed the agenda for the RPITF; it was refined by the task force as the process ensued. It focused on Rouge Park issues that were relevant to the Town of Markham. Consensus was the outcome in most cases but the task force felt some matters needed more input from Council. These have been appropriately referenced.

## **BACKGROUND**

Note: this report deals with the Town of Markham. All references to Rouge Park are to lands that are, or may become part of, the park in Markham. Any references to sections elsewhere include such modifiers as "Markham / Toronto," "as a whole," "The Richmond Hill satellite park," etc. The term "Greater Rouge Park" refers to lands generally known as Rouge Park in Markham plus the federal lands in Markham to the north, some of which are already designated for RP purposes. "Staff" refers to Markham staff.

Rouge is a park in progress. The oldest section, which is in Toronto, was created in 1995. The park is still in its infancy, without final boundaries, operating structures, staffing components, and appropriate funding levels. Its relationship with Markham is poorly defined – which is an on-going problem. This report recommends steps toward a clearer role for all parties. The park's potential value for both residents and visitors is high. From our viewpoint today, we can only glimpse the role a mature Rouge Park will play in the lives of Markham and GTA residents 25, 50, or 100 years from now.

The Markham / Toronto portion of Rouge Park is an important terrestrial link between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine. The moraine dips into northeastern Markham on parts of the federal lands. This link is both historic and current. Trails, culture, watercourses, wildlife, agriculture, and obviously the natural environment corridor itself, they all say visibly that RP is a special place.

Unlike other municipal parks, Rouge is governed by a voluntary board, the Alliance, made up of political representatives from nine governments (federal, provincial, Durham, Markham, Pickering, Richmond Hill, Toronto, Whitchurch-Stouffville, and York), and appointees from several agencies and NGOs such as the Toronto Zoo, the Toronto and Region Conservation Area (TRCA), and Save the Rouge Valley System. The TRCA and the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, using the interest on a multi-million dollar grant made several years ago by the Federal Government, are its main sources of funds. It also receives significant in-kind funding from its municipal partners.

Markham Council, through its participation on the RP Alliance Board, has agreed to manage the lands in accordance with the vision, goals and objectives of the park. These have been articulated through management plans prepared by the Alliance and the TRCA. The Alliance, as a result, has a role in the park's decision-making process that is normally the sole responsibility of a municipality.

Markham's relationship with the park will always be a high priority. The sheer size of Greater Rouge Park in proportion to Markham guarantees it. It covers 19% of Markham, almost one fifth of the Town.

The major corridor of the park is the Little Rouge Creek south of Major Mackenzie Drive. It also encompasses the Bob Hunter Memorial Park at 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue east of the CP Rail tracks, and includes the lands east of the Little Rouge, generally south of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The guiding document is the Rouge North Management Plan. Draft management plans have been prepared for the Little Rouge Creek Corridor and Bob Hunter Memorial Park. A fourth management plan is underway for the Eastern Markham lands that are east of the Little Rouge Corridor. (See Figure #1 – Greenbelt Lands in Markham)

## **ROUGE PARK IS VERY BIG**

Rouge Park as a whole is already the largest urban park in Canada. It is a significant land holding. Including the federal lands, the Toronto / Markham portion exceeds 22,000 acres. Almost 9,000 hectares.

Various public agencies, primarily the Ontario Realty Corporation (ORC), a provincial land agency, the TRCA, a semi-autonomous provincial environmental and conservation agency, and the Town of Markham own the lands. The federal Pickering Airport lands are located immediately north of the park.

The following demonstrates the current size and potential of Rouge Park:

	Acres	Hectares
<b>A) Markham's Rouge Park:</b>		
Tompion (Steeles & Ninth)	40.63	16.44

Bob Hunter Memorial Park	489.75	198.20
Little Rouge Creek Corridor*	1,732.37	701.06
Eastern Markham	1,540.40	623.37
Toogood Pond Park	90.34	36.55
Milne Park	<u>383.19</u>	<u>155.07</u>
Subtotal:	4,276.68	1,730.71
<b>B) Markham's Potential Additions:</b>		
Federal Green Space Corridor	2,502.17	1,012.59
Remaining federal airport lands	2,329.71	942.80
Middle Reaches n. of Maj. Mac.	<u>1,365.09</u>	<u>552.43</u>
Subtotal:	6,196.97	2,507.82
<b>C) Markham Total (A) + (B):</b>	10,473.65	4,238.53
<b>D) Toronto's Rouge Park:</b>	<u>11,624.00</u>	<u>4,700.00</u>
<b>E) TOTAL Markham &amp; Toronto:</b>	22,087.65	8,938.53

Note: The Little Rouge Creek Corridor (\*) consists of two sections. The valley lands are owned by the Town of Markham and the tablelands by the TRCA:

Markham portion of LRCC	412.34	166.86
TRCA portion	<u>1,320.03</u>	<u>534.20</u>
Total:	1,732.37	701.06

In comparison, Stanley Park in Vancouver is 1,012 acres, Bronte Creek Provincial Park in Oakville is 1,600 acres and High Park in Toronto is 403 acres. If all the lands above are integrated eventually into the Markham / Toronto Rouge Park, it will be more than twenty five times the size of Central Park in New York (853 acres). Incidentally, Algonquin Provincial Park is 1,907,498 acres.

There is another component – lands within the general boundaries of the park but not part of the designated park. These include private lands, the 407, and the hydro corridor. They exceed 505 acres. The park to one degree or another affects them, and some may perceive them as part of the park.

The size of RP in Markham / Toronto is enormous without considering the contiguous section in Pickering, which may soon expand, or satellite sections similar to Markham's Milne Park located in Richmond Hill and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

## **Part 1: DESIGNATING AND NAMING**

### **1.a ROUGE PARK LANDS**

There is confusion regarding what comprises Rouge Park.

Lands become part of the park through a process of formal recognition by the landowner and / or government. Once this has been done, there is an expectation that the Alliance will have input into management decisions. Tributaries in the middle reaches have been referred to as Rouge Park, notwithstanding they are predominantly in private ownership. Toogood Pond (Town owned, Town Managed) and Milne Dam Conservation Area (TRCA owned, mostly Town managed) have also been referenced as RP by the Alliance and the TRCA. The following summarizes the status of lands associated with Rouge Park:

**Bob Hunter Memorial Park** (name formally recognized by the province)

The name was provided by the province to honour a world-renowned Canadian environmentalist. It is recognized by the Alliance and partners including Markham. These lands are currently owned by ORC and will be conveyed to the TRCA to be managed for Rouge Park purposes in the near future.

**Little Rouge Creek Corridor Management Plan area** (no name)

Although this is a defined geographical area specific to the lands encompassed by the Little Rouge Creek Corridor Management Plan, the lands are generally known as 'the Little Rouge Creek Corridor.' This is not a formal park name.

**Eastern Markham lands** (no name)

The lands east of the Little Rouge Creek Corridor have been identified by the Province as lands to be managed for Rouge Park purposes under the continued ownership of the Province through the ORC, as opposed to the usual which would be through the TRCA. These lands are referenced as Little Rouge Creek East Lands by Rouge Park staff, but are generally referred to by staff as Eastern Markham, from Markham's Eastern Markham Strategic Review policy paper of a few years ago.

**Tompion Lands** (no official name)

The name Tompion refers to a recent landowner. The lands were purchased under a partnership of the Town, York Region and the TRCA and are under the management of the TRCA.

**Milne Dam Conservation Area** (name formally recognized)

This area, also known as Milne Park, was in existence as a conservation area / park before the creation of Rouge Park. It is identified as RP by the Alliance and TRCA and the lands are included on the maps of Rouge Park prepared by their staff. The section along the northern edge of the 407 was recently added to Milne by ORC. It remains in TRCA hands and has not yet been transferred to Markham for management. (See Figure #5 – Milne Park in Markham)

**Toogood Pond Park** (name formerly recognized)

This area was in existence as a conservation area / park before the creation of Rouge Park. It has often been identified as Rouge Park by the Alliance and TRCA and included on the maps of RP prepared by park staff. Both Toogood and Milne have major dams under the jurisdiction of the TRCA for storm water management purposes.

**Middle Reaches north of Major Mackenzie** (no name)

The term "middle reaches" refers to the tributaries of the Rouge extending north of Major Mackenzie and west of the Little Rouge corridor. They are generally in private ownership with the larger tributaries being subject to the Provincial Greenbelt Plan. Markham Official Plan Amendment #140, which was recently under appeal to the OMB but now settled, lays out ecological criteria to delineate a protected corridor around all Rouge



tributaries. This science-based approach for watershed protection replaces the Town's traditional valley plus 10 metres. OPA #140 does not deal with RP boundaries rather the limits of lands to be protected for environmental purposes by Markham or the park. The RP logo is proposed by the Alliance for road signs to identify river-crossings in these areas. Part 3b of this paper deals with signage.

RPITF recommends that the Town formally recognize Rouge Park as the lands comprising Bob Hunter Memorial Park, Little Rouge Creek Management Area, Eastern Markham, and Tompion and that Markham establish a park with these boundaries called "Rouge Park".

It recommends that there should be a single landowner and a single manager of RP. The two do not have to be the same although they could be. In Toronto, the TRCA owns the land in the park and the city manages it.

With regard to the section of RP owned by the Town of Markham, RPITF recommends that Markham indicate that it would be willing to follow the single owner and single manager principle, subject to a reasonable outcome of the governance review, and that Markham would transfer ownership if that were one of the recommendations. RPITF's recommendation for a governance review is found in Part 4.a of this report.

The Committee discussed whether Markham's three satellite sections should be included in RP:

Toogood Pond Park,  
Milne Dam Conservation Area, and  
The Middle Reaches north of Major Mackenzie.

Although there was some desire for further discussion, members felt that the above areas should not be included in RP. Instead, they see that a large, easily identifiable, contiguous park in the east end, Rouge Park, would foster a better understanding of responsibilities. It would match public perceptions: "The big swath in the east is Rouge Park with a special type of governance. All the other green space in Markham is the jurisdiction of the Town." Simple.

The task force felt that conflict might develop in the future over management and responsibility for Milne, Toogood, and the Middle Reaches. They saw no reason for Rouge Park's oversight; the Town's record of accomplishment in developing and managing parks, with the TRCA as required, is excellent. Markham was one of the first to pilot pesticide free parks and has often been able to acquire park-land allocations 25% or more above the Planning Act minimum. The Town is a leader in park assistance programmes, from Adopt-a-Park and the Markham Environmental Sustainability Fund, to its land acquisition funds and the Mayor's new million dollar "Markham Trees for Tomorrow." Concern was raised about adding a third level of decision-making to the current mix of Markham and the TRCA as RP becomes better funded and operationally stronger in the future. No one could

cite other examples in the GTA nor find any requirement under the Municipal Act to surrender jurisdiction.

The RPITF does not equate Rouge Park with the Rouge Watershed that covers most of Markham east of the 404. As one member said, "Rouge Park has enough responsibility handling that huge land mass in the east without adding most of the Rouge Watershed to the west. If Markham was not acting responsibly in Milne, Toogood or the Middle Reaches, there might be an argument, but Markham has an excellent track record!"

The committee recommends that Greater Rouge Park should be located east of Ninth Line stretching from Steeles to the Stouffville boundary in the north. With obvious avoidances of housing developments, private lands, the 407, and hydro. To be more exact, from the south just west of Ninth and the Rouge River at Steeles, the general boundary would track along the east side of the CP Rail line and the Box Grove and Cornell Secondary Plans and back to Ninth Line at the Donald Cousens Parkway, and from there up to Stouffville – but with a section west of Ninth Line north of Elgin Mills included - and then east to the York / Durham Line, and finally back down to Steeles. (See Figure #4 – Greater Rouge Park)

Those boundaries would endow Rouge Park in Markham with 8,632 acres. With Toronto, it climbs to 20,256 acres. The difference with the previous size, 22,087? Milne, Toogood and the Middle Reaches are not included.

This does not mean that the RPITF cannot foresee connections between RP and contiguous sections of Markham's open spaces or parks. There are several connecting points and more will develop over time. However, each system would be independent. This is normal in Canadian parks. In British Columbia, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks are distinct entities but contiguous, and Kootenay the same with Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park.

It is Markham's intent that over time the park would be enlarged as lands are conveyed into public ownership. The Town will continue to apply the policy regimes established by Council, for example those in Official Plan Amendment #140 that established the nomenclature of "Rouge North" for lands in private ownership. These policies delineate lands intended for permanent protection and eventual conveyance into public ownership as development proceeds or other circumstances occur. They will form a significant component of the Town's open space network. Whether the lands in this area are managed by the Town as natural heritage open space or as formal Town parks, or incorporated into Rouge Park, will be determined at the time when the land is secured into public ownership and integrated into adjacent land uses, and by where it is located relative to the boundaries outlined above. Figure #2 identifies RP as the Alliance saw it in 2007, and Figure #3 shows the lands to be recognized formally by the Town.

There are at least five other parcels in east Markham under provincial ownership: two at the corner of Ninth and Highway 7, one at Ninth and the 407, and one about 500 metres west of Ninth just north of the 407. Most are leftover from land assembly for the 407 or provincial ownership of Highway 7. Milne Park south of the pond is another example. There are probably more remnants. The Ministry of Transportation, the ORC and the TRCA hold the lands. All should remain as natural heritage lands and be regularized according to the formula in the previous paragraph. There is one more, along the east side of Reesor Road north of the 407. This parcel is discussed in Part 3.f below.

The most important part of this section is a recommendation to establish a park in east Markham called Rouge Park as a Markham park, and to state RPITF's strong desire for its expansion to the Greater Rouge Park boundaries described above. Rouge has now reached a level of activity and maturity in Markham for its existence to be formalized. Such a procedure would be the first step in establishing protocols for maintenance, etc. The task force also felt that a special arrangement should be made to ensure the continuation of Markham's sole ownership and management of three cultural centres: Cedarena, Cedar Grove Community Centre, and Cedar Grove Community Park, regardless of the disposition of the rest of the lands in the Little Rouge Corridor.

***Recommendation #1.a.1***

***The RPITF recommends that the Town establish a municipal park in east Markham called "Rouge Park."***

***Recommendation #1.a.2***

***The RPITF recommends that the lands shown in Figure #3 as Rouge Park lands be included in the park: Little Rouge Creek Corridor, Bob Hunter Memorial Park, Eastern Markham, and Tompion, and that Toogood Pond Park, Milne Dam Conservation Area, and the Middle Reaches north of Major Mackenzie not be included in Rouge Park.***

***Recommendation #1.a.3***

***The RPITF recommends that the lands and properties owned by the Town of Markham known as "Cedarena," "Cedar Grove Community Park," and "Cedar Grove Community Centre" continue to be owned and managed by Markham.***

***Recommendation #1.a.4***

***The RPITF recommends that staff enter into negotiations with the Ministry of Transportation, the ORC, and the TRCA to complete the transfer of remnant parcels of land in east Markham to the Town, or to the future RP, according to the recommended boundaries.***

## **1.b FEDERAL AIRPORT LANDS IN MARKHAM**

Transport Minister David Collenette announced in March 2001 that, with regard to its Pickering Airport site, the Federal Government would take steps to protect as green space, portions of the Oak Ridges Moraine and a north-south corridor connecting to the Rouge Park. The initiative included 5,628 acres on the Oak Ridges Moraine in Markham, Uxbridge and Pickering with a large portion for the RP corridor near the eastern boundary of Markham. The Rouge North Management Plan and Official Plan Amendment #140 both recognize this federal corridor as a connection to the park. The Provincial Greenbelt Plan identifies all the lands within the federal holdings in Markham as Greenbelt and some of them as Oak Ridges Moraine as well. Municipal and provincial policies and plans have no jurisdiction on federally-owned lands; nevertheless, all four governments, federal, provincial, regional and local, appear to have similar objectives for the corridor.

Following the announcement in 2001, an excellent Green Space plan was produced for the corridor by Transport Canada. It included community consultation and stakeholder involvement. The details of the plan are not as well known as other east end management plans and it seems tantalizingly out of reach.

The Federal Government have advised that formal implementation of the Green Space will not occur in advance of a decision regarding the Pickering Airport. Does that mean only after a go-ahead decision to build? Land procurement started over 35 years ago. If an airport is approved it might not start construction for another 5 years, or open for business in a decade. The Greater Toronto Airport Authority's Environmental Assessment for the potential airport has been on pause for two or three years. The result? The RPITF's vision could be in limbo for quite some time.

This activity hiatus means that there is time for Markham to hold discussions with the Federal Government on an integrated and coordinated management approach with the RP concerning the federal lands in Markham. Involvement of the TRCA in these negotiations would be important with regard to a change of ownership and / or management. A major concern of Transport Canada relates to flocks of birds and water fowl which could be attracted to a park like Rouge. The TRCA has dealt successfully with these issues elsewhere.

There is a good reason for holding discussions sooner rather than later. Since release of the Green Space vision in 2005, there has been little evidence of a financial commitment by Ottawa. Bringing the lands under the umbrella of RP will open the door to implementation.

The RP corridor is not the only federal land in Markham. The lands to the east, which stretch over to York-Durham Line, also belong to Transport Canada. In the 1970s, the western tips of the two proposed airport runways actually crossed over York-Durham Line into Markham. Not any more. The EA is studying an

airport which is completely east of the Havelock Rail Line in Pickering. Any runways would end kilometres from Markham. There is no longer a practical reason for any of the federal lands in Markham to remain frozen in Transport Canada's hands.

From Markham's point of view, it is desirable to have only one managing body for the environmentally protected lands in the east end. Policies, management practices, responsibilities and liabilities – how can one park have so many of each? The confusing string of management bodies and visions including the Federal RP Corridor, Transport Canada, Rouge Park, Bob Hunter, TRCA, ORC, and Markham itself, should not continue. All the publicly held lands noted above should be fully integrated into Rouge Park as a matter of urgency. The public is poorly served by the current disjointed approach. For matters related to running a park, including dealing with governments and agencies with interests in the area, the managing board of RP, however structured, should take the lead.

***Recommendation #1.b.1***

***The RPITF recommends that the Federal Airport lands in Markham should be integrated into RP and that staff enter into discussions with the Federal Government on the matter as soon as possible.***

***Recommendation #1.b.2***

***The RPITF recommends that the Town coordinate efforts with the Federal Government, the TRCA, and Rouge Park Alliance to implement the Green Space vision in a manner consistent with its vision and the objectives of the TRCA, Rouge Park and the Town.***

## **1.c A NAMING PROTOCOL**

There is no RP or Town policy established to name the smaller sections and features within the park. The name Bob Hunter is appropriate. However, Tompion is not; it is located near Bob Hunter and is the name of a previous landowner. Other areas in the park as a whole are named such as Woodlands Area, Cedar Grove Community Park, Finch Meander, etc. Naming the sub areas, watercourses, and distinct geographic aspects helps create identity and character and is especially important for isolated parcels. Some areas in east Markham are referenced by the associated management plans, but nothing formal. How they are named should have a consistent approach. Appropriate names should be introduced in a shared process with Council, landowners, Rouge Park, and the public. In the middle reaches, future parkland and watercourses will be named by the Town consistent with current naming practices as above.

***Recommendation #1.c***

***The RPITF recommends that the Town engage the Rouge Park Alliance, TRCA, the Region, Province and the Federal Government to***

***establish appropriate names for distinct areas and features within Greater Rouge Park. Such a process would recognize historic and current local contexts and include community consultation.***

## **Part 2: PUBLIC USES AND ACTIVITIES**

Note: Rouge Park is a significant public resource with a large land mass capable of providing a variety of public uses and experiences. Markham is prepared to enter into discussions with its partners to determine the Town's participation in capital funding and long-term operational funding for public uses and activities that provide a benefit to the residents of the Town of Markham and which meet the objectives of its Parks and Facilities Master Plan.

### **2.a CAMPING**

Camping is a growing family activity that requires large parcels of natural areas. For a short period of time you live on the land, consume little, and leave nothing behind. Camping should be integrated in the park with other visitor experiences and incorporate existing structures for washroom facilities and shelter. It is a sustainable and educational activity that enhances RP's natural themes.

The RPITF believes that staff and RP should investigate ecological and educational camping opportunities. There should be facilities for both group camping, such as Scouts, and family camping. The number of sites should be small, possibly two to four.

On November 29, 2005, Council supported the following as part of their comments on the draft Little Rouge Creek Management Plan: "That the Little Rouge Creek Management Plan identify a specific site to support specialized, educational / cultural small scale camping."

Camping can generate revenue for the long-term management of the Park. Some members thought that camp facilities could be managed by the private sector thus reducing the reliance on staff resources.

There is an existing camp ground in the Toronto portion of Rouge Park, Glen Rouge Campground. It is managed by the Toronto Parks Department. It is a beautiful oasis near the city with over 100 sites along the banks of the lower Rouge. It is used by tourists coming to Toronto, weekend hikers, and families wanting a natural near-home holiday experience.

RV camping was identified as a potential use requiring further discussion by Council. While it is recognised that it may not conjure up images consistent with RP's "Wild in the City" brand, the reality is that RVs are permitted in Toronto. Having an area where this can be done in Markham would ensure some consistency in activities south and north of Steeles. In addition when the cost of fuel is

taken into consideration the opportunity to enjoy nature with a shortened drive makes the idea worth considering.

***Recommendation #2.a.1***

***The RPITF recommends that ecologically focussed camping be permitted within Rouge Park and that a small number of sites be located after criteria are established by staff and the Alliance, and that one of the sites be large enough to handle group camping.***

***Recommendation #2.a.2***

***The RPITF recommends that Council provide further direction on RV camping services within Rouge Park.***

## **2.b DOG OFF-LEASH SITES**

Dog off-leash sites are high demand facilities in Markham. One such area exists off 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue near Woodbine; it is very well used. There are some in Toronto too. They are usually designed and managed by the community and can be an attractive amenity. Markham has guidelines and a community committee established for the development and over-sight of dog off-leash areas. The committee's objective is to ensure the appropriate long-term management of the location. They generally require a small parking lot and a fenced perimeter. The RPITF discussed the growing demand for these facilities and recommends that the Town partner with Rouge Park to identify suitable sites just inside the western edge of the Park close to the urban communities.

The committee emphasizes that, with a park as large as Rouge next door to the 50,000 people who will soon be living in Markham east of Ninth Line, the establishment of these facilities are necessary for the park too. Two to four are needed. Without such amenities, there will never be enough park wardens to ensure pets are not running loose in the park. RP does not have any wardens doing enforcement today. Trail management will have to deal with pets as well. Some families will want their four legged member to join their morning hike. There are hundreds of dogs across the road in Cornell and Box Grove today.

The Rouge North Management Plan does not specifically address this use. The RPITF considers them appropriate when located away from sensitive ecological areas and with good road access. Proper location of designated areas will prevent the informal use of the park for dog off-leash activities, which is certainly happening now, and protect wildlife and natural habitats. The Town does not consider the land it owns along the Little Rouge where it could locate such amenities, as the best location.

On November 29, 2005, Council made the following comment on the draft Little Rouge Creek Management Plan: "That the Little Rouge Creek Management Plan

not preclude dog leash-free areas being located in the outer edge of the corridor lands, in an area of minimal environmental impact and consistent with any future guidelines for the management of dog leash-free areas.”

***Recommendation #2.b***

***The RPITF recommends that staff be directed to consult with the RP to identify potential dog off-leash areas and that such sites be developed after criteria are established by staff and the Alliance.***

## **2.c GROUP PICNICS**

The north side of Milne Dam Conservation Area is owned by the TRCA and operated by Markham under a management agreement. Milne Park is a passive recreational area with picnic shelters and BBQs for large group picnics and small ones too. It has numerous groomed fields for walking, playing pick-up soccer or baseball, and holding children’s races. It even has a beach for playing in the sand. The usable picnic space is approximately 88 acres; it can accommodate up to 1,725 people on a busy summer weekend such as Victoria Day or Civic Holiday. There is a \$5 per car admission fee in the summer. Despite significant capacity, there still is a huge demand for more group picnic facilities.

Both the Little Rouge Creek and Bob Hunter Management Plans contemplate picnic facilities, but only very small contained areas. The Eastern Markham area has good potential. The RPITF recommends that RP include a group picnic area of comparable size to the existing Milne Park. Many smaller areas, more than presently contemplated, are also needed in all parts of the park although it is hoped that they would be properly sited so as not to disturb the natural areas. The major facility could easily be integrated into areas where existing buildings are located to provide washrooms and shelters and act as an entry gate for some of the park’s pathways.

In addition, the task force has also requested that staff investigate a memorial or celebration forest that might be adjacent to the major picnic area and include an arboretum, floral gardens, plus art and theme areas.

On November 29, 2005, Council supported the following as part of their comments on the draft Little Rouge Creek Management Plan: “That the Little Rouge Creek Management Plan identify specific locations and general size of picnic areas, including one site for large groups located in close proximity to a trail head [that would] adequately accommodate accessibility [needs] and parking.”

***Recommendation #2.c.1***

***The RPITF recommends that staff work with RP to identify potential locations for a large group picnic area and that implementation be considered a priority.***



***Recommendation #2.c.2***

***The RPITF recommends that Rouge Park include numerous smaller picnic sites throughout the park and consideration be given to a celebration forest and an arboretum / horticultural garden area.***

## **2.d TRAILS, TRAILHEADS, AND PARKING**

The Rouge Park management plans identify conceptual trail locations for all purpose and pedestrian trails. The Bob Hunter Master Plan provides a greater level of trail planning in that locations for loop trails have been identified. The Little Rouge Creek Management Plan only shows a main north-south trail and leaves the detailed loop trails for a further trail planning process. Those trails which have been identified have been integrated with Markham's Cycling Master Plan and its draft Pathway and Trails Master Plan. York Region, through its recent Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan Study, has also worked hard on trail networks. Much public consultation has taken place to produce these three documents. But they have only limited details on RP's plans. Staff identified the need for some paved trails in the park to serve people in wheelchairs; these will be even more important once the provincial accessibility standards are approved. Bike, rollerblading and stroller requirements were also noted.

The ongoing naturalization and planting activities in the park, particularly in areas where trails may be located in the future, creates challenges for the planning and approval of restoration projects by staff. Markham does not want to preclude locations for future trail development so early in park planning. A detailed trail and pathway master plan is necessary to ensure that this recreational component is considered, planned for, and protected - notwithstanding site restoration activities. Such a master plan should be an immediate priority.

In the Little Rouge Corridor Management Plan, Cedarena has been identified as a potential trailhead and modest picnic area. The RPITF sees this as a good recommendation but felt strongly that any expansion, or changes in use of the Cedarena area should only be supported if they do not compromise the heritage value of the facility or affect its traditional usage.

Permission for pathways to go over or under infrastructure needs resolution. There are several obstacles, such as the 407, regional roads, the hydro corridor, and the Stouffville and Havelock Rail Lines. At the same time as discussing pathways with the owners of the above, complimentary re-naturalization would also be worthy of discussion.

One of the reasons for the establishment of the RPITF was Markham Council's understanding that a mature RP will have millions living in an urban context in close proximity. If reasonable amenities, such as those outlined in this report,

are not provided, the public create them and possibly in environmentally damaging ways. With regard to trails, dozens of park entry points, loops, and mid-blocks are needed, more foot-bridges are necessary, some access-to-the-water locations are required, provisions for horses, bikes, and cross-country skiing should be planned for, and much more. The committee endorses the accent on naturalization but believes it can only be successful if a significant variety of public amenities are also provided.

RPITF wants to see important public attractions, including trails, accessible to YRT / VIVA. Three transit nodes stand out - the terminal proposed for Highway 7 and Donald Cousens Parkway and the two possible GO stations on the soon-to-be-restored Havelock Line: Box Grove / Steeles / Ninth Line, and Locust Hill / Donald Cousens / 407. This second GO station will someday be the location for a 407 Transitway stop too. These locations will need washrooms and tuck shop facilities. Parking requirements inside the park would be reduced somewhat. A RP mini-bus system focused on these nodes would also help. It would increase opportunities for those without a car to experience the beauty of RP.

Importantly, the committee urges staff to ensure that enough parking is supplied at each entry node and trailhead to ensure that local traffic is not impeded and that no parking overflow occurs in residential areas inside and just outside RP.

On November 29, 2005, Council supported the following as part of their comments on the draft Little Rouge Creek Management Plan: "That the north-south trail be identified as a multi-use trail for pedestrian, cycling and cross country skiing [and that it contain] loops and access to the watercourse and direct connections to the Cornell open space system approximately half way between Highway 7 and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue and [the open space system in] Box Grove."

***Recommendation #2.d.1***

***The RPITF recommends that staff and the Alliance treat with the highest priority the preparation of a detailed RP trails and pathways plan, especially in Eastern Markham and the Little Rouge Corridor.***

***Recommendation #2.d.2***

***The RPITF recommends that, until such a trails and pathways plan is approved, that staff identify appropriate locations for trails and parking, and protect for them, on all pending site restorations in RP.***

***Recommendation #2.d.3***

***The RPITF recommends to staff and the Alliance that they ensure that some RP attractions be located near the YRT / VIVA terminal and the Havelock GO stations, and that enough parking be available at each entry node and trailhead so that traffic is not impeded and that no parking overflow occurs in the residential areas in or near RP.***

## **2.e AN OUTDOOR ACTIVITY AND CULTURE CENTRE**

RPITF supports the accent RP has put on nature-based recreation. Hiking and enjoying the outdoors are extremely important in the context of a huge urban community such as the GTA. Sustainability and environmental awareness are lessons for people of all ages.

With its huge size, Rouge Park can provide other opportunities too. Camping and group picnics have already been discussed. The Town has also identified the need for an outdoor activity complex in east Markham. It would include a children's playground, sports fields for possibly soccer, baseball, football, rugby and cricket, and a park maintenance building with public washrooms and change facilities. Part 2.g elaborates on other potential activities. The Town believes that a 37.5 to 50 acre site is the right size. The significant land holdings in Eastern Markham offer an opportunity.

The task force recognizes that the current Rouge Park position is not to support an outdoor activity centre but it believes that the use, if properly planned and integrated, is compatible with the much larger areas devoted to the natural environment.

A maintenance building in Greater RP is needed with or without an outdoor activity centre. All major parks have them. If located close to the centre, it could provide washrooms, a tuck shop, and a supervisory office.

Algonquin Park, Ontario's best known park, has many different zones and entry points. There are zones for wilderness, nature reserves, heritage, natural environment, recreation, and development. Indeed, as with agriculture in Rouge, it has significant forestry operations. The park is about 200 kilometres from the millions living in the GTA. Rouge Park however will soon be surrounded by the GTA. Ontario's best known park might offer guidance on how to deal with multiple uses inside the framework of Ontario's largest urban park.

Bronte Creek Provincial Park is another comparator. The size of the park in Oakville is about one fourteenth of Greater Rouge Park. It has sensitive naturalized areas, important animal and fish habitat, camping, a man-made swimming pond, an artificial skating rink, play areas for baseball and volleyball, a park store, a leash free area for dogs, and more.

RPITF feels that some active recreational uses should be integrated into RP. An outdoor activity centre would be one of them. A feeling that the public can use the park for reasonable and responsible purposes will be important for the park's long-term integrity. Such amenities properly located would create a sense of identity and ownership for the people living in the park or next door. These

activities say, "The park is essentially naturalized but it also has large sections for agriculture, historic hamlets, picnic areas, trails, and places for culture and sport."

This concept has significant potential for revenue generation for Markham and RP. As stated in the note under "Part 2: Public Uses and Activities", Markham is prepared to discuss the capital and operational funding of items in this section.

The location could provide a starting point for running and bicycle races and other outdoor activities, all of which would serve to publicize RP. Attached to it should be an outdoor culture area for plays, music concerts (under a bandshell), and lectures on nature and agriculture - perhaps accredited ones from Guelph, Seneca, U of T, or York. The area could host volunteer "Environmentalists-for-a-Day / Weekend" activities including planting and remediation lead by groups such as Friends of the Rouge Watershed and professional staff.

RPITF understands that there may be conformity issues relative to the Greenbelt Plan in this and other aspects of the report. But it feels it is more important to reflect Council's views and get the recommendations right for the discussions which will follow Markham's consideration of the report. RPITF's priority is the residents living in or near the park now or in the future.

One point is clear, RP will have more than enough land to meet all needs.

***Recommendation #2.e.1***

***The RPITF recommends that staff and the Alliance identify a location for an outdoor activity centre in Eastern Markham.***

***Recommendation #2.e.2***

***The RPITF recommends that staff and the Alliance identify a location for a park maintenance facility in Eastern Markham.***

***Recommendation #2.e.3***

***The RPITF recommends that staff and the Alliance identify a location for an outdoor cultural centre in Eastern Markham, for plays, music, nature lectures, and volunteer planting activity coordination.***

## **2.f THE ROUGE PARK OFFICE AND WELCOME CENTRE**

The vast acreage and available housing stock within Rouge Park creates an opportunity to site the head office of Rouge Park in Rouge Park.

Presently the office is in Aurora.

It seems logical that the staff should be situated in or very near the park. The office could be integrated with other uses such as an interpretive or welcome

centre, a large group picnic area, an outdoor activity centre, or a major trailhead. The RP Welcome Centre will be important for new visitors; it would include interpretative displays both permanent and changing, helpful staff, literature including maps and brochures, and a good selection of RP souvenirs. Everything to enhance the experience. It would be a tourist attraction in itself for schools, visiting groups, and bus tours.

Whether the business office is located adjacent to the welcome centre or elsewhere is for professionals to decide, but the centre should have easy access to existing or potential transit. It should also be well lit for staff and public safety.

There are numerous heritage buildings within Greater Rouge Park, one or two of which could become entry features for the complex. A location on Highway 7 or Reesor Road would be ideal for it.

Opportunities sometimes arise in the development planning process at the Town for the acquisition of suitable heritage buildings and / or locations which may also be helpful to RP.

On November 29, 2005, Council supported the following as part of their comments on the draft Little Rouge Creek Management Plan: "That the Rouge Park Alliance consider the development of a Rouge Park Interpretive Centre facility large enough to generate revenue from school and speciality groups and provide a significant focal point and legacy for the Rouge Park."

A relationship between RP and the Markham Museum has been developing in the past few years which should be fully explored. Many of the artifacts in the Museum come from the communities now in the park. With the opening of a RP Welcome Centre, the two sites could cooperate on advertising, exhibits, admission fees, tours, and staffing.

***Recommendation #2.f.1***

***The RPITF recommends that the Alliance be advised that the Town supports the relocation of the RP offices to the park in Markham and encourages RP to commence review of their office / interpretive centre requirements with a vision of locating in or near the park.***

***Recommendation #2.f.2***

***The RPITF recommends to staff that the Town make every effort to assist RP in finding a suitable location at a reasonable cost.***

***Recommendation #2.f.3***

***The RPITF recommends to staff that the relationship between the Markham Museum and RP be formalized and that staff explore all opportunities to develop a shared experience for the visiting public.***

## **2.g OTHER OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

The Rouge Park Implementation Task Force identified many other activities as potential for RP, including mountain biking and horseback riding. Management Plans for the park say that some of these are not appropriate; the task force is aware of this and potential incompatibilities with the Greenbelt Plan and the province's policy on protected countryside and natural heritage areas. Yet, there is a demand for more activities. That demand will grow in the future and this is one of the few possible large locations suitable for relatively inexpensive family outdoor entertainment so close to the city.

Informal mountain bike trails exist today in the park. They are slated for closure under the Little Rouge Creek Management Plan but when the trails come back in another location, as they will, it begs two questions for the Alliance, "Is strict enforcement possible in a massive park so close to so many people? Isn't our task more about channelling public expectations?"

There are riding stables on the federal lands. The Eastern Markham Strategic Review notes that such businesses help keep the rural areas alive despite the close proximity of the city. Other identified uses include Bed and Breakfasts, pick-your-own produce experiences, garden centres, etc.

On November 29, 2005, Council supported the following as part of their comments on the draft Little Rouge Creek Management Plan: "That the Little Rouge Creek Management Plan address the opportunities or issues related to equestrian trails associated with horse farm operations and motorized trails."

This report has already identified several larger aspects of park development. The task force divided these "Other Outdoor Activities" into three categories: those it feels are compatible with current management plans, those that need to be clarified, and those that should be considered as ancillary. The first category is task force recommended. The second needs further discussion, and for the third, RPITF suggests a location be found close to the park as a satellite of the outdoor activity centre - possibly under private ownership.

### **Category #1 – Recommended Activities:**

- 1. Annual Running and Bike Races (to the moraine and back on the existing road system),**
- 2. Art Shows (short-term),**
- 3. Canoeing,**
- 4. Chess,**
- 5. Children's Playground,**
- 6. Children's Summer Camps (existing use),**
- 7. Community Gardening,**

8. Croquet,
9. Crosscountry Skiing,
10. Dog-sledding,
11. Fishing,
12. Golfing (existing use),
13. Horseback Riding (existing use),
14. Horseshoes,
15. Kite Flying,
16. Mountain Biking,
17. Nature and Agriculture Lectures,
18. Organized Hiking,
19. Outdoor Bocce and Lawn Bowling,
20. Outdoor Skating (artificial and natural ice, Cedarena and elsewhere),
21. Outdoor Theatre and Concerts,
22. Snow-Shoeing,
23. Spiritual and Artistic retreats,
24. Swimming,
25. Volleyball including Beach Volleyball, and
26. Tubing.

**Category #2 – More Consideration Needed:**

27. Kick-Sledding, and
28. Tobogganing

**Category #3 – Ancillary Activities to be Located just outside RP:**

29. ATVing,
30. Archery Range,
31. BMX Biking,
32. Go-Karting,
33. Skateboarding,
34. Snowmobiling, and
35. Target Shooting.

Members noted that most activities, such as tobogganing, have associated liability issues. These will have to be addressed going forward. Take tobogganing – add proper signage, leave a portion of a few berms grassed rather than re-forested, etc. - solutions can be found if we truly want to provide good family fun. Rules would be needed for many of the activities, not just this one.

There is great variety on the list. Some compliment the outdoor activity centre or the large picnic area; others like canoeing are on their own. Some appeal to Markham's diverse cultures, language groups and seniors. Some are active; others are more passive. Many lend themselves to accessible programming.

Three are motorized and noisy. And five depend on cold and snowy winters in a time of climate change!

With these activities, Rouge Park will be a fun place to be on any weekend.

Where possible, new sites should be nearer the outer edges of the park to preserve the naturalization accent in more sensitive areas. RPITF noted that the future will see new recreational activities develop that are little known today and RP should be prepared for this.

The Town may wish to establish single purpose activity clubs, say The Rouge Park Horseshoe Club, with rules for respecting the natural surroundings, and the like. Visitors might join for the day or year! Such a system could offer revenue opportunities. Because they are in a regulated park, the Town could make it mandatory that the clubs be members of the Markham Sports Council and approved by Council as are other organizations receiving support.

On hunting, RPITF supports the strict prohibition in place today. It wants to ensure that, when enforcement officials are in the park, eliminating hunting and charging those who hunt, is their number one priority. Council receives reports of hunting on occasion - guns, bows and arrows, and crossbows, although so far not trapping. The activity is illegal under Bylaw 323-86 and visitors do not anticipate hunting as they traipse through the park. It is extremely dangerous.

Golf and children's summer camps are on the list. Existing uses, such as Bushwood Golf Club and Camp Robin Hood should continue.

***Recommendation #2.g.1***

***The RPITF recommends that Council provide further direction on items one through thirty five above.***

***Recommendation #2.g.2***

***The RPITF recommends that staff and the Alliance increase their efforts to enforce the ban on hunting in Rouge Park.***

## **Part 3: INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **3.a RAILS, ROADS, SEWERS, and MORE**

Over time, Rouge Park will become almost surrounded by the urban areas of Markham (especially Cornell and Box Grove with more development possible on Steeles just east of Ninth and on the tableland portions of Remington-Parkview Golf Course), Pickering including Seaton, Toronto, and Whitchurch-Stouffville.



Infrastructure upgrades and new infrastructure will be required to support existing planned growth and that mandated under the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Plus, old infrastructure will need replacing.

Most of the items mentioned below are just speculation about what a planning engineer might have in the back of his or her mind. Most will never see the light of day or even get as far as a community meeting. The real purpose of the list is to demonstrate that pressure for infrastructure improvement will exist in the RP area for decades to come. Some on the list expose differences between RP partners. For example, should 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue be widened, or what is the route of the Markham Bypass (a.k.a. the Donald Cousens Parkway)? And others could return major benefits to RP similar to York's remediation package which came out of the problem-filled 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue sewer project.

With stress on the word "may", proposals for improvement may include:

1. **Hydro:** addition of another major tower line in the existing hydro corridor from Markham to the Pickering Nuclear Station.
2. **Parking:** construction of significant surface or structured parking lots at the transit nodes mentioned below.
3. **Rails:** improvements to the Stouffville and Havelock Lines and a second grade separation at Ninth where the CP and CN lines cross.
4. **Roads:** widenings of Steeles Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Highway 407, Highway 7 including a possible bypass of Locust Hill, 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Major Mackenzie), 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Elgin Mills), Ninth Line from 16<sup>th</sup> to Stouffville, completion and widening of the Donald Cousens Parkway to Steeles and improvement of its intersection with Steeles, and York-Durham Line. Plus bridge improvements.
5. **Sewers:** completion of the York Durham Sanitary System Southeast Collector which is in the middle of an EA, servicing or replacing of the YDSS late 1970s line, and water and sewer connections to Locust Hill.
6. **Transit:** addition of new GO stations at Ninth and Steeles (potentially in RP), at Donald Cousens / 407 in conjunction with a 407 Transitway station (potentially not in RP) and a second Transitway station east of Locust Hill at York – Durham Line (potentially in RP), plus longer hours and weekend service, a VIVA Terminal just west of RP on Highway 7, a higher level transit service on Steeles east of Markham Road.
7. **Water:** closing Stouffville's upper aquifer wells operated by York Region and increasing Stouffville's use of Lake Ontario water.

8. **And More:** additional cell towers, improvements or servicing to the Trans Canada Pipeline, an airport in Pickering, locations for new sources of renewable power such as solar and wind, etc.

The list draws attention to the fact that population increases within 20 kilometres will require major infrastructure improvements and impact the park dramatically.

Of particular importance is infrastructure which will be required in the Highway 7 and 407 corridors, and along the GO rail lines for enhanced transit services. These transit nodes will provide increased public access to Rouge Park. Transit is a significant public policy requirement and RP will need to ensure that initiatives which affect the park but which are needed to address planned urban growth to deal with congestion, pollution, park user accessibility and climate change are both supported and implemented as quickly as possible.

Increasing Stouffville's supply of lake water, and lowering its dependence on well water from the upper aquifer should be beneficial in maintaining or even raising the water levels of the Little Rouge Creek and the Rouge downstream.

RPITF recognizes that there will always be a "Propose and Resist" dance with regard to infrastructure initiatives. The geographic position of RP relative to residential communities, employment centres, electricity production, sanitary services, and existing transportation facilities almost guarantees a continuing stream of infrastructure improvement proposals, and differences of opinion. The recent dewatering problem along Ninth Line and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a good example of the way the relationship between the Alliance and major partners can get seriously off track. A better process is needed. RPITF expressed concern that a reoccurrence could permanently damage the most important project, RP itself.

Markham has already identified the principle of enhanced consideration for planned infrastructure through Official Plan Amendment #140 (Rouge North Management Area). OPA #140 includes policies requiring a higher standard of environmental consideration relative to infrastructure impacts. The policy does not call for an end to infrastructure improvements. It does elevate the bar for their evaluation. It seeks the best methods of implementing such proposals with the least environmental impact on the park.

On November 29, 2005, Council supported the following as part of their comments on the draft Little Rouge Creek Management Plan: "That the Little Rouge Creek Management Plan not preclude municipal infrastructure improvements required to support planned and future growth in accordance with applicable Town, Regional and Provincial policy including rail associated improvements."

***Recommendation #3.a***

***The RPITF recommends that the Town and the Alliance support the planning of necessary infrastructure improvements, such as road***

***widenings, sewer projects, transit enhancements, etc., in a manner that provides opportunities for enhanced environmental benefits in support of the goals and objectives of Rouge Park.***

### **3.b SIGNAGE**

There is significant signage currently erected in east Markham. Some relates to Rouge Park [See Figure #6 – Rouge Park Signage]. But many signs have little to do with the park itself - road signs, direction signs, advertising, etc.

A few years ago, Markham installed several watercourse crossing signs over Robinson Creek as a pilot project. This was done in consultation with, and at the request of the RP Alliance Sub-Committee on Communications headed by Markham Deputy Mayor Jack Heath. The signs were designed by the committee and produced by the Town's sign shop. They have a distinct wave appearance to represent moving water, and include elements of the official colours, fonts and styles of Toronto, Markham, and Whitchurch-Stouffville. They give the name of the watercourse and in smaller type, the municipality.

The signs have the RP logo on them which indicates that the watercourse is part of the park.

The pilot proved successful with residents and motorists as the signs showed a special flare, and identified natural features that are not well known.

The Alliance submitted a request on February 25, 2008 to expand the signage programme to all watercourse crossings throughout the Rouge Watershed using the pilot sign. On April 7, 2008 Council referred the request to the Commissioner of Development Services.

Given Recommendation 1.a.2 which proposes RP as an east Markham park only, RPITF does not support the message on the proposed sign that every water course in the Rouge Watershed is part of Rouge Park. RPITF believes that the sign should indicate the Rouge Watershed if the crossings are not actually in RP.

RPITF supports watercourse crossing signage as they enhance the sense of community and natural environment awareness. With recent completion of the Rouge Watershed Plan, there is an opportunity to take the pilot programme and roll it out in a consistent manner across the Town using watershed names for crossings outside the boundaries of Greater RP. This approach has been used by many communities including some in the United States. Markham is part of the following watersheds:

1. Don,
2. Duffins,

3. Highland (Morningside),
4. Petticoat, and
5. Rouge.

Environmental monies were put into recent Markham budgets to assist the two major watershed organizations in the Town, the Rouge and the Don. \$25,000 each per year for naturalization projects in Markham. The Rouge Park Alliance has used these funds for planting and remediation and reports back annually on their accomplishments, but the Don Watershed Regeneration Council (DWRC) has never done so, primarily because their administrative structure is different. Their funding sits waiting for them in Markham's bank account.

The DWRC is anxious to take the wave design and use it to sign water course crossings for the whole Don Watershed.

DWRC has requested, and we have offered, to look at using this annual grant money for a major watercourse crossing sign project. In discussions with DWRC, the City of Toronto, and the TRCA the following proposal was developed:

1. Watercourse crossing signs will use the Robinson Creek pilot design, for both the Don and the Rouge Watersheds. A mock-up of the design has already been shown to Markham Council and the Alliance. The Alliance has given permission for its use.
2. The final design needs tweaking and the details will be worked out by Jack Heath and Tom Boudreault of the City and their design shop.
3. A version of the sign will be developed for regional roads, which will display both the York and Markham logos.
4. The DWRC will use, for its designated portion of the sign, the Don River Watershed logo developed several years ago. The TRCA will develop a Rouge Watershed logo. There already is a Rouge Park logo. They have been asked to provide logos for the Duffins, Highland, and Petticoat Watersheds as well.
5. The TRCA will provide a final list of locations for signs.
6. Signs would be produced for:
  - the Don Watershed in Markham (22)
  - the watershed in Richmond Hill, Toronto and Vaughan (146)
7. The estimated total cost of the project is approximately \$42,780. Toronto, Markham, and the TRCA will cover 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the cost each (\$14,260). The signs will be produced by the Toronto sign shop.

8. Funding for hardware, such as posts and brackets to a value of \$70 per location, will be available.
9. TRCA will handle the financial aspects of the project.
10. Local municipal operations staff will review site locations, suggest the appropriate size, order the hardware, and erect the signs. They will be recover their hardware expenditures after the signs are erected.
11. Annual inspection of the signs will be the responsibility of TRCA and they will deal with maintenance or replacement if necessary. The Toronto sign shop will be responsible for producing any replacement signs and the local municipal works department will handle installation.
12. Markham will use the same fund to complete the watercourse crossing programme for RP and the Rouge Watershed and the three small watersheds. Signs in Rouge Park will complement the signage work Toronto has done in the park south of Steeles. Signs for the rest of the watershed would be dependent on TRCA's logo development.

A staff report will be necessary at the appropriate time.

There is interest in the project elsewhere. This project may become a pilot for a municipal watercourse crossing sign programme for the GTA and across Ontario - especially if Markham uses the design for Duffins, Highland, and Petticoat and it spreads to Pickering. Precedent exists for one municipality taking the lead in park signs. Markham started this process. And Toronto produced advertising signs last year for RP which have been used beyond the city. Council will need to discuss the point set out in the original environmental grant to the DWRC that the money must be used in Markham.

There is another type of sign: "You Are Entering RP." These should only be used where the public is entering the formally recognized Rouge Park. RPITF recommends that they should be part of a MOU between Markham, York and the TRCA. Like the watercourse crossings, joint signs are recommended for regional roads. Rouge Park itself cannot enter into an agreement as it is not a legal entity, however the Alliance would surely be involved in all discussions.

There is a third type of sign: advertising, for which there can be a revenue stream. Markham does its best to control these signs but it can be difficult. There are a limited number in the park. They should be covered in the MOU.

***Recommendation #3.b.1***

***The RPITF recommends that the Town support watercourse crossing signage to identify watersheds (Don, Duffins, Highland, Petticoat, and Rouge) for crossings of watercourses with official names except***

*that, inside RP, the signs would identify the park rather than the watershed.*

***Recommendation #3.b.2***

***The RPITF recommends that the Town endorse in principal the proposal of the Don Watershed Regeneration Council for water-course crossing signage.***

***Recommendation #3.b.3***

***The RPITF recommends that the Town, York and the TRCA / Alliance introduce "You are Entering RP" signage along the lines discussed in this report.***

### **3.c PROTECTION OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS**

Markham was successful twenty years ago in establishing a subdivision for the relocation of threatened heritage homes. Markham Heritage Estates sits on seventeen acres of land divided into 44 lots on 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue west of Highway 48. Creation of this development was strongly influenced by the long-standing conflict between new development and heritage conservation.

The subdivision has only 12 remaining lots. It has been adding one or two homes a year. Staff and Council worry that it will soon be full.

East Markham has numerous heritage buildings on lands owned by the Federal Government, the TRCA for Rouge Park purposes, Markham, and others. Many are in poor condition and need loving care. Their long-term survival is at risk.

Markham Council won the Prince of Wales Award for heritage conservation in 1999. The Town has an excellent reputation in the field. Rarely does a Council meeting go by when there is not another building being designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, or an agreement ratified with a developer to restore a home in situ to its previous splendour and a new owner, or a home is being moved to Heritage Estates.

Transport Canada does not acknowledge the Ontario Heritage Act. In the north part of Greater Rouge Park, the Federal Government is the landlord. Many of their heritage buildings are not re-tenanted on becoming vacant, are boarded up, and some are even demolished as was the case with three last year. The story is somewhat better to the south. Many RP, TRCA and ORC heritage buildings are designated under the Act. They represent significant cultural heritage and have the potential for adaptive reuse. But many need extensive work and have suffered significant decline.

RPITF feels that there should be a heritage preservation strategy for all the heritage buildings in Greater RP.

Heritage buildings lose their context if moved to other places on the property or even more so if moved off the property. They should be restored in situ. A smaller number may have to be moved because of potential flooding, poor access, and other factors. For this category, two concepts were explored:

1. **A heritage subdivision in Rouge Park.** It would be modeled on the Heritage Estates but smaller, with perhaps 15 to 25 lots. Possible locations might include Eastern Markham or along Reesor Road. The original version provides a revenue stream for Markham and the same would be the case for RP for the new one. 20 lots at \$100,000 each is \$2 million. If Heritage Estates is any indication, this new site would become a park attraction.
2. **A small infill location or two.** There are two hamlets in east Markham: Cedar Grove and Locust Hill. It may be possible to integrate two to five heritage homes in each of these communities and a smaller number in other locations.

Heritage buildings represent community, past and present. The occupants of homes in the park are eyes on the park and spokespeople for a way of life under threat. Community should be invigorated in east Markham, not eliminated. RPITF recommends that the heritage preservation strategy include a goal that all heritage houses in RP are lived in and that a use will be found for heritage buildings that are not homes. It recommends that no heritage home in Rouge Park should be moved out of the park if relocating is necessary, none should be allowed to deteriorate by neglect, nor should any from outside the park be moved into the park.

Moving buildings out of RP or not treating them properly is contrary to one of the main objectives of the park - cultural heritage protection and preservation.

Ultimately, heritage homes and other buildings do their best when privately owned. Both the Rouge Park Heritage Estates and the infill opportunities can only be optimized with privatization. Who but a private owner would pay the \$20k to \$50k to move a home to a new location?

Markham owns three houses in the Rouge Park; Council has passed a resolution to pursue private ownership options.

Markham's Heritage Planning Group is undertaking a Threatened Heritage Building Study to examine a number of strategies. RPITF believes the study should have a special section for Rouge Park. It should also investigate possible policy constraints relative to the Greenbelt Plan and suggest solutions. Lastly, it

should recommend that Markham's Heritage Planning staff will assist RP in the establishment and operation of a Rouge Park Heritage Estates if requested.

***Recommendation #3.c***

***The RPITF recommends that staff develop a heritage building preservation strategy for Greater RP using principles enunciated in this report and that they work with Public Works Canada, the TRCA, and the Alliance to create a heritage subdivision and infill lots for the protection and concentration of moved heritage buildings.***

### **3.d RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN THE PARK**

The vast majority of lands within the boundaries of Greater RP are owned by governments and agencies. This also applies to the residential properties. Some are vacant, but most are leased. That means they have to be managed.

The Rouge North Management Plan does not provide specific policy direction on the sale of Rouge Park lands to private interests. Alliance staff takes the position that the presence of private land ownership within a public park could introduce conflicts and ongoing problems from an operational perspective. Potential conflicts over trail locations, parking, hours of operation, and wildlife have been mentioned. As a consequence, some on the Alliance do not support the sale of any Rouge Park buildings to private interests.

The question is about homes and buildings, not about large amounts of land. "Should some or all of the homes be privatized?" RPITF believes that all publicly owned land, other than possibly a small amount close to or underneath buildings, should remain publicly owned.

No one takes better interest in a house than a private owner. Many parks across Canada have dealt successfully with the reality of private homes inside the park; RPITF believes RP can too.

RPITF recommends that all publicly owned residential properties in Greater Rouge Park be privatized. Heritage or otherwise, occupied or vacant. Many of the homes need significant repairs, and most of them would do much better with owners who see repair and maintenance as part of an investment in home ownership. The TRCA manages the residential portfolio for Rouge Park. On almost \$1 million dollars in rental revenue per year, the net return for RP is about \$60,000. The rest goes to maintenance and management fees. Indeed, many believe that, if all the repairs were actually done that needed to be done and the proper staff costs were included, TRCA would lose money for many years to come. The neglect has been that bad. No figures are available for maintenance costs on the federal lands, but the story is probably the same.



The housing stock of 35 years ago in Greater Rouge Park has been depleted through neglect and demolition.

RPITF discussed two options for privatization:

1. **Sell the home only.** The building would be sold. The property on which it sits however would be leased for up to 99 years. This would get TRCA and RP out from under the onerous maintenance costs but it wouldn't leave new owners with as strong a stake in the community as the 85% of Markhamites to the west who own their own homes and property. Heritage homes would have heritage easements.
2. **Sell the home and the land on which it sits.** The property would have a conservation easement and be sized to ensure no future severance opportunities were possible. No one wants to see even small scale development in the park. There would be enough for a septic system, driveway and a reasonably-sized yard, no more. Heritage homes would have heritage easements. This approach would have the same positive results for TRCA and RP as #1 plus it leaves the new owner with the highest possible stake in the community.

RPITF recommends #2. Sell the home and a small amount of land. Other buildings, such as barns, should be privatized as well.

The sale would be conducted according to the usual rules for the disposal of public assets, although RPITF recommends that the current tenant should have the right to match the highest bid. Fair and equitable treatment for tenants, purchasing or not, will be of prime importance. The proceeds from any sales should be turned over to Rouge Park for a special purpose. Perhaps the downpayment on a RP Welcome Centre? The total could be several million.

RPITF had trouble understanding the argument about conflicts between property owners and the proper management of RP. Should it matter whether those complaining are private owners, leaseholders, or short-term tenants? Using this argument, the only way to eliminate future conflicts would be to have no one living in Greater Rouge Park at all.

RPITF recommends that all buyers should be required to sign a covenant on their purchase documents acknowledging that the location is inside a park and that certain conditions apply. This would include their agreement with the possibility of trailheads being located nearby and rules against keeping or attracting large birds or letting pets run loose.

Given some aspects of the Ontario Greenbelt Plan, negotiations will be necessary with the province on the matter of privatization of some or all of the tenanted homes in the park and on the federal lands. The draft Little Rouge

Creek and Bob Hunter Management Plans includes a clause recommending that the TRCA and the Town jointly consider how best to manage residential properties to maximize revenue for RP. Markham and York have not given final approval to the plans including that specific clause.

There are approximately 137 residential properties on publicly-owned land in Greater Rouge Park:

	Heritage	Non-Heritage
Rouge Park	20	37
Federal Lands	47	33
Total:	67	70

Several are vacant but the bulk are occupied. These homes exist in the park now. RPITF does not want to add to the total, just not see it drop any further.

RPITF believes the province will see the benefit in east Markham. It is a reasonable approach. And a matter of fairness and equity for tenants and former owners who have waited so long. Private ownership builds community. Markham wants the trend to houses being boarded up or levelled in Greater Rouge Park reversed. One hundred years ago, there were many people living in the area. Pictures of school children on the walls of Cedar Grove Community Centre, the former school, attest to a vibrant community. The policy of the current landlords to remove homes for which they cannot make a profit means that tomorrow's visitors wishing to understand the heritage of the park, with agriculture and an exciting community life, will ask, "Why did their families eventually all leave this beautiful place?"

On May 26, 2008 Council adopted a resolution with respect to the three Markham owned properties in Rouge Park. Council wants to privatize its three properties and directed staff to investigate and report back on the sale of the houses for two of the properties along Reesor Road which are on table land, and for the onsite preservation and / or relocation of the third heritage property at 9<sup>th</sup> Line which is in the flood plain.

The Town's direction on these three properties should extend to all the residential properties in Greater Rouge Park. The federal and provincial governments should cease being residential landlords in the east end of Markham and a normal real property regime should be restored. After 35 years, the process that started with expropriations for an airport should end.

***Recommendation #3.d.1***

***The RPITF recommends that the draft Little Rouge Corridor and Bob Hunter Management Plans be amended to permit the privatization of residential properties under the strict conditions outlined in this***

***report and that this approach apply to all such properties in Greater Rouge Park.***

***Recommendation #3.d.2***

***The RPITF recommends that staff assist all public entities holding residential properties in Greater RP to proceed, using Option #2 as a guide, to privatize the residential properties in the park.***

### **3.e AGRICULTURE IN THE PARK**

Markham has a significant agricultural base, even today with the Town's extensive urbanization. Except for the valley lands which are predominately in the Little Rouge Corridor and the two hamlets of Cedar Grove and Locust Hill, Greater Rouge Park is essentially an agricultural area.

The east end of Markham is Class One agricultural land, the best in Markham. Some of the best in Canada. The land is used for cattle, plant nursery, fruit and vegetable, greenhouse, and dairy purposes. Local food production, for sale to nearby urban residents, is a profitable reality in east Markham. The area has skilled farmers and good access to water resources. The economic impact of agriculture in Markham is in the range of \$60 million a year.

Bob Hunter Memorial Park demonstrates how big the agricultural component is. Approximately 300 of its 489 acres are productive farm lands. 61%. The percentage for Eastern Markham and the federal lands is in the same range. Not all the Little Rouge Corridor lands are in the valley; it too has good farmland although the percentage is probably lower.

The task force supports the continuation of agriculture in Greater Rouge Park and in each of its smaller components. It supports the growing of food in the park for local consumption in Markham, Pickering and Toronto. Markham has recently taken a leadership role in this area; it has called for more local food production, not less!

Continued agriculture is part of RP's mandate. In order to maintain a stable agricultural base in Rouge Park, several issues need to be addressed quickly:

- The relationship with the federal and provincial governments needs to be resolved with regard to reliable access to land via long-term leases or ownership. Farmers need a positive resolution on this matter to justify large financial investments.
- The interface between replanting activities and agriculture needs to be clarified and delineated. Over 700 acres of the park are planned for naturalization within the next few years. Most of these are in production today

or fallow for future production. It is not possible to say at this time how much agricultural land should be re-naturalized, but it is possible to say, "Seven hundred acres are too much at the present time."

- More attention needs to be paid to the maintenance and improvement of farm buildings.
- The agricultural relationship with Greater Rouge Park should be formalized. A long range strategy for the maintenance and development of agriculture in the park is needed. It should deal with issues such as wildlife, trail locations, lease rates, lease lengths, use of roads, fragmentation of production lands, trespassing, etc.

RPITF is not aware of a RP agricultural master plan. The most important questions crying out for answers are, "How much?" and "Where?" Many in the agricultural community believe that farm leases will not be terminated if the land is being actively farmed. Yet this has been happening. Is there an unwritten plan? Have leaseholders and other stakeholders been consulted? The Town is presently working on an Agricultural Assessment as a part of its growth management studies under the provincial growth plan. RPITF recommends that a special section of the assessment be devoted to the specific problems of agriculture and its future in Greater Rouge Park.

***Recommendation #3.e.1***

***The RPITF recommends that staff and the Alliance place a high priority on the preparation of an agriculture master plan for Greater Rouge Park, and that consultation with all stakeholders commence as soon as possible.***

***Recommendation #3.e.2***

***The RPITF recommends that no further plantings be permitted after those scheduled for next spring until the agriculture master plan has been completed and approved by Markham Council.***

### **3.f THE REESOR ROAD PARCEL**

On the east side of Reesor Rd., between Highway 7 in the north and 407 in the south, is a 38 acre piece of land. It is owned by the ORC.

This parcel is designated for business park / employment land purposes in the draft Cornell Secondary Plan - OPA #168. This was done several years ago. After consulting with Markham, the province did not include it in the Greenbelt. Council contemplates upscale employment uses for the parcel; indeed it was on a short list for IBM's Research Labs ten years ago. Water and sewer servicing were far away and IBM eventually located its facility and 2,500 jobs at Warden

and the 407. The same concept for the location motivates Council and its Economic Development Department today. A business similar to IBM would provide the opportunity for many in Markham, north Scarborough, and Pickering to work closer to home thus minimizing the impact on the GTA's transportation problems. There is a bonus; VIVA's new terminal, a Havelock Line GO station, and a 407 Transitway station, are all planned nearby.

In January 2008, Council established a 'Study Area' for this parcel to allow for further review within the context of potential Rouge Park uses and the Town's objectives as stated above. The Rouge Park and the Province are currently studying the options for use of these lands.

The RPITF has identified employment uses as Markham's continued priority for this parcel. The members discussed the potential for it to be a business campus with possibly an ecological flavour, with connections to RP via an entry node and pathway, shared use parking, and retention of the heritage house on the site.

***Recommendation #3.f***

***The RPITF recommends that staff notify the Province, ORC, TRCA, York Region, and the Alliance that Markham's priority is for employment uses on the Reesor Road parcel, and that Markham would be interested in exploring ecological enhancements for the site in the context of an upscale business campus.***

## **Part 4: GOVERNANCE**

### **4.a PARK OPERATIONS, MANAGEMENT, AND FUNDING**

Note: If the boundaries of Rouge Park are accepted as outlined in Recommendation 1.a.2, then the satellite portions of RP in Richmond Hill (Phyllis Rawlinson Park), Whitchurch-Stouffville (Bruce's Mill Conservation Area), and Markham (Toogood, Milne, and the Middle Reaches) would no longer be part of Rouge Park and would become the sole responsibility of the municipality and / or the TRCA. Markham is in support of this change, but RPITF is aware that input from Richmond Hill, Whitchurch-Stouffville, and the TRCA is necessary. The following recommendations assume they agree with Markham.

The Rouge Park Alliance is a voluntary organization which relies on the goodwill, and support of its members, especially its municipal partners: Durham, Markham, Pickering, Richmond Hill, Toronto, Whitchurch-Stouffville, and York.

The Alliance generally sets the management directions for the park including appropriate uses. Ecological restoration activities have been prominent and extremely successful. They receive annual funding by RP as well as partnership funding. The ongoing operations of Rouge Park currently rest with the property owners, TRCA, ORC, and the Town of Markham. These include dealing with tenants, land transfers or purchases, employment of staff, road clearing, bylaw

enforcement, etc. No capital projects, such as recreational trails and public infrastructure, have commenced to date, and there are no dedicated funds for their delivery.

The current governance model presents both challenges and opportunities for Rouge Park. The model is complex and unwieldy. The park has been very successful in acquiring significant lands to add to Rouge Park (with a special thank you to the province), and in funding natural heritage restoration projects throughout the watershed. The inability of RP however to own land, manage its own funds, or accept the direct donation of land and financial donations, is a major limitation on its objectives. There have also been challenges in harmonizing the approach to land use and infrastructure requirements between RP and local and regional municipalities.

The Rouge Park Alliance has periodically undertaken a review of its governance and operational requirements. RPITF believes it is time for a review that is more comprehensive.

There is a growing need for:

- A coordinated approach to the delivery of park infrastructure,
- A solution to long-term sustainable funding for capital and operational expenditures,
- A better understanding of municipal, TRCA, and RP management and operational responsibilities,
- A long-term staffing plan,
- The final boundaries of the park, and
- A new governing structure for RP as it becomes an operating park.

The Province, the TRCA, and the Town each support RP objectives, but with different budget, timing, and operational priorities and responsibilities. RP's accent on natural heritage is supported by all landowners, but as this report points out, there are differences in directions, perspectives, approaches, and priorities for public uses and funding strategies.

It is challenging for the Alliance to effect change when its lands and monies are tied to a voluntary partnership organizational model and when each partner brings a different long-term vision for public use and funding.

RPITF recommends that the model now in place should be revisited. It recommends that Council invite the other park landowners to establish a governance and organizational review committee to make recommendations on the above issues.

RPITF does not want to presume which governance model will emerge. A National Park? A TRCA Conservation Area like Heart Lake? A Provincial Park

like Bronte Creek? A municipal park like High Park? A park owned by the TRCA but managed by Markham like Milne?

There are many options for a governance model. Most include the participation and leadership of the Rouge Park Alliance or its successor in decisions related to the park. They include:

- A new owner - with Markham no longer having ownership or responsibility,
- The Town owning and managing the park on its own similar to Toronto,
- Markham managing, but subject to TRCA ownership and oversight,
- Elevation of the role of the Alliance to an autonomous management organization,
- A Provincial Park model with a citizen's advisory committee,
- A super-municipal park based on the TRCA / Toronto model but with cross-border organizational structures,
- A municipal agency like the Toronto Zoo or the Markham Theatre,
- Something completely different, or
- No adjustment in the organizational model of the park and the Alliance.

The "TRCA owns and Toronto manages" model has the advantage of being well understood. The task force discussed it and recommends a super-municipal model based on it, and trust the governance review will examine it carefully.

The same principle of one owner and one manager means that the province should review the ownership and responsibility for Eastern Markham. The proper development and operation of a real park in east Markham is being impeded by a plethora of governments and agencies involved in the area, each with its own priorities. This anomaly, of the ORC's continued involvement, is an example.

What would a super-municipal park look like? A big park for a big city. It straddles five municipalities, Durham, Markham, Pickering, Toronto, and York. Municipal parks are a lower-tier function, but because of its extraordinary size, it would have a direct relationship with York and Durham. Within reasonable parameters it would have control over its own revenues and expenses as well as responsibilities granted to it by its five partners and authorized by provincial legislation. It would have an MOU with these partners on who does what such as snow plowing and pathway construction, on annual funding, on the value of in-kind services, on its relationship with the TRCA with regard to environmental programmes, financial support and staffing, and much more. The roles for the federal and provincial governments would be diminished although not eliminated. RPITF believes that this innovative governance model, although seemingly original, is probably in play elsewhere. An examination of the models for local, national and international parks in similar circumstances is needed.

The opportunities for a provincial or national park have been raised in the past, and neither Queen's Park nor Ottawa seem to be interested.

There is an MOU between Toronto and RP already in place which could serve as a starting point. The importance of Toronto's role in taking the steps needed to develop the Greater Rouge Park as outlined here cannot be understated.

The real problem is funding. The park is not having great difficulties at the moment with capital funding for naturalization projects, planning studies, or land acquisition. No funds though have been obtained for such capital projects as major pathway construction or an office / welcome centre. On the operating side, it is not doing well and has little prospect of improvement. For operating functions it is dependant on the services of its municipal partners and parent body, the TRCA. The staffing component has not increased much in the past decade - which is probably reasonable if the park were a mature one. It is not.

RPITF discussed options for financial support from the Town for RP's operating and small capital budget. Without the proper staff resources to do park planning, implementation, and supervision, RP is treading water. Markham would be willing to take to the Governance Review table a proposal to contribute an amount of \$150,000 for Rouge Park operations and smaller capital projects starting in 2009 which would escalate by an extra \$142,000 each year for the following six years until it reached \$1 million. And then adjusted for inflation. Markham would expect to see proportional financial support from its other municipal partners. Discussions with York for a similar amount are bearing fruit and the subject has been raised with Toronto.

It should be noted that, for many years, Markham has been making an annual grant of \$25,000 to RP. If the proposals in this section are implemented, this amount would be subsumed into the larger amount.

***Recommendation #4.a.1***

***The RPITF recommends that Council initiate a Rouge Park Governance Review, to be managed and funded by Durham, Markham, Pickering, Toronto, York, the Province and the Federal Government, to review the current governance and operational structure of RP with an objective of recommending a long-term governance model.***

***Recommendation #4.a.2***

***The RPITF recommends that Council include \$150,000 in its 2009 budget as a Rouge Park Operating and Small Capital Projects Grant to be held for Council release pending the satisfactory results of the governance and operating review under #4.a.1.***

***Recommendation #4.a.3***

***The RPITF recommends that York include \$150,000 in its 2009 budget as a Rouge Park Operating and Small Capital Projects Grant to be***



*held for Regional Council release pending the satisfactory results of the governance and operating review under #4.a.1.*

***Recommendation #4.a.4***

*The RPITF recommends that Markham and York Region each give positive consideration to a target of an annual Operating and Small Capital Projects Grant to Rouge Park of \$1,000,000, through a seven year escalating process, pending a satisfactory outcome of discussions with their partners on governance, operations, and the many other matters raised in this report.*

## **4.b MUNICIPAL / ROUGE PARK STAFF LIAISON**

With implementation efforts increasing and different approaches used by the various Rouge Park landowners, there is a great need for a staff liaison committee to assist both the municipalities and Rouge Park.

A staff committee would bring an integrated approach to dealing with Rouge Park issues at the municipal level and assist the park with municipal requirements, processes, and protocols - something which has been a problem for some time. The committee would be led by municipal staff and agendas prepared with input from all participants.

***Recommendation #4.b***

*The RPITF recommends that staff establish a municipal staff liaison committee, consisting of representatives from all municipalities, the TRCA, and RP to address implementation issues in a timely and consistent approach.*

## **Part 5: TOWN ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES**

RPITF identified a number of Town of Markham environmental assistance programmes which could be used to support the development of RP:

- 1. Adopt- a-Park,**
- 2. Colour Your Corner,**
- 3. Markham Environmental Sustainability Fund,**
- 4. Markham Trees for Tomorrow, and**
- 5. Pitch-In Week.**

Adopt-a-Park, Colour Your Corner and Pitch-In Week offer small financial or in-kind incentives for community groups to clean and maintain parklands and other public areas. The committee was unaware of any assistance going to RP from these three, and felt they should be extended to the park. Environmental

Sustainability and Trees for Tomorrow provide funding for community groups for tree plantings and similar initiatives.

RPITF recommends that each fund identify a specific allocation for Rouge Park projects. The percentages and rules may vary in each case. Adopt-a-Park is authorized to give up to \$500 a year to park improvement groups; it might offer funds and assistance to a maximum of 5 smaller locations in RP. That would be about 10% of Adopt-a-Park's total. The requirement that the groups be Markham-based would be dropped in order to encourage people from across the GTA to take an interest in RP. Because so many trees are needed in RP, the financial assistance for activities supported by Markham Trees for Tomorrow would be much higher as a portion of its overall budget. And so on for each fund. Just as with Markham's annual grant of \$25k to the Alliance, the monies would have to be spent in Markham. RPITF also recommends that staff work with RP on the operation of these programmes in the park.

In addition there is one more:

#### **6. Markham Environmental Land Acquisition Fund.**

Town staff have already identified priority lands in Greater Rouge Park for purchase using this fund. The Town is adding \$500,000 a year to the fund from Powerstream dividends; it now stands at more than \$5 million. RPITF recommends that Markham and York continue to pursue potential RP properties.

It also recommends that environmental land acquisition be moved to the front burner again especially if additional monies can be obtained from Toronto's interesting new land purchase programme and elsewhere. The cost of land, even in the Greenbelt, is rising and vacant land will be even more expensive tomorrow.

RPITF recommends that the Town develop an MOU to be used when any agency holds title to lands purchased with Markham funds. It would deal with permitted uses, expectations for the property, and issues related to the possible resale of the land in the future. York Region is looking at the same.

Other Town programmes, such as Celebrate Markham, Tourism Markham, the Markham Arts Council, and the Markham Sports Council, could come into play as the park matures.

#### ***Recommendation #5.1***

***The RPITF recommends to Council that the five Town environmental programmes be expanded to include a specific minimum percentage for community participation activities in Rouge Park and that staff report back with detailed recommendations.***

**Recommendation #5.2**

***The RPITF recommends to Council that the Environmental Land Acquisition Fund include an allocation portion for specific Rouge Park projects and that staff report back with detailed recommendations.***

**Recommendation #5.3**

***The RPITF recommends to Council that staff develop an MOU to be used when Markham funds are used to purchase properties that will be held by other governments or agencies.***

## **Part 6: MATTERS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

Several matters need further discussion by Council.

**Approval of the Two Management Plans.** The Little Rouge Corridor and Bob Hunter Management Plans received approval in principle in March by Council. York has not even done that. When should each get final approval? Before or after the governance review? What changes are needed? How will we handle the Eastern Markham Management Plan?

**Town Bylaws.** Bylaws are the responsibility of a municipality under the Municipal Act. They cannot be transferred to other organizations. Yet national and provincial parks handle important responsibilities, not their local municipalities. RPITF recommends that consideration be given to a devolution arrangement with RP. Again, we would need provincial assistance. There is no Rouge Park Act; perhaps this will be the trigger. The Alliance would then have the power to change certain bylaws, or introduce its own in specific fields, as they apply in the park. Discussion should also take place concerning differences in partners' applicable bylaws. For example, it is complicated for a park to operate under different animal control regimes. Here are a few important bylaws:

- **Advertising Signage.** Some signs that are acceptable in an urban context could be questionable in a park.
- **Animal Control.** Dogs running loose, fishing out of season, overpopulation of certain species, bears, hunting, these may become issues of great importance to RP. Some controls are municipal and some provincial. It is important to remember that wildlife management is a problem in agricultural areas, and major portions of RP fit that category. Markham's bylaw against discharging of firearms would require examination too.
- **Dumping.** This is a major concern in the park especially along the western edges next to urban Markham.

- **Fires.** The setting of fires in parks in rural Ontario, including campfires, can have serious consequences in a dry July.
- **Tree Preservation.** Markham's new tree bylaw covers all areas of Markham including RP and prevents the cutting of any tree 20 cm or more in width without staff permission. There are no exemptions for invasive species. Toronto is more lenient.

The Region of York's Forest Conservation Bylaw, for forested areas over half an acre, is another bylaw to be considered. Enforcement, with the park authorized to hire wardens or special constables, would also need consideration.

**Entrance Fees.** Milne Park has an entrance fee, so does Algonquin. RPITF does not know of any "real" park without one. Fees are an obvious symbol of park boundaries and activities. How would they work if introduced? What about commuters? There are many questions!

**The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).** The RPITF process leads to an MOU between the TRCA / RP, Markham and York Region. What comes first, the governance review or the MOU? Can discussions on an MOU for some aspects start immediately with others conducted simultaneous with the governance review process, and a few dependent on the results? Have we explored the full range of matters to be in an MOU? Will it deal with financing RPITF's recommendations? What are the implications for Markham and York's budgets?

**A Target Date.** Is there a target date for making most of the changes recommended in this report? Establishing a park in the east end of Markham has taken far too long. How about two years after a 2009 MOU signing?

## **NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION**

There is one word to describe the attitude of the task force, "Impatient." Markham wants to get on with building the park.

Following consideration and approval by Council of the RPITF Report, as is or amended, the task force recommends that Markham engage the TRCA, the Rouge Park Alliance, our partners, First Nations representatives, tenants, other stakeholders, and the general public in discussions regarding this report and its recommendations.

Rouge Park is not an average municipal park with groomed lawns; it is more like a conservation area but in the heart of a huge city. The principles of environmental sustainability are important as Rouge Park becomes a reality. We have

made progress but there is a long way to go to achieve the future envisioned by Rouge Park and Markham.

If this report leads to fruitful discussions between Markham and the many members of the Rouge Park family, and then to implementation of many or all of its recommendations - modified if appropriate - then the RPITF will feel that its efforts have made a small contribution to the wonderful Rouge Park of our future.

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## Appendix C: Remnant Parcels of Land in East Markham

Cornell Cn  
 Pyreside St  
 Hahan St  
 Lane  
 II Rouge Blvd

Riverlands Ave  
 Lane  
 Bur Oak Ave  
 Lane  
 Walkerville Rd

Country  
Millyroy

Sir Gareth Crt  
Sir Lancelot Dr Sir Lancelot Dr

Sir Galahad P/  
Parkway Ave  
Wootton Way

Church St  
Jill Cr  
Judy Cr  
Jack Cr

Linden Lea St  
Oak Lea Cir

Captain Rolph Blvd  
Pringle Ave  
Hamilton Hall Dr  
Camelot Way  
Elm Lea St  
Rose Way

Hwy 7 E  
Reginald Cres

Henry Corson Pl

e Kalvinster Dr  
 Lane  
 West Normandy Dr  
 Lane

Kenilworth Gate  
Foxton Rd  
Lane  
Wildmoor St  
Oakmoor Lane

Delmark Blvd  
Ashland Cres  
Radford Cres  
Major Button's Dr  
Dewitt Cr

Colonel Butler Dr

Hwy 407

Hwv 407

Map showing the area around the intersection of 9th Line and Wood Thrush Ave. The map includes the following streets:

- 9th Line
- Wood Thrush Ave
- Primrose Path Cres
- Russell Jarvis Dr
- Legacy Dr
- Rock Dove Ave
- Trout Lily Ave
- Lady Fern Dr
- Red Ash Dr
- Rouge Bank Dr

Copper Creek Dr  
Boswell Rd  
Collingham Pl  
Oakborough Dr  
Rennie Ave  
Larkspur Dr

Donald Cousens Pty

Reesor Rd