

Appendix D



**SUMMARY OF THE APRIL 16, 2009
ROUGE PARK IMPLEMENTATION TASK
FORCE WORKSHOP**

TOWN OF MARKHAM

May 4, 2009

Introduction

The workshop was used as one of the mechanisms to obtain feedback (as directed by Council) from other agencies, boards, adjacent municipalities and the Provincial and Federal Governments on the recommendations of the Rouge Park Implementation Task Force (RPITF). Prior to the workshop the following documents were circulated as background information to the participants:

- RPITF Final Report : Rouge Park: a Park in Progress
- November 25, 2008 Power Point Presentation to Council and Council Resolution
- Staff Comments on the Final Report

The workshop was chaired by Deputy Mayor Jack Heath who did an introduction and provided background information on the process to date, as well as a summary presentation on the Task Force recommendations. A participants' workbook (Appendix 'A'), was distributed to all persons in attendance and these were to be used in four group break-out sessions assisted by facilitators. In addition, for ease of reference, the groups all had the same discussion topics which were linked to recommendations in the RPITF report (Appendix 'B'). The workshop concluded with a plenary session to present the major findings from each of the four groups and some closing remarks from the Chairman.

A list of attendees can be found in Appendix 'C'.

The topics which were discussed and a summary of the findings are as follows:

Discussion Topic 1

What is Rouge Park and what should be included in Rouge Park.

Summary Findings

- Size and scale of the park is unique in that it links the Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario.
- Potentially the largest park in close proximity to an urban area in North America.
- A park which has a number of stakeholders and built on partnership.
- The park also has significant amounts of Prime Agricultural lands, where farming has been a viable undertaking.
- It represents a continuous natural area, with significant natural features such as valleylands and tablelands (should include a Nature Sanctuary) and which provides ecological goods and services for the entire watershed.

- The cultural heritage of the park should be maintained including preservation and protection of the residences bearing in mind it was created from an already settled area.
- General agreement that there should be privatization of ownership (in some form) for existing tenants. This would ensure protection of the heritage homes and they would provide an additional role by having “eyes on the park”.
- General support of the idea that the park should be a contiguous land holding. A larger contiguous park would provide an enhanced user experience and provide greater park efficiencies (e.g. parking, washrooms).
- There was some support for the Park to be managed on a watershed basis, which would include areas that are not contiguous such as Milne Park.
- The overall consensus was that the Federal Government should play a role in Rouge Park through provision of land, and funding.

Discussion Topic 2

What kinds of facilities and activities should be permitted in the Rouge Park.

Summary Findings

- There is need to undertake a Master Plan for the park which would hinge on long term financial sustainability (including user fees), enforcement (Park Ranger program), as well as determining prioritization of activities that would be permitted.
- Need to balance public funds expended on facilities compared to revenue.
- The proposed uses should be compatible and not detrimental to the Park. If possible they should be grouped together to maximize opportunity.
- Many of the suggested activities could be a fit with the park but it would have to come with containment and control.
- It was important to establish Rouge Park Office, Interpretive/Educational Centre and Trailheads, as well as the establishment of key entrance points, because for example there is no way to get into the park north of Steeles Avenue.
- A careful balance of active and passive uses is required including support for passive uses such as camping, bed and breakfast and a place for leisure activities including being able to bring dogs into the park.
- Rouge Park should encompass lots of uses including active uses.

- Create a Canadian Park identity-cultural aspects, wilderness will always be the largest space.
- Agriculture makes Rouge Park different and unique and should be retained.
- Will need to have a balance between wildlife and agriculture.

Discussion Topic 3

Governance

Summary Findings

- This should be based on the findings from the governance review that is about to be undertaken.
- Needs a governance model that has consensus by all the stakeholders.
- Have to ensure that there are sufficient resources (especially financial) for all the activities that are being considered for the park.
- Current partnership model has been very successful, and there is support for continued partnership arrangements.
- Inadequate staffing on the ground is likely to affect the park negatively in the future.
- There is an opportunity for the private sector to become more involved in the operations of Rouge Park.
- Consideration should be given to creation of a Foundation for the Rouge Park which could allow future fund-raising opportunities.

Final Comments

It is expected that there would be plans and funding in place to fully implement Rouge Park, including public use infrastructure such as a network of trails, other recreational opportunities along with interaction with nature, all occurring in a controlled managed landscape.

The park should have a strong educational and youth focus and should give visitors a life-changing personal experience that will continue to inspire people to enjoy and protect the park.