



environmental
defence
INSPIRING CHANGE



December 13, 2012

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty,
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A1

Dear Premier,

Re: Important Conditions for Rouge Park Land Transfer to Federal Government

We are writing to urge your government to attach strong conditions to the transfer of provincial Rouge Park lands to the federal government and Parks Canada for Rouge National Park.

We recommend five conditions to ensure the new National Park adequately protects the critical Rouge Park ecological corridor(s) between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine, as envisioned in both the Greenbelt Plan (s. 3.2.6) and the Rouge North Management Plan (4.1.1.2).

Southern Ontario has one third of Canada's population, one third of Canada's species at risk, and less than one percent of its land protected by provincial and national parks. Rouge Park may be the last large natural parkland opportunity in the endangered Carolinian and mixed woodland plain eco-zones of southern Ontario. Within this context, the ecological significance and potential of Rouge Park cannot be overstated.

The creation of Rouge National Park represents a unique opportunity and responsibility to advance the Province's recently announced implementation plan for conserving biodiversity. Given the growth projections and development pressures in the Greater Toronto region, the government should seize this opportunity to expand the system of protected areas and park lands, to promote landscape-level conservation planning, and to reduce urban sprawl – all key actions identified in *Biodiversity: It's In Our Nature*.

The history of the Rouge Park dates back to Premier David Peterson, who, on March 26, 1990, announced plans to create a Rouge Park linking Lake Ontario to the Oak

Ridges Moraine. Four years later, the Rouge Park Management Plan was approved by the Ontario Government after thorough public and stakeholder consultation. As stated in the 1994 Rouge Park Management Plan, the vision for the park "centres on the protection and appreciation of the park ecosystem."

In 2005, your government created the widely acclaimed Greenbelt Plan which similarly identifies and protects Rouge Park ecological corridors in *section 3.2.6*:

*"This Plan identifies a **600 metre wide corridor for the Little Rouge River as the main ecological corridor**, between Lake Ontario and the southerly boundary of Oak Ridges Moraine Area, as well as several other Rouge River tributaries, in recognition of the longstanding commitment to establishing the Rouge Park. ... In the case of a conflict between this Plan and the Rouge North Management Plan, the more restrictive policies apply."*

Despite this longstanding commitment, the federal government's Rouge National Urban Park Concept (June 2012) proposes a Rouge Park vision that does not even mention the word ecosystem or the Greenbelt Plan's "main ecological corridor". Thus, the draft National Park Concept is critically inconsistent with the public vision, planning, scientific and legislative framework developed over the last 23 years through exhaustive public, stakeholder and agency consultation, and provincial leadership.

We understand that Minister Bob Chiarelli is negotiating with the federal government to develop a memorandum of understanding to guide the transfer of priceless provincial Rouge Park lands to the federal government. We respectfully ask the Provincial Government to secure a binding legal agreement requiring that the federal planning process, legislation and strategic plan for Rouge National Park will:

1. Incorporate, strengthen and implement the vision, goal and objectives of approved Rouge Park Plans (1994 and 2001), the provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005), the Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008), the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2002), the Toronto Remedial Action Plan and Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and associated watershed, fisheries and natural heritage system plans.
2. Protect and restore the ecological corridor outlined in the Greenbelt Plan (s.3.2.6), Rouge North Management Plan (4.1.1.2), and Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008) to create a large mixed-wood and Carolinian forest habitat system linking Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine with public parkland.
3. Expand the current 57 km² study area to approximately 100+ km² by including all of the existing contiguous Rouge Park lands and the adjacent federal lands within the Provincial Greenbelt natural heritage system in order to facilitate good long term planning for the Park's ecological health and

resilience, biological diversity, visitor potential and sustainable community supported agriculture;


4. Include First Nations, Friends of the Rouge Watershed and other conservation organizations on the Rouge National Park Advisory Board to ensure that the deep community roots of Rouge Park continue to inform and influence Park planning, protection and implementation.
5. Ensure that agricultural operations within the park are sustainable and compatible with the protection of water quality, biological diversity and ecological health.

Your government has a number of opportunities to ensure that the transfer of Rouge Park lands maximizes this unique biodiversity conservation opportunity. Please require the above conditions to protect the Province's priceless Greenbelt and Rouge Park legacies and deliver on Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy.

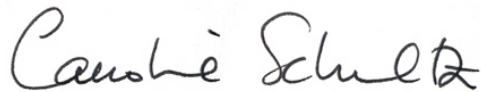
We trust that you will discuss these recommendations with Minister Chiarelli, your colleagues and Cabinet.

We look forward to your favourable response.

Yours truly,



Dr. Rick Smith
Executive Director
Environmental Defence



Caroline Schultz
Executive Director
Ontario Nature



Jim Robb
General Manager
Friends of the
Rouge Watershed

Cc. The Honourable Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
The Honourable Michael Gravelle, Minister of Natural Resources

Rouge National Urban Park - Official Plan Amendment - Final Report

City Council Decision

City Council on November 27, 28 and 29, 2012, adopted the following:

1. City Council amend the Official Plan, for the lands in the Rouge Park area substantially in accordance with the proposed Official Plan Amendment attached as Attachment 6 to the report (October 23, 2012) from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning.
2. City Council authorize the City Solicitor to make such stylistic and technical changes to the proposed Official Plan Amendment as may be required.
3. City Council thank Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Federal government for committing to create a National Park in the Rouge Valley area and further encourage the Federal government to:
 - i. Ensure that the concept, legislation and management plan for Rouge National Urban Park respects, strengthens and implements the vision, goals and objectives of the City approved Rouge Park Plans (1994 and 2001) and current Toronto Official Plan, the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005) and the Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008); including incorporating the existing park vision that:

the Rouge National Urban Park will be a special place of outstanding natural features and diverse cultural heritage in an urban-rural setting, protected and flourishing as an ecosystem in perpetuity. Human activities will exist in harmony with the natural values of the Park. The Park will be a sanctuary for nature and the human spirit;
 - ii. Respect conservation science, good planning principles and long term park ecological health and visitor potential, by including the 100+ km² public land

assembly within the Rouge and Duffins Creek watersheds as part of the Rouge National Urban Park study area;

- iii. Ensure restoration of a large mixed-wood and Carolinian forest habitat system linking Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine with public parkland and trails; and
- iv. Include First Nations and other respected conservation NGOs on the Rouge National Urban Park Advisory Board.

Statutory - City of Toronto Act, 2006

Background Information (Committee)

(October 23, 2012) Report from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division on Rouge National Urban Park - Official Plan Amendment - Final Report
(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/pg/bgrd/backgroundfile-51492.pdf>)

Motions (City Council)

1 - Motion to Amend Item (Additional) moved by Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker (Carried)

That City Council thank Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Federal government for committing to create a National Park in the Rouge Valley area and further encourage the Federal government to:

- i. Ensure that the concept, legislation and management plan for Rouge National Urban Park respects, strengthens and implements the vision, goals and objectives of the City approved Rouge Park Plans (1994 and 2001) and current Toronto Official Plan, the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005) and the Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008); including incorporating the existing park vision that:

The Rouge National Urban Park will be a special place of outstanding natural features and diverse cultural heritage in an urban-rural setting, protected and flourishing as an ecosystem in perpetuity. Human activities will exist in harmony with the natural values of the Park. The Park will be a sanctuary for nature

and the human spirit;

- ii. Respect conservation science, good planning principles and long term park ecological health and visitor potential, by including the 100+ km² public land assembly within the Rouge and Duffins Creek watersheds as part of the Rouge National Urban Park study area;
- iii. Ensure restoration of a large mixed-wood and Carolinian forest habitat system linking Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine with public parkland and trails; and
- iv. Include First Nations and other respected conservation NGOs on the Rouge National Urban Park Advisory Board.

Vote (Amend Item (Additional))

Nov-29-2012 5:01 PM

Result: Carried	Majority Required - PG19.3 - De Baeremaeker - motion 1
Yes: 33	Paul Ainslie, Maria Augimeri, Ana Bailão, Michelle Berardinetti, Raymond Cho, Josh Colle, Gary Crawford, Vincent Crisanti, Glenn De Baeremaeker, Frank Di Giorgio, Sarah Doucette, John Fillion, Paula Fletcher, Doug Ford, Rob Ford, Mary Fragedakis, Mark Grimes, Doug Holyday, Chin Lee, Josh Matlow, Pam McConnell, Mary-Margaret McMahon, Joe Mihevc, Peter Milczyn, Denzil Minnan-Wong, Frances Nunziata (Chair), Cesar Palacio, Anthony Perruzza, Jaye Robinson, David Shiner, Karen Stintz, Michael Thompson, Adam Vaughan
No: 0	
Absent: 12	Shelley Carroll, Janet Davis, Mike Del Grande, Norman Kelly, Mike Layton, Gloria Lindsay Luby, Giorgio Mammoliti, Ron Moeser, John Parker, James Pasternak, Gord Perks, Kristyn Wong-Tam

Motion to Adopt Item as Amended (Carried)

Vote (Adopt Item as Amended)

Nov-29-2012 5:02 PM

Result: Carried	Majority Required - PG19.3 - Adopt the item as amended
Yes: 33	Paul Ainslie, Maria Augimeri, Ana Bailão, Michelle Berardinetti, Raymond Cho, Josh Colle, Gary Crawford, Vincent Crisanti, Glenn De Baeremaeker, Frank Di Giorgio, Sarah Doucette, John Fillion, Paula Fletcher, Doug Ford, Rob Ford, Mary Fragedakis, Mark Grimes, Doug Holyday,

	Chin Lee, Josh Matlow, Pam McConnell, Mary-Margaret McMahon, Joe Mihevc, Peter Milczyn, Denzil Minnan-Wong, Frances Nunziata (Chair), Cesar Palacio, Anthony Perruzza, Jaye Robinson, David Shiner, Karen Stintz, Michael Thompson, Adam Vaughan
No: 0	
Absent: 12	Shelley Carroll, Janet Davis, Mike Del Grande, Norman Kelly, Mike Layton, Gloria Lindsay Luby, Giorgio Mammoliti, Ron Moeser, John Parker, James Pasternak, Gord Perks, Kristyn Wong-Tam

October 10, 2012

Dear Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Hon. Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance and Minister for the GTA
Honourable Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment
Alan Latourelle, Parks Canada CEO
Pam Veinotte, Superintendent, Rouge National Park

RE: Creation of Rouge National Park

Thank you for announcing the creation of Rouge National Park within the Rouge, Petticoat and Duffins watersheds which flow to Lake Ontario within, and near, the Toronto Lake Ontario "Area of Concern".

For more than 25 years, Great Lakes United has been the leading international coalition committed to promoting and coordinating basin-wide initiatives to protect and restore the Great Lakes and the Saint Lawrence River. Through a broad network of organizations and individuals, Great Lakes United pursues the development and implementation of policies and actions that support the health of the world's largest freshwater ecosystem and its communities.

As Environment Canada's website notes:

The Great Lakes ecosystem provides a critical source of income, water, food and energy, key transport routes and important spaces for recreation and tourism. Thriving habitats and native fish and wildlife communities contribute to the social and economic vitality of the Great Lakes. ... Unfortunately, many human activities put pressure on the ecosystem that results in the loss or degradation of some habitats and threatens the species that those ecosystems support.

Environment Canada's summary of outcomes associated with the 2012 GLWQA include:

- *Within two years, complete the development of and begin implementing lakewide habitat and species protection, restoration, and conservation strategies;*
- *Increase awareness of native species and habitat and the methods to protect, conserve, maintain, restore and enhance their resilience*
- *Contribute to the recovery of populations of species at risk and the restoration of degraded habitat;*
- *Increase habitat areas in the Great Lakes.*

The Rouge River Watershed and beach are within the Toronto "Area of Concern", under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and public uses are impaired within this area. Rouge Beach was closed to swimming at Lake Ontario on 25 of 92 reported days in Summer 2011, and it recorded the highest E. coli levels of the 11 Toronto beaches on 42 of those 92 days (<http://www.toronto.ca/health/beaches/ecoli.htm>).

Fortunately, more than 100 km² of public land surrounds the Rouge, Petticoat and Duffins River watersheds in Toronto, Markham and Pickering. The vast majority of these public lands are designated "natural heritage system" within the Provincial Greenbelt. These public Greenbelt lands are part of the mixed woodland plain and Carolinian forest zones of southern Ontario, - the life zones with the greatest biological diversity and most endangered species in Canada but the fewest natural environment parks.

The current Rouge Park is comprised of approximately 45 km² of provincial and other public lands stretching from Lake Ontario at the Toronto - Pickering border to 16th Avenue in east Markham. The federal government owns another 55 km² of public Greenbelt land which stretches northward from the existing Rouge Park all the way into the heart of the Oak Ridges Moraine and eastward into the Duffins Creek watershed in Pickering.

These public lands provide an opportunity and responsibility to protect and restore habitat and water quality and contribute to the recovery of endangered species - expected 2012 GLWQA outcomes.

The Framework "How Much Habitat is Enough" was developed to inform habitat restoration within Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOCs). According to this report:

"the framework provides guidance on the minimum habitat required to begin to support viable wildlife populations and should be seen as a starting point not a final goal."

This Framework was first prepared in 1998 by the Canadian Wildlife Service, Great Lakes 2000 Cleanup Fund, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. It was revised by Environment Canada in 2004 to incorporate the most current conservation science and notes:

"The guidelines are based on scientific literature and field studies concerning the amount of habitat required to provide for the ecological needs of fish and wildlife in wetlands, riparian areas and forested areas."

This federal report found that more than 30% forest cover and 10% wetland cover are needed for viable wildlife populations and watershed health. However, as the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority's (TRCA) 2007 Rouge Report Card reveals, the Rouge Watershed falls far short of these ecosystem health targets with only 13% forest cover and approximately 2% wetland cover. The TRCA's Rouge Report Card concludes:

"the current quantity, quality and distribution of natural cover are insufficient to provide long-term support for many of the native communities and species".

Within this context, it is understandable that Section 4.1.1.2 of the approved 2001 Rouge North Management Plan states:

"The overriding goal in creating the Little Rouge Creek Corridor is to establish a viable terrestrial corridor with interior forest habitat conditions.

Section 3.2.6 of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005) gives strong legal support for this Rouge North Management Plan policy by stating:

"This Plan identifies a 600 metre wide corridor for the Little Rouge River as the main ecological corridor, between Lake Ontario and the southerly boundary of Oak Ridges Moraine Area, as well as several other Rouge River tributaries, in recognition of the longstanding commitment to establishing the Rouge Park." ... "In the case of a conflict between this Plan and the Rouge North Management Plan, the more restrictive policies apply."

The framework "How Much Habitat is Enough" further defines the necessary ecological corridor width by stating the:

"minimum forest width needed to create interior forest habitat conditions is 500 metres"

Given the existing public policy, scientific, ecological, Greenbelt, Rouge Park and Great Lakes context, the federal government and Parks Canada have a clear opportunity and responsibility to:

1. Create a Rouge National Park Study Area which includes the 100 km² public Greenbelt land assembly surrounding the Rouge River, Petticoat and Duffins watersheds;
2. Respect, strengthen and implement the laws, plans and public policies developed after many years of public planning and stakeholder consultation, including:
Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and Toronto Remedial Action Plan;
Environment Canada's "How Much Habitat is Enough (2004)";
Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005);
Rouge Park Management Plan (1994) and Rouge North Plan (2001);
Rouge River Watershed Plan (2007);
Duffins Creek and Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan (2003);
Fisheries Management Plan for Duffins Creek and Carruthers Creek (2004);
TRCA Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy (2007);
Rouge Park Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008); and
Draft Fisheries Management Plan for Rouge River (2011).
3. Implement restoration of forests and wetlands on public Rouge River Park lands to:
 - a) fulfill GLWQA 2012 commitments and the conservation science recommendations of the 2004 Environment Canada Report "How Much Habitat is Enough";
 - b) buffer, inter-connect and restore mixed woodland and Carolinian forests and habitat for the 20+ federal species at risk within Rouge Park;
 - c) improve water quality, stream flow, fish habitat and aquatic health in local streams to improve Lake Ontario water quality, health and beaches;
 - d) Reduce runoff and costly pollution, flooding, erosion damage to downstream properties and infrastructure;
 - e) Create the 600 metre wide "main ecological corridor" outlined in the Greenbelt Plan, Rouge North Plan, Markham OPA 140 and the Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008).
4. Support the implementation of watershed and subwatershed plans, water budgets, source water protection plans, and habitat restoration action plans, to protect and restore local streams, improve water quality, reduce bacterial contamination of beaches, and protect source water areas like the Oak Ridges Moraine and its aquifer system.

Conclusion:

The Rouge National Park concept, legislation and plan should give priority to the protection and restoration of Carolinian and mixed woodland plain forests and wetlands within a sustainable natural heritage system which links Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine with natural environment parklands.

This goal is consistent with Canada's national and international commitments to protect and restore habitat, biological diversity, endangered species and water quality within the Toronto Area of Concern and the Great Lakes basin.

Please give Parks Canada the mandate and resources to conduct a science-based public process which plans and implements a 100 km² Rouge National Park and links Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine with forests, wetlands and natural environment public parklands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Jackson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Jackson".

John Jackson, Interim Executive Director
& Director, Clean Production and Toxics

jjackson@glu.org

519-744-7503

Draft Rouge National Park Concept Weaknesses

	Existing Rouge Park Strengths	draft Rouge National Park Concept Weaknesses
1. Protection	<p>Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005) section 3.2.6</p> <p>Rouge Park Plans (1994 & 2001)</p> <p>Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Plan (2002)</p> <p>Rouge Watershed Plan (2007)</p> <p>Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008)</p> <p>Toronto Remedial Action Plan to improve Lake Ontario Water Quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - federal takeover will nullify existing legislation and plans and could seriously weaken park protection <p>Does not specify that Parks Canada will respect, strengthen and implement existing Park Plans, the Provincial Greenbelt Plan, the ORM Protection Plan, Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008) and watershed plans</p>
2. Vision Statement	<p><i>"Rouge Park will be a special place of outstanding natural features and diverse cultural heritage in an urban-rural setting, protected and flourishing as an ecosystem in perpetuity. Human activities will exist in harmony with the natural values of the park. The park will be a sanctuary for nature and the human spirit. ... The primary focus of the vision centres on the protection and appreciation of the park ecosystem."</i></p>	<p>The proposed federal vision ignores the ecological role of a true National Park by not even mentioning the word ecology</p> <p>Shifts the focus to a "diverse landscape" and "varied uses" - a recipe for misuse and abuse of the park's natural environment to the detriment of biological diversity, water quality and visitor experiences - contrary to a true Canadian National Park</p>
3. Study Area	<p>In 2009, the proposed Park Study Area was 160+ km² (see Star Article, April 3, 2009)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the study area contains nationally endangered Carolinian & mixed-wood plains life zones of Canada - zones with the most biological diversity and endangered species in Canada but fewest national parks - predominantly within the "natural heritage system" designation of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan 	<p>57 km² Study Area (far too small for the Study Area)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - excludes existing Rouge Park areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 km of the Rouge Valley next to the Toronto Zoo 5 km of the Rouge Valley and Milne Park in Markham 4 km of the Morningside Tributary - excludes 36+ km² of federal lands within the Greenbelt - excludes the 2002 federal Green Space Preserve in Pickering - fails to plan for long term park health and visitor use
4. Ecological Corridor	<p>Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005): "This Plan identifies a 600 metre wide corridor for the Little Rouge River as the main ecological corridor, between Lake Ontario and the southerly boundary of Oak Ridges Moraine Area ...</p> <p>Rouge North Management Plan (s. 4.1.1.2) states: "The overriding goal in creating the Little Rouge Creek Corridor is to establish a viable terrestrial corridor with interior forest habitat"</p>	<p>No mention of 600 metre ecological corridor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the ecological backbone of Rouge Park <p>Fails to include the federal lands in Pickering necessary to create a true Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine ecological link which goes around the urban blockade of Stouffville - Transport Canada already designated these public lands as a "Federal Green Space Preserve" in 2002</p>
5. Park Name	<p>Rouge Park "Wild in the City" existing name and motto</p>	<p><i>"Rouge National Urban Park, a People's Park"</i> - a misnomer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gives expectations of an urban park with mowed lawns, instead of a nationally significant natural and cultural treasure - a recipe for park exploitation and degradation over time

Rouge Park - Existing Legislative, Policy, Scientific and Ecological Context

The draft Rouge National Park Concept does not adequately describe or embrace the strong existing foundation of conservation science, legislation and public policy provided by:

- Rouge Park Management Plans (1994 and 2001);
- Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005);
- Toronto's Lake Ontario Area of Concern Remedial Action Plan under the GLWQA;
- Environment Canada's "How Much Habitat is Enough" Report;
- Rouge Watershed Plan (2007) and Rouge Park Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008);
- Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Plan (2002); and
- associated watershed, fisheries and natural heritage system plans.

The existing Rouge Park vision, goal and objectives were approved by the Ontario Government in the 1994 Rouge Park Management Plan after a thorough three year public planning process led by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

In 2001, after a thorough four year public planning process, the Rouge North Management Plan adopted the vision, goal and objectives from the 1994 Park Plan. Rouge Park Plans were legally adopted in Toronto and Markham Official Plans and strengthened by the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005).

Section 3.2.6 of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005) states:

*"This Plan identifies a **600 metre wide corridor** for the Little Rouge River as the **main ecological corridor**, between Lake Ontario and the southerly boundary of Oak Ridges Moraine Area, as well as several other Rouge River tributaries, in recognition of the longstanding commitment to establishing the Rouge Park. ... In the case of a conflict between this Plan and the Rouge North Management Plan, the more restrictive policies apply."*

Section 4.1.1.2 of the approved 2001 Rouge North Management Plan states:

"The overriding goal in creating the Little Rouge Creek Corridor is to establish a viable **terrestrial corridor with interior forest habitat conditions.**"

After reviewing many scientific studies, Environment Canada, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ontario Ministry of Environment produced a Report "How Much Habitat is Enough" to inform habitat restoration within Great Lakes Areas of Concern, like Toronto's waterfront and Rouge River watershed. According to **"How Much Habitat is Enough"**:

"the minimum forest width needed to create interior forest habitat conditions is 500 metres"

"How Much Habitat is Enough" also indicates that more than 30% forest cover and 10% wetland cover are needed for viable wildlife populations and watershed health.

The TRCA's Rouge Report Card (2007), states:

"the Rouge Watershed currently has 13% forest cover and 1% wetland cover"

"the current quantity, quality and distribution of natural cover are insufficient to provide long-term support for many of the native communities and species"

The restoration of the "main ecological corridor" along the Little Rouge River is stipulated by the requirements of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005), Rouge North Management Plan, the federal government's "How much Habitat is Enough" and the Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008). The 600 metre ecological corridor along the Little Rouge River was:

- ✓ outlined in the initial March 26, 1990 Rouge Park announcement by Premier Peterson;
- ✓ outlined in the 1994 Rouge Park Management Plan approved by Premier Rae's government after a multi-year public and stakeholder planning process;
- ✓ approved in the 2001 Rouge North Management Plan after another multi-year public and stakeholder planning process during the government of Premier Harris ;
- ✓ strengthened by the 2005 Greenbelt Plan of Premier Dalton McGuinty's government;
- ✓ identified for restoration in the approved Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008).

Southern Ontario is home to the Carolinian and mixed-wood forest zones of Canada. These life zones have the most biological diversity and endangered species in Canada but the fewest national and provincial parks. Only 1/400th of southern Ontario is protected by national parks, far less than most other areas in Canada. The public land surrounding the Rouge may represent the last chance to create a large national park in southern Ontario which protects and restores a sustainable system of Carolinian and mixed-wood forest habitats and endangered species.

Within the established legal, policy, scientific and ecological context, significant and timely ecological restoration will be necessary on public Rouge National Park lands to:

- 1) Expand, re-connect and buffer natural areas within two of Canada's most endangered life zones;
- 2) Improve water quality and habitat within the Toronto Great Lakes Area of Concern;
- 3) Support the environmental quality and visitor experiences worthy of a National Park;
- 4) Accommodate, dissipate and mitigate the visitor pressures of a Rouge National Park;
- 5) Involve youth, volunteers, NGOs and corporations in Park support and enjoyment;
- 6) Reduce runoff and costly pollution, flooding, erosion and climate change liabilities; and
- 7) Protect and improve urban air quality, recreation, public health and prosperity.

Friends of the Rouge Watershed Request to the Federal Government

Whereas,

100+ km² of public land surrounds the Rouge River in Toronto, Markham, Pickering and Uxbridge and this public land is predominantly designated "natural heritage system" in the Provincial Greenbelt Plan;

This public land is part of the mixed-wood plains and Carolinian forest life zones of southern Ontario - the zones with the most biological diversity and endangered species in Canada but the fewest natural parks;

This public land has priceless long term value as a Rouge National Park which will be accessible to several million Canadians by public transit or a relatively short drive;

Southern Ontario has only 1/400th of its land protected by national parks and 1/200th protected by provincial natural environment parks, far less than most other areas of Canada;

Parks Canada needs to reach-out to the diverse population of the Golden Horseshoe area of southern Ontario to provide a true Canadian national park experience for urban dwellers, young and old;

A great investment of public time and resources has already been spent on public approval processes to create existing Rouge Park Plans, the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan, watershed plans and the Toronto Remedial Action Plan for improving Lake Ontario water quality and watersheds pursuant to the Great Water Quality Lakes Agreement;

Federal and provincial ministries produced a science-based report (How Much Habitat is Enough, 2004) which recommends more than 30% forest cover and 10% wetland cover for a healthy and biologically diverse watershed and improved water quality in Toronto's watersheds and along our waterfront;

The Rouge Watershed currently falls far short of the aforementioned healthy watershed targets having only 13% forest cover and approximately 2% wetland cover and the TRCA's Rouge Watershed Report Card concludes - **"the current quantity, quality and distribution of natural cover are insufficient to provide long-term support for many of the native communities and species"**

Canadians expect fair, informed and open public policy development, particularly for a national park which will need to sustain its natural and cultural values through the centuries and provide access to a nationally significant natural environment for millions of Canadians, current and future.

FRW respectfully asks the federal government to:

1. Include the 100+ km² public land assembly within the Rouge National Park study area;
2. Give priority to the protection and restoration of a 600 metre wide mixed-woodland plains and Carolinian forest "ecological corridor" linking Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine as outlined in the provincial Greenbelt Plan, Rouge Park Management Plan (1994), Rouge North Management Plan (2001), TRCA Targeted Natural Heritage System Plan (2007) and Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008);
3. Ensure that the concept, legislation and management plan for Rouge National Park respects, strengthens and implements the vision, goal and objectives of approved Rouge Park Plans (1994 and 2001), the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005), the ORM Conservation Plan (2002), the Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008), the Toronto Remedial Action Plan and Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and associated watershed plans;
4. Utilize some of the already announced funding to provide Parks Canada with the resources and additional time to conduct a rational, scientific and transparent public planning process which properly develops the park concept, study area, boundaries, legislation and management plan;
5. Include First Nations, Friends of the Rouge Watershed (FRW) and other respected conservation NGOs on the Rouge National Park Advisory Board to ensure that the deep community roots of Rouge Park continue to inform and influence Park planning, protection and implementation.