



CITY COUNCIL REFERRAL OF MEMBER MOTION

Reinforcing the Importance of the Toronto Island Habitat

Date: November 20, 2017
To: Parks and Environment Committee
From: City Council
Wards: All

CITY COUNCIL DECISION

City Council on November 7, 8 and 9, 2017, referred Motion MM34.13 to the Parks and Environment Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor Joe Cressy, seconded by Councillor Paula Fletcher, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources to consider the Toronto Islands for designation as a Bird Sanctuary, under the Migratory Birds Act, and the enacting of appropriate regulations for the protection arising from such a designation.

SUMMARY

The Toronto Islands are a jewel in the heart of Canada's largest metropolis. In addition to being home to hundreds of residents, they represent a significant destination for residents and visitors from across our City, providing a way to enjoy and respect the natural environment, mere minutes from downtown. The Toronto Islands are a sanctuary for all of us.

By their very nature, they also create a significant natural habitat for many plant and animal species. Many areas of the Islands have been designated Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest by the Ministry of Natural Resources, demonstrating their high value for conservation, study and education. Portions of Muggs Island, Hanlan's Beach and Centre Island are also designated as Environmentally Significant Areas by the Ministry,

a designation for areas of particular significance and sensitivity, and which require additional protection to preserve their environmental qualities and significance.

The Islands' location immediately adjacent to the biggest metropolis in Canada inherently creates a danger to the species that rely on this habitat for survival. We saw first-hand this past year that the climate change crisis has already begun affecting the Islands, when flooding not only closed them to the public, but endangered the habitat of their plant and animal species. In 2013, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority remarked in a letter to Toronto and East York Community Council that the Island wetlands provide feeding areas for colonial bird species, waterfowl and rare migrants as they move through the urban environment, as well as important foraging area for many of the significant species nesting at Tommy Thompson Park, and foraging and resting for hundreds of migrating bird species.

An area can be designated as a Migratory Bird Sanctuary, under the Federal Migratory Birds Convention Act. The Act allows for regulations for the protection of migratory birds, to prohibit the taking, injuring, destruction or the molestation of their (migratory birds) nests or eggs, within any prescribed area, and for the control and management of such area. That provision forms the basis for establishing sanctuaries for migratory birds and for enacting regulations to control and administer such sanctuaries.

Given the significance of the ecosystem to the natural and migratory bird population, but also the clear dangers to the bird species native to and migrating to and from the Islands, a review for designation as a Bird Sanctuary for the Toronto Islands is a critical step in protecting this habitat.