



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Establishing a National Urban Park in the Rouge Valley

<b>Date:</b>	March 29, 2012
<b>To:</b>	Executive Committee
<b>From:</b>	Deputy City Manager, Cluster B
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	p:\2012\Cluster B\DCM\ex120001.docx

#### SUMMARY

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In 2011, the Government of Canada announced its commitment to work towards the creation of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley. The federal government is engaging the City of Toronto and other public landholders, as well as stakeholders and First Nations, to work towards establishing the first national urban park.

The purpose of this report is to obtain City Council's endorsement of a *Statement of Intent*, committing the City to work in collaboration with the federal government and other public landholders on a recommendation on the park boundaries and to take the necessary steps that would be required to establish the Rouge National Urban Park.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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**The Deputy City Manager recommends that City Council:**

1. Endorse the *Statement of Intent* (Attachment One) which commits the City to collaborate with the Government of Canada and other public landholders towards the establishment of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley.
2. Authorize the Deputy City Manager, and appropriate City staff, to represent the City in the national urban park establishment process (Attachment Two), and report back on the results of the establishment process, including how City interests have been addressed.

## Financial Impact

Recommendations found within this report have no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on September 21 and 22, 2011 and May 11 and 12, 2010, Toronto City Council adopted motions endorsing the creating of a national park in the Rouge Valley areas and recognizing the extraordinary ecological wealth found in the Rouge Valley.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.PE7.1#>

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2010.MM49.27#>

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

The area currently known as Rouge Park is approximately 4726 ha (47 km<sup>2</sup>) in size and extends from Lake Ontario north towards the Oak Ridges moraine. It is an extensive network of natural, cultural, agricultural and recreational lands within a boundary that overlaps public and private properties, and municipal and provincial infrastructure corridors, within the City of Toronto, Markham and Pickering. The public lands are held across all orders of government and are mostly administered by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. The park protects 12% of the Rouge River watershed and small parts of the Petticoat Creek and Duffins Creek watersheds. The park has a rich diversity of natural and cultural heritage resources, including: rare Carolinian forest; numerous species at risk; geological outcrops from the interglacial age that are internationally significant; heritage structures and a national historic site; and in-situ evidence of human history dating back over 10,000 years, including some of Canada's oldest known Aboriginal historic sites and villages.

The City of Toronto has long recognized the importance of the Rouge Valley. As early as 1959, the former Metropolitan Toronto identified portions of Rouge Valley as Public Open Space to be permanently preserved in the Metropolitan Toronto Official Plan. The protected area gradually increased until 1994 when it had grown to what it is essentially today identified as Rouge Park within the City of Toronto. In 1994, the Province of Ontario approved the *Rouge Park Management Plan*. The following year the Rouge Park was officially established by the Province, the Rouge Park Alliance was established as a voluntary partnership organization to oversee the implementation of the Rouge Park Management Plan and the federal government provided a \$10 million endowment to establish and manage the park. In 2001, the *Rouge Park North Management Plan* was released to guide the protection, enhancement and restoration of the Rouge Park and watershed north of Steeles Ave.

In 2010, a report on governance, organization and financial review of the Rouge Park Alliance was submitted to the Rouge Park Alliance. The report reviewed the current governance model, assessed the adequacy of the current level of capital and operating funding, considered alternative park models, and identified the components of a new model that would meet the needs of an enhanced Rouge Park on the edge of a major metropolitan area. The report recommended the establishment of a National Park. Toronto City Council supported the findings of the Rouge Park Alliance report at its meetings on September 21 and 22, 2011 and May 11 and 12, 2010.

In the 2011 federal Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada announced that it "will work with provincial, regional, municipal, Aboriginal and community stakeholders toward establishing an urban national park in the Rouge Valley of eastern Toronto". This action has been committed in the 2012 federal budget.

## **COMMENTS**

### Statement of Intent

#### *Purpose*

The *Statement of Intent* (Attachment One) has been prepared to express the commitment of the Participants to work together towards a recommendation on park boundaries, while taking the necessary steps required to establish the Rouge National Urban Park. The *Statement of Intent* identifies Participants, scope of cooperation of the Participants, preliminary park concept, and a park establishment process and timing. The *Statement of Intent* includes the study area under consideration by Parks Canada (Annex 1) and identifies the members of the Landholder's Table (Annex 2).

Participants to the *Statement of Intent* include:

- Government of Canada (represented by the Parks Canada Agency)
- Province of Ontario (represented by the Ministry of Infrastructure)
- City of Toronto
- Town of Markham
- City of Pickering
- The Regional Municipality of York
- The Regional Municipality of Durham
- Toronto Region Conservation Authority

#### *Scope of Cooperation*

The establishment of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley raises a number of issues of mutual interest which will need to be addressed. Participants to the *Statement of Intent* have agreed to work cooperatively to address the following:

- Identification of lands recommended to be included in or excluded from Rouge National Urban Park;

- Rouge National Urban Park Concept;
- Recommend processes and conditions of any land transfer to Parks Canada subject to obtaining all necessary approvals;
- Public communications;
- Transition measures;
- Relationship to adjacent land uses (including the Toronto Zoo and Beare Road Landfill) and agricultural uses;
- Roles and recognition of the Participants under the new governance model; and
- Infrastructure and its future management.

### *Park Concept*

A national urban park is a new federal concept that will merge elements of the existing national park model with a new conservation and management approach that will address the specific circumstances of the Rouge Valley. The park concept will be informed by a consultative process as outlined in the park establishment process.

### *Establishment Process and Timing*

In order to establish Canada's first national urban park, the Government of Canada, through Parks Canada, has developed a National Urban Park Establishment Process which includes two parallel processes (Attachment Two).

Stream one brings together all public landholders and the current Rouge Park managing authority, through a Landholder's Table (established November 2011), to discuss and develop an agreement on lands to be included in the park, and issues of mutual interest to be addressed and land transfer processes. The *Canadian National Parks Act* requires that lands within national parks be owned by Parks Canada and the establishment of a national urban park will require that the lands be transferred to Parks Canada. The transfer of lands to Parks Canada raises a number of issues of mutual interest which will be addressed through park establishment process. As a result of this stream of work, Parks Canada is working towards a multi-party agreement land transfer by Fall 2012.

The second stream involves public and stakeholder consultations to help develop guiding principles and key elements of the park vision; to confirm broad public support; and to get feedback on the national urban park concept, park establishment and interim management guidelines. A broad range of stakeholders and First Nations are being consulted.

As a result of the overall park establishment process, Parks Canada will be putting forward recommendations to the Government of Canada on the legislative process and final steps to establish the national urban park.

## Possible City Interests and Considerations

The establishment of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley is consistent with the City's vision of protecting the Rouge Valley as parkland for the long term. The Official Plan identifies the Rouge Valley area within the City of Toronto as part of the Green Space System and designates lands in the Rouge Valley as Parks and Open Space.

Within the City of Toronto, the study area under consideration by Parks Canada (Appendix One) is similar to the existing Rouge Park. Most of the lands in the Rouge Park within the City of Toronto are owned by the TRCA. The City owns a portion of the lands on which the Zoo is located as well as the lands associated with the former Beare Rd landfill. The City also owns and operates roads, bridges and water infrastructure and provides a variety of programs and services in the Rouge Park primarily through Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The Province also owns lands and infrastructure corridors. There are a few privately held properties located within the Rouge Park but these will not become part of the national urban park.

Through the park establishment process and as part of the identification of proposed park boundaries, any implications for the City of Toronto will be assessed. An Official Plan amendment would be required if any City owned lands located in the Green Space System are to be transferred to Parks Canada.

The Toronto Zoo and the former Beare Rd. landfill are not included within Parks Canada's proposed study area. However, discussions are scheduled with Parks Canada to determine the relationship between the proposed national urban park and the Toronto Zoo and future uses of the Beare Rd site.

Parks Canada has indicated that all roads, road allowances and associated infrastructure (e.g., bridges, culverts, etc) will be excluded from the Park. These lands, as well as any lands required for future road or water improvements (e.g., widening of Steeles Ave as part of an approved class EA), are being identified by City Divisions and will be retained by the City. Any easements respecting infrastructure will also be secured.

The concept for the new national urban park, its future governance and transition measures are of interest to the City due to its location within and adjacent to the City of Toronto and the City's long standing involvement in the governance of Rouge Park through annual operating contributions, membership on the Rouge Park Alliance, and programs and services. The City will participate in the development of the proposed park concept, governance model and interim governance through both the Landholder's Table and the stakeholder consultation components of the park establishment process.

### *Next Steps*

City staff will work with Parks Canada and other participants at the Landholder's Table and through stakeholder consultations to address City interests and issues identified above and any other issues that are identified through the park establishment process. Following presentation by the federal government of the national urban park concept and confirmation of funding and proposed park boundaries, a staff report on the results of the establishment process and how City interests have been addressed will be prepared.

### **CONTACT**

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### **SIGNATURE**

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### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment One: Statement of Intent  
Attachment Two: Rouge National Urban Park Establishment Process