



January 17, 2018

Members of the Parks and Environment Committee

**Re. PE 24.5 Reinforcing the Importance of Toronto Island Habitat**

Waterfront for All congratulates Councillor Cressy for his initiative to recommend that Toronto City Council request the federal Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources to consider designating Toronto Islands as Bird Sanctuary under the Migratory Birds Act. We heartily support this initiative and urge members of Council to support it as well.

Migratory birds brighten all of our lives, whether we pay them close attention or not. But they should not be taken for granted. Many species require very specific natural habitats, and in some cases, those habitats are becoming degraded. “Migratory Stop-over Locations” are critical habitats for birds, many of which must travel thousands of miles to reach their breeding grounds in the Spring or their wintering grounds in the Fall.

Toronto Islands are one of those Migratory Stop-over Locations. Reaching out into Lake Ontario with an abundance of greenery and secluded spots, Toronto Islands provide a respite for scores of species during their migrations. Habitat loss is a major contributing factor in the decline of many bird populations, and the north shore of Lake Ontario is increasingly being urbanized and built up. This makes Toronto Islands that much more important.

Waterfront for All is a growing coalition of more than 30 organizations advocating for Toronto’s waterfront. We want to ensure that it remains clean, green, usable, diverse, open, accessible, connected, affordable and attractive. Balancing these priorities means that we need to tread lightly on our waterfront and ensure its bio-diversity. That is why we support the designation of the special places on Toronto Islands as a Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

Migratory Bird Sanctuaries do not have to be remote. Often the conditions for these sanctuaries exist close to human uses.

They have been designated in Cottage Country:  
Eleanor Island on Lake Muskoka, Lake Mississippi, the Rideau River

There are MBS's in or near urban areas:

Couvée Islands, Île-aux-Hérons, Senneville, all near Montréal

There are MBS's near popular recreation spots:

Upper Canada Sanctuary on the St. Lawrence River near Cornwall or Philipsburg, QC

There is no reason why designating parts of Toronto Islands should conflict with other enjoyments when already the city recognizes Environmentally Significant Areas on Muggs Island, Hanlan's Beach, Centre Island Meadow, Snake Island, West Algonquin Island and eastern Ward's Island. Designating Toronto Islands as a Migratory Bird Sanctuary would reinforce with federal designation the special character that Toronto already recognizes there. It would strengthen our awareness of the importance of birds in our environment and their special needs. It would help to protect the special green urban sanctuary that Toronto Islands represent to Torontonians. It would simply say, "These are areas for the birds." Here, by regulation:

We cannot hunt birds,

We cannot disturb or destroy their nests,

We can't take their eggs,

We cannot carry a hunting firearm.

We cannot let a dog or cat run at large,

We cannot harm birds.

Waterfront for All believes that the secluded spots on Toronto Islands should be treated with these precautions. The birds on Toronto Islands make it a very special part of the waterfront. They need the secluded areas to recharge during their migrations in the Spring and Fall. We ask that City Council request the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources to consider designating Toronto Islands as a Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

Yours sincerely,

John Wilson  
Waterfront for All