



# Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DAVID CROMBIE RECEIVES 2003 ROUGE PARK AWARD

*York Region* – The Rouge Park Alliance, the partnership body which coordinates the management of Rouge Park, gave recognition to members of the community at an awards ceremony in Markham this evening. The Honourable David Crombie, former Toronto mayor and federal cabinet minister received the 2003 Rouge Park Award as recognition of his important role in the establishment of Rouge Park.

As early as the creation of the “Interim Report” of the Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront, Mr. Crombie, in his role as Commissioner, recommended the protection of the Rouge River watershed. Following approval and release of the 1994 Rouge Park Management Plan, the Province asked Mr. Crombie to develop a management structure and funding formula for the entity which would implement the Plan. His report was approved, and in 1995 the Rouge Park Alliance began its work.

As Chair of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, David Crombie was the trustee of the funds from the federal government which were designated for Rouge Park purposes. His advice and guidance during these formative years were invaluable in assisting the Rouge Park Alliance in its operations and utilization of the endowment funds.

“On a wide scale, David Crombie’s vision for a Greater Toronto Area bioregion, which includes the Lake Ontario waterfront, the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges Moraine and all of the watersheds in the GTA, has provided a basis for ecosystem planning throughout the region,” observed Ron Christie, Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance when presenting the award. “This vision continues to provide a means for ecologists, planners, and others to consider ‘the big picture’ when developing plans. Our latest park management plan is no exception, it was created with similar goals in mind, thanks to the legacy left to us from David’s work over the years.”

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“Those of us who have worked in the Rouge valley know that it’s a privilege, and it’s been my great privilege to be part of the movement to protect the Rouge as a park,” said David Crombie. “It is one of the most beautiful valleys in this part of North America. For many people in the Greater Toronto Area, it’s still undiscovered. Rouge Park is one of the best kept secrets in the Toronto area; it’s a jewel in the eastern GTA and I am proud that I’ve been part of protecting it for the future.”

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual Rouge Park Awards ceremony included congratulations to 1999 Rouge Park Award winner, Lois James, for recently receiving the Order of Canada as recognition of her environmental activism over the past 30 years, largely concentrated in the Rouge. Awards of appreciation were given by Rouge Park to environmental restoration project leaders and private land owners from Markham, Richmond Hill, Toronto and Whitchurch-Stouffville. Awards were also given to local schools, teachers, and educational organizations for their efforts in teaching people of all ages about the natural environment in Rouge Park and beyond.

“Rouge Park has always relied on partnerships to help us achieve our ecological restoration, protection and enhancement goals,” said Mr. Christie. “The community members who continue to help us implement the park vision are one of our most valuable resources.”

Established in 1995, after years of citizen support for the protection of the Rouge River valley in Toronto, Rouge Park is one of North America’s largest natural environment parks in an urban setting.

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# Backgrounder

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## *Summary of 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Rouge Park Award Recipients*

### **Main Rouge Park Award**

Presented by Ron Christie, Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance to Hon. David Crombie for his contributions to the establishment of Rouge Park.

The Rouge Park Award is presented annually to a group or individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the protection, enhancement and restoration of Rouge Park by:

- contributing to the establishment and/or development of Rouge Park
- actively promoting Rouge Park
- showing commitment and making an outstanding contribution to the Rouge Park Vision, Goal and Objectives
- exhibiting leadership and promoting community involvement in Rouge Park
- encouraging natural and cultural heritage by example
- actively participating in Rouge Park programs and activities
- promoting the cause of Rouge Park at the political or legislative level
- making other outstanding contributions to Rouge Park

### **Education Awards**

Presented by Markham Councillor and Rouge Park Alliance member Jack Heath.

- 1) Mr. Chris Evans, Program Coordinator, Rouge Valley Foundation, Toronto
- 2) Hillside Outdoor Education School, a 27-year old outdoor education centre for students of the Toronto District School Board, Toronto
- 3) Ms Tazmeen Jajbhay, teacher and the 2002-2003 Grade 10 Enriched Science class at Bayview Secondary School, Richmond Hill
- 4) West Rouge Public School, an elementary school of the Toronto District School Board, Toronto

Education Award winners have helped to promote knowledge and understanding of the natural and cultural values of the Park, their protection and management requirements, and their significance, sensitivities and interrelationships to the general public. This includes involvement with the organization of public education events, community celebration events and other activities that bring the message to the media, public and Park visitors of Rouge Park as a special place.

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### **Heritage Awards**

Presented by Brian Denney, CAO/Secretary Treasurer, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Rouge Park Alliance member.

- 1) Mr. Rob Johnson, Restoration Projects Director, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Toronto
- 2) Mr. Rob Messervey, former Aurora District Manager, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (and currently with MNR, Peterborough)
- 3) Toronto Zoo, Rouge Park Alliance partner, Toronto
- 4) Mr. Tupper Wheatley, President, Milne Park Conservation Association, Markham

Heritage Award winners have made a significant contribution to the protection, restoration and enhancement of the natural ecosystems of the Park by ensuring the health and diversity of its native species, habitats, landscapes and ecological processes.

If emphasizing the human values of the Park, they identify, protect and conserve the cultural heritage features for their inherent value and depiction of the long-term human use and occupancy of the area. This includes involvement with natural restoration and renaturalization projects, facilitating community involvement in volunteer events, the securement of funding for restoration or preservation work and working with Rouge Park to ensure that projects and activities help us to achieve our restoration and protection goals.

### **Rouge River Keepers**

Presented by Hon. Pauline Browes, former MP and Rouge Park Alliance member, 1998 Rouge Park Award recipient.

- 1) Cedar Brae Golf & Country Club, Toronto
- 2) L'Arche Daybreak, an organization which assists persons with developmental disabilities, Richmond Hill
- 3) Mr. Sim Pijselman, private land owner, Whitchurch-Stouffville

The goal of the Rouge River Keepers programme is to ensure that human activities exist in harmony with the natural values of Rouge Park and the Rouge River watershed. Private land owners, whether residential, agricultural or corporate, who use environmental best management practices on their properties are eligible. These land owners must demonstrate a commitment to protecting the environment, or restoring it where necessary, on their lands for the long term. On-site assessments are done by our Stewardship Coordinator on candidate properties according to specific criteria.

**Other:** Congratulations were given to Lois James, 1999 Rouge Park Award winner and 2003 recipient of the Order of Canada in recognition of her activism in the Rouge for close to 30 years.

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