



Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

21 August 2006

ROUGE PARK AWARD GIVEN TO PREMIER MCGUINTY

Markham – Premier Dalton McGuinty was the enthusiastic recipient of this year's Rouge Park Award today at a reception where he announced the new Bob Hunter Memorial Park. The Rouge Park Award is given to a member or members of the community who have made outstanding contributions to Rouge Park, Canada's largest near-urban wilderness park.

Gord Weeden, Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance, the board of directors for the Park, reflected on the Ontario government's contributions: "Premier McGuinty's leadership has resulted in a significant amount of new land added to Rouge Park, strong Provincial support for our management plans, and now the welcome addition of Bob Hunter Memorial Park as adjacent protected park land. Rouge Park would not be Canada's largest near-urban wilderness park without the efforts of people like Premier McGuinty demonstrating their commitment to this special park. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to Rouge Park, it is my great pleasure to announce Premier Dalton McGuinty as the recipient of this year's Rouge Park Award."

"I'm pleased to accept this award on behalf of all the people in my government who are working hard to protect Ontario's natural spaces," said Premier McGuinty, "And I am pleased to dedicate this new park in the memory of Bob Hunter, who was not only a hero to me, but to millions of people around the world whose lives he touched through his writing, broadcasting and activism."

This is the first Rouge Park Award to go to a provincial politician. Former Rouge Park Award recipients include the Honourable David Crombie, former MP and Mayor of Toronto, and Joyce Trimmer, former Mayor of Scarborough.

Rouge Park is Canada's largest near-urban wilderness park. Now 41 km² in size, it is a protected wilderness area in and near Toronto, Canada's largest city. Reaching from the Oak Ridges Moraine roughly 50 km north of the city, south to where the river flows into Lake Ontario, the Park provides a diversity of wildlife habitats and a countryside landscape of farms and historic hamlets, merging with culturally-diverse eastern Toronto.

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Backgrounder

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Last updated: Monday, August 21, 2006

Rouge Park Awards

Rouge Park Awards

The Rouge Park Award is the Park's way of recognizing individuals or groups who have made an outstanding contribution to Rouge Park. Groups or individuals that meet one or more of the following criteria will be considered:

- contributed to the establishment, development, promotion of Rouge Park
- shown commitment and made an outstanding contribution to our Vision, Goals and Objectives
- exhibited leadership and promoted community involvement in Rouge Park
- encouraged natural and cultural heritage by example
- made any other outstanding contributions to Rouge Park

Past Rouge Park Award winners

1998 - Hon. Pauline Browes, former MP
1999 - Lois James, local environmental activist
2000 - Joyce Trimmer, former Scarborough mayor
2001 - Jim Robb and Cathy Gregorio-Robb, environmental activists
2002 - Save the Rouge Valley System, Inc
2003 - Hon. David Crombie, former MP and former Toronto mayor, urban environmental advocate
2004 - Gord Weeden, first General Manager of Rouge Park (served 1995-2001)

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Presentation of 2006 Rouge Park Award to Premier Dalton McGuinty
Speaking notes for presenter: Gord Weeden, Chair, Rouge Park Alliance
21 August 2006, Rouge Park, Markham (BHMP)

Honourable Premier, members of the Legislature, members of the Rouge Park Alliance and honoured guests, welcome to Rouge Park and the new Bob Hunter Memorial Park.

It is with great pleasure that I announce the selection of Premier Dalton McGuinty as the recipient of the 2006 Rouge Park Award.

The Rouge Park Award is presented to an individual, group or organization that has made an outstanding contribution to the establishment, protection or enhancement of Rouge Park.

Premier McGuinty's leadership has resulted in a significant amount of new land added to Rouge Park, strong Provincial support for our management plans, and now the welcome addition of Bob Hunter Memorial Park as adjacent protected park land. Rouge Park would not be Canada's premiere near-urban wilderness park without the efforts of people like Premier McGuinty demonstrating their commitment to this special park. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to Rouge Park, it is my great pleasure to announce Premier Dalton McGuinty as the recipient of this year's Rouge Park Award.

In April 2004, Ontario government donated over 14 square kilometres of environmentally-significant lands to Rouge Park. These lands resulted in a total Park size of 41 square kilometers, 11 times the size of New York's Central Park, or 24 times the size of Toronto's High Park.

Rouge Park is special not only because of its large land base, but also because it serves as a valuable natural, cultural and recreational link between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine and protects a reservoir of biodiversity in Ontario's Greenbelt.

Rouge Park serves the people of Southern Ontario well. In addition to providing clean air, clean water and beautiful natural landscapes, the Park's 12 km of rustic trails and Toronto's only campground provide healthy outdoor experiences for millions of taxpayers from the city and beyond.

In one short decade, Rouge Park has evolved from an ambitious concept to the winner of the Ontario Parks Association's "Protecting Tomorrow Today" award, and recognition by international travel guides as one of the best parks to visit in the Toronto area. The Park also protects cultural and agricultural heritage for the long term and has the only working farms in the City of Toronto.

We are grateful that the Province had the vision to create Rouge Park in 1995 and, more recently, to develop and implement the Greenbelt Plan and commit to its success with financial support.

The Greenbelt Plan protects even more of Ontario's natural, cultural and agricultural heritage while giving special recognition to Rouge Park and its management plans.

Now, with the addition of Bob Hunter Memorial Park to the Rouge Park family, these adjacent protected areas are each enhanced and provide greater opportunities to build lasting ecosystems and effective linkages.

Mr. Premier, I also want to acknowledge the support we receive from the staff of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ontario Realty Corporation, and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal as we move forward with Rouge Park initiatives. Our own staff has gained a reputation for innovative approaches to environmental management, in Canada and abroad.

We also wish to thank the Ontario Government for its financial support for land securement and resource planning and for supporting the Rouge Park Alliance by appointing Brad Duguid, MPP, Scarborough Centre, as the representative of the people of Ontario. Brad is a very active supporter of Rouge Park and provides direction and valuable assistance to us.

Premier McGuinty, you are leaving a very valuable legacy of environmental accomplishment, including the Greenbelt, which will help curb urban sprawl and preserve our quality of life for generations to come.

It gives me great honour, Premier McGuinty, to present you with this carving of a beaver, native to Rouge Park, by local artist Feliks Kivikink. Please accept this as an expression of our deepest gratitude for your leadership and your government's support of Rouge Park and Ontario's heritage. Thank you.



Rouge Park - Wild in the City!

What is Rouge Park?

Rouge Park is Canada's premier near-urban wilderness park. Now 41 km² in size, it is a protected wilderness area in and near Toronto, Canada's largest city. Reaching from the Oak Ridges Moraine roughly 50 km north of the city, south to where the river flows into Lake Ontario, the Park provides a diversity of wildlife habitats and a countryside landscape of farms and historic hamlets, merging with culturally-diverse eastern Toronto.

Rouge Park was created by the Ontario government in response to public concerns about the protection of the Rouge River valley. In 1994, the Province of Ontario developed the *Rouge Park Management Plan* and created Rouge Park in 1995. The Park, and the watershed which is its home, have special recognition in Ontario's Greenbelt Plan (Section 3.2.6) and provide a reservoir of biodiversity in the Greenbelt and the only link to Lake Ontario in the Greenbelt in Toronto.

Rouge Park is open 365 days a year, with unlimited, free access to 12 km of rustic hiking trails, riverside camping, a sandy beach and spectacular views. Many areas are accessible by public transit. Visit www.rougepark.com for details. Go "Wild in the City!"

Our Vision

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.

Our Goal

To protect, restore and enhance the natural, scenic and cultural values of the Park in an ecosystem context, and to promote public responsibility, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of this heritage.

Park Size and Location

Rouge Park is 4100 hectares, or 41 square kilometres in size and protects approximately 12% of land in the Rouge River watershed, the a geographic area of approximately 337 km² which is drained by the Rouge River system. The headwaters, or source, of the 250 km-long Rouge River system are in the Oak Ridges Moraine, a geologic feature north of Toronto. The Rouge River and its tributaries flow south into Toronto, through the marshes at Rouge Beach, and empty into Lake Ontario.

How is Rouge Park governed?

Rouge Park is a partnership park, with land and funds from the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, municipal governments and other agencies. The board of directors for Rouge Park is the Rouge Park Alliance, a partnership of 12 government organizations and one not-for-profit group.

The Rouge Park Alliance is guided by the *Rouge Park Management Plan* (1994) for the Park area south of Steeles Avenue and the *Rouge North Management Plan* (2001) for the portion of the Park in York Region.

Rouge Park Alliance:

Organization	Member
Government of Canada	Derek Lee, MP (Scarborough-Rouge River)
Province of Ontario	Brad Duguid, MPP (Scarborough Centre)
Region of Durham	Roger Anderson, Regional Chair

Organization	Member
Region of York	Regional Councillor Frank Scarpitti
Town of Markham	Regional Councillor Jack Heath
City of Pickering	Regional Councillor Rick Johnson
Town of Richmond Hill	Councillor Elio Di Iorio
City of Toronto	Councillor Raymond Cho; Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	Councillor Clyde Smith
Toronto & Region Conservation Authority	Dick O'Brien, Chair
Toronto Zoo	Calvin White, General Manager
Waterfront Regeneration Trust Corporation	Pauline Browes, Director
Save the Rouge Valley System Inc.	André Flys
CHAIR	Gord Weeden (appointed by the Province of Ontario in 2005)

Some Interesting Facts about Rouge Park

1. Rouge Park is Toronto's largest park, and is already 15 times as big as New York's Central Park, or 5 times the size of London, England's Hyde Park.
2. Outcrops of rock formed during the last glacial period are found in Rouge Park and are important to geologists studying seismic activity, in particular the risk of earthquakes in the Toronto area. Faults are visible indicating significant earthquake activity between 80,000 and 13,000 years ago.
3. Rouge Park is home to the "Carrying Place" trail, one of Canada's National Historic Sites, which was an original portage route between Lake Ontario and Lake Simcoe.
4. An active farming community is part of the legacy that Rouge Park preserves, protecting the only rural landscape and working farms in the City of Toronto.
5. The mouth of the Rouge River stays frost-free one month longer than northern areas of the river system on the Oak Ridges Moraine.
6. Rouge Park has the largest and best examples of Canada's rare Carolinian habitat in Toronto and is the only officially recognized site in the Toronto area.
7. Inspired by the scenery during the 1950s, FH Varley, one of Canada's renowned Group of Seven painters, captured the banks of the Rouge River in Markham on canvas as a lasting memory of their beauty.
8. Rouge Park's natural setting has provided filming locations for decades, posing as a backdrop for an array of landscapes, from the far north to the bayous of Mississippi. A Canadian filmmaker had a studio in the Park for many years, filming underwater beaver activity and simulating birds in flight.

External recognition

- 2005: Rouge Park receives Ontario Parks Association's "Protecting Tomorrow Today" award for staff's vital role in ensuring that a large reservoir of biodiversity in the GTA was included in the Ontario Greenbelt Plan and major contributions to enhancing natural environment goals in "Our Common Grounds", the City of Toronto's new strategic plan for parks, forestry and recreation. More at www.rougepark.com
- The popular *DK Eyewitness Travel* series lists Rouge Park first in its "Top 10 Greenspaces" in the Greater Toronto Area. More at www.rougepark.com

Our Programmes

Rouge Park operations include the Natural and Cultural Heritage Programme, which reviews proposed projects that assist with restoring and enhancing the ecological and human heritage of the Park. The Interpretation and Communications Programme coordinates resources for the public use aspects of the Park and provides information and receives feedback about our unique Park and the Rouge Park Alliance. Our web site, www.rougepark.com presents a wide range of information and access to our major planning documents.

Heritage Project Funding

Two programmes provide start-up funds to groups for projects which protect, restore and enhance Rouge Park and the Rouge River watershed. The Natural and Cultural Heritage Project Fund is intended for larger projects, which are reviewed by a panel of experts to assess and prioritize a project's merits for funding. The Small Grants Programme helps groups conducting smaller-scale projects. Both funds require the applicants to solicit partner funding.

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