

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IT'S OFFICIAL: ROUGE PARK COMES TO MARKHAM

Markham – At its most recent meeting, the Town of Markham council voted unanimously to endorse the Official Plan Amendment required to make Rouge Park a reality in Markham. After a process of careful study and extensive public and stakeholder consultation, councillors were able to approve with confidence the recommended amendment to Markham's most important planning framework.

Ron Christie, Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance, the management body of Rouge Park which was established in 1995, was pleased to see the outcome of the meeting. "We have worked closely with the Town of Markham to ensure that the Rouge North Management Plan was incorporated into the Official Plan in a progressive and environmentally-sound way," reported Mr. Christie. "We are especially pleased that Markham is moving to secure the Little Rouge Creek corridor, which is one of the best examples of a healthy stream in the eastern GTA. Now we can be sure that it provides Rouge Park with a natural connection from the Oak Ridges Moraine to Lake Ontario." A large part of Rouge Park in York Region will fall within the municipal boundaries of Markham, making the municipality's support paramount to the Park's long-term success.

The Town of Markham has shown great leadership in incorporating the park plan as an amendment to the official plan, an initiative which is unprecedented in Ontario. "We have learned a lot from this process. Our development of the OPA is a big achievement, not only for Markham, but for municipalities throughout Ontario who want to make great strides in protecting the natural environment," said Ward 5 Councillor, Jack Heath, who represents Markham on the Rouge Park Alliance. "There is a strong implementation plan in place and we can be confident that we will see this ecologically significant park become a reality in our region over the next few years."

To achieve this, similar support will be required from the other municipalities in the York Region section of Rouge Park, the Towns of Richmond Hill and Whitchurch-Stouffville. Markham's Deputy Mayor, Regional Councillor Frank Scarpitti, represents the Region of York on the Rouge Park Alliance. He was instrumental in developing the comprehensive implementation document which provides a template for the other two municipalities to use in amending their official plans. "Our intent in this implementation strategy was to set a precedent in Markham that could be followed in Richmond Hill and Whitchurch-Stouffville. The Rouge Park Alliance gave us the challenge of setting the standard in Markham. We have met that challenge and now we are ready to work with our other municipal partners in York Region to move forward. When that process is complete, we will all see the ecological benefits and restored habitats of Rouge Park over the long term."

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With the help of this official plan amendment, Rouge Park will be one of the largest natural environment parks in an urban area in North America, over 50km² , comprising marshes, forests and river environments.

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