

REPORT CALLS FOR NATIONAL ROUGE PARK ***Rouge Park Alliance Considers Consultant's Report***

February 5, 2010 - The Rouge Park Alliance today received a consultant's report which recommends that transitioning the Park into Canada's first near urban national park is the best way to preserve and enhance this vitally important area.

"The founding partners have made incredible contributions in bringing Rouge Park to this stage. National Park status will allow us to fully develop and reach the potential of these lands as North America's premier urban wilderness park," said Alan Wells, Chair of the Rouge Park Alliance.

The lands in Rouge Park are a nationally significant ecological area located in the heart of the GTA, making a National Park the preferred option. Additionally, many of the GTA's 7 million residents are new Canadians whose first experience with a national park would be in Rouge Park.

The report also calls for the addition of nearly 5000 acres of federal lands in Markham to the Park, as an agricultural preserve, expanding the total Park area by 1/3 to 15 000 acres (nearly 6100 hectares). "This allows us to fulfill our vision of a park from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine," said Wells. "We will continue to protect natural areas while supporting agriculture, cultural heritage and recreation."

Since its inception, the Park has grown considerably, and continues to evolve. While the goal and vision of the Park remain true today, the Rouge Park Alliance has reflected on its structure, funding and partnerships so that the Park can continue strongly into the future. The next step is for Alliance members to consider the recommendations in the report over the next 60 days.

Rouge Park is a remarkable environmental asset combining nature, trails and farms. But to fully realize the vision of the Park, the consultant feels change is required. Rouge Park needs new funding commitments and a new structure to give it stronger leadership. In the consultant's view, the best means of achieving this is to designate Rouge Park as a national park.

The Rouge Park Alliance is a voluntary partnership consisting of 12 organizations, including multi-levels of government and other Park stakeholders that oversee the implementation of Rouge Park Plans.

Rouge Park is Canada's premier urban wilderness park protecting two National Historic Sites, and the only working farms in Toronto. It is protected park land in the Rouge River, Petticoat Creek and Duffins Creek watersheds, in and near Toronto, Canada's largest city. The award-winning Park provides a reservoir of biodiversity in the Greenbelt and the only link to Lake Ontario in the Greenbelt in Toronto.

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For more information:

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