



Report to: Development Services Committee

Date: March 27, 2012

SUBJECT: Federal Parks Canada Review for a Rouge National Urban Park

PREPARED BY: Lilli Duoba, Senior Environmental Coordinator,
Environmental Planning and Rouge Park

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the staff report entitled Federal Parks Canada Review for a Rouge National Urban Park dated March 27, 2012 be received;
- 2) And that Council endorse the Parks Canada partnership 'Statement of Intent – Towards Cooperation and Collaboration in the establishment of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley' and continue to advance the Federal Rouge Park planning process as identified in this report;
- 3) And that staff continue to monitor and participate in landowners discussions and stakeholder discussions regarding a new Rouge National Urban Park and any alternative interim and long term Rouge Park arrangements;
- 4) And that staff schedule a discussion item for the Rouge National Urban Park at a Part A Development Services Committee meeting in April to identify Markham's interests and requirements relative to the proposed National Park including, but not limited to:
 - consideration of Milne Dam Conservation Area and other inclusions and exclusions for the Rouge National Urban Park
 - consideration of a potential large group picnic area, potential activity and/or cultural centre and other public uses
 - discussion of long term management options of residential and agricultural leases
 - discussion of heritage building strategy and Transport Canada's building demolition requests
 - provision for maintenance and operations facilities
 - provision for existing and planned infrastructure
 - review relevant recommendations of Markham's Rouge Park Implementation Task Force
 - other relevant matters as determined by staff;
- 5) And that Parks Canada staff be invited to meet with the Town (Markham and Region Rouge Park Alliance representatives, other interested Members of Council and Town staff) following the Park A session and release of the Federal Budget, to discuss Markham's interests in the Rouge National Urban Park;

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- 6) And that Council reaffirm its December 13, 2011 resolution (Appendix 'C') requesting Parks Canada and Transport Canada to work together with respect to heritage buildings on the Pickering Airport lands, which are under consideration as part of the Rouge National Urban Park;
 - 7) And that this staff report be forwarded to Parks Canada, Transport Canada, Province of Ontario (represented by Ministry of Infrastructure), Rouge Park Alliance, City of Toronto, Region of York, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, City of Pickering and Region of Durham for information;
 - 8) And further that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In April 2011, the Federal Government announced that it would create a Rouge National Urban Park and assigned responsibility for this process to Parks Canada. The establishment of Rouge Park as a National Park will require new Federal legislation as the Rouge Park does not fall within the parameters of a National Park as currently defined in existing national parks legislation. Parks Canada has established a process that involves both a Landowners Table and stakeholder consultation program. The themes that Parks Canada has evolved their consultation process around include a people's park, protecting natural heritage, protecting cultural heritage including locally significant heritage buildings, protecting and managing agricultural resources including long term leases and continued partnerships and a role for Markham and other stakeholders. Parks Canada have identified a study area for the Rouge National Urban Park which includes all the Federal lands in Markham (Pickering Airport lands), Bob Hunter Memorial Park, Little Rouge Creek Corridor, provincially owned lands in eastern Markham and Tompion property (Steeles and Ninth Line) in Markham. Parks Canada has requested all members of the Landowners Table to endorse a Statement of Intent (Appendix 'A') in order to provide greater certainty in the park planning process as Parks Canada continues to resource and invest in the National Rouge Urban Park initiative. Following the endorsement of the Statement of Intent, a Part A presentation will be scheduled with Development Services Committee to discuss Markham's interests in the Rouge National Urban Park as well as convene a meeting with parks Canada staff. A National Park designation for Rouge Park has been supported by Markham Council as it will deliver a single holder of lands within the Park, a single administrative framework and importantly, a single senior government funder. The study area for the Rouge National Urban Park is identified on Figure 1.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the report is to provide Council with an update and overview of the Parks Canada review process for a Rouge National Urban Park, highlight key issues to be communicated to Parks Canada for consideration in their review process and authorize the Town to endorse a Statement of Intent with Parks Canada as requested by Parks Canada of all participants on the Landowners Table.

BACKGROUND:

In September 2009, the Rouge Park Alliance retained a consulting firm to undertake a Governance, Organization and Finance Review (GOFR) of the Rouge Park Alliance to identify sustainable long term options for the management of the Rouge Park lands in Toronto and Markham. The report was completed in February 2010 and identified a number of management scenarios with a National Park being the preferred option. In April 2010, Markham Council endorsed in principle the recommendations of the Rouge Park Alliance Governance, Organization and Finance Review for the future management of the Rouge Park as a National Park (Appendix 'B').

In April 2011, the Federal Government announced that it would create a Rouge National Urban Park. Parks Canada was assigned the responsibility to develop a National Park review process for the Rouge Park lands.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Parks Canada Approach for a Rouge National Urban Park

There is currently no legislation which guides the development of the Rouge Park. The park is created through the partnership of the landowners and is managed by an advisory structure. The establishment of Rouge Park as a National Park will require new Federal legislation as the Rouge Park does not fall within the parameters of a National Park as defined in existing national parks legislation. There are no comparable National Parks to the Rouge Park. The Federal Government is embracing this challenge and opportunity because of the unique opportunity that a national urban park provides. A National Rouge Urban Park would provide easy accessibility to 20% of Canada's population which is an opportunity not provided by any other National Park. Parks Canada staff have coined the phrase 'people's park' to define a vision for a Rouge National Urban Park. This vision articulates a "gathering place for the diverse communities of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to experience the outdoors on a grand scale".

The themes that Parks Canada has evolved their consultation process around include:

- *Connecting the hearts and minds to the Rouge Park* (people's park),
- *Defining a conservation approach for natural heritage* (protecting natural heritage),
- *Preserving the cultural heritage character of the Rouge Park* (protecting first nations and cultural heritage including locally significant heritage buildings),
- *Managing the working landscape* (protecting and managing agricultural resources including long term leases),
- *Facilitating opportunities for working together in the stewardship of the park* (continued partnerships and a role for Markham and other stakeholders).

Parks Canada staff has also acknowledged the importance of protection of existing and planned infrastructure to support planned growth including transportation corridors through the Park and has identified that a management framework would be responsive to these needs including expansion roads in accordance with planning and environmental assessment legislation. The transportation corridors would not be included in the park boundary.

Rouge Park Study Area

Parks Canada has identified a study area for the future Rouge National Urban Park including the lands identified in the 2010 Governance, Organization and Finance Review Governance Review (see Figure 2), and as recommended by the Markham Rouge Park Implementation Task Force (see Figure 3). These lands include the Toronto Rouge Park lands (Steeles to Lake Ontario), Little Rouge Creek Corridor lands, Bob Hunter Memorial Park, Tompion Lands (Ninth Line and Steeles), Eastern Markham Provincially owned lands and all the Federally owned lands in Markham. The study area does not include the tributaries of the Rouge River through Markham or the satellite locations within the tributaries such as Milne Dam Conservation Area, Toogood Pond, Markham Centre Greenlands or Rawlinson Park (Richmond Hill) and Bruce's Mills Conservation Area (Whitchurch-Stouffville). Land ownership in the Rouge National Urban Park study area is identified on Figures 4 and 5. The study area is consistent with both the recommendations of the Rouge Park Implementation Task Force received and endorsed in principle by Markham Council in 2009 and the recommendations of the Rouge Park Alliance Governance, Organization and Finance Review endorsed by Markham Council in 2010. In 2011, Markham Council passed a resolution directing consideration of Milne Dam Conservation Area as a potential inclusion for the National Park. This item will be included in the discussion of Markham's issues and interests with Development Services Committee in April. Parks Canada has been provided with Markham Council's resolution.

Statement of Intent

The transition from a partnership park to a Rouge National Urban Park requires a significant commitment and public investment on the part of the Federal Government. As such, Parks Canada has requested that the landowners impacted by the potential transfer of lands confirm their agreement to continue to advance the process towards a Founding Deal. Parks Canada has developed two working groups to provide input and guidance in the process to establish a new Federal park. These groups include the Landowners Table and Stakeholder Consultations. Town staff are involved with both activities. Parks Canada has requested the agreement to assist with securing federal funds and as a show of good faith to continue to work through the process as Federal funds are invested. Staff support this process and recommend that the Statement of Intent as identified on Appendix A be endorsed by Council. Following the endorsement of the Statement of Intent, a Part A session will be scheduled with Development Services Committee to discuss Markham issues relative to the proposed Rouge National Urban Park. Staff will also convene a meeting with Parks Canada staff and interested Members of Council to discuss how Markham's interests can be addressed within the framework of the proposed Rouge National Urban Park.

Consultation

Parks Canada have designed a two prong park planning process. The Landholders Table is the working group comprised of Rouge Park landowners for the purpose of addressing the Rouge park boundaries and land transfer process. A parallel stakeholder engagement process is also underway to address the vision and function of the Rouge National Urban

Park. The first stakeholder workshop was held in November 2011 and additional events will be held by Parks Canada throughout the park planning process. Town of Markham staff and Markham's Rouge Park representatives are involved with both processes.

Conclusion

A National Park designation for Rouge Park will deliver a single holder of lands within the Park, a single administrative framework and importantly, a single senior government funder. Parks Canada have already identified and committed to address many of the issues that Markham has identified (eg. protection of existing and planned transportation infrastructure, protection of agricultural lands, protection of heritage resources and balancing natural heritage protection with human use and enjoyment). Town staff will continue to participate in the process and update Council at key milestones. Town staff will prepare an update and discussion item for Development Services Committee in April following the announcement of the Federal Budget where the level of Parks Canada funding for the Rouge National Urban Park is considered.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)

There are no municipal financial implications as a result of this report, however there are financial implications that will need to be considered in the transfer of lands for National Park purposes. Over the long term, the Town would benefit from the public investment that would be provided for by Parks Canada in the delivery of the Rouge National Urban Park in Markham. This investment could be substantial and would provide Markham with an extraordinary public amenity and benefit, and would reduce or eliminate any Town financial support to the Rouge Park in the future. Parks Canada have identified that they would cover all the costs involved with the transfer of lands. Parks Canada have identified that consistent with their park acquisition policies, they will not consider any payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) for non-revenue lands, but will consider PILT funds for revenue lands. The Town would also need to factor in the cost of municipal services which would be provided to support the Federal Park (road maintenance etc.). These details would be addressed over the negotiations for the final Rouge National Urban Park boundary.

It is important to note that the Statement of Intent (Appendix 'A') recognizes that Markham Council will only agree to transfer Town lands to Parks Canada if satisfied with the national urban park concept plan, and confirmation of funding and park boundaries (see clause 7.1).

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

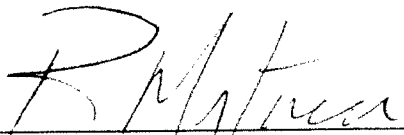
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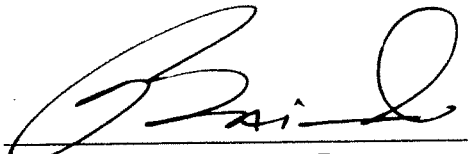
The recommendations support a number of the Town's strategic priorities including environment, growth management, transportation/transit, municipal services and Parks and Recreation.

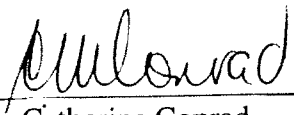
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

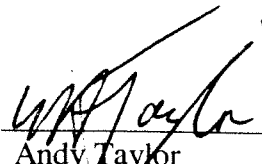
This report has been coordinated with the CAO's office and Legal Services.

RECOMMENDED BY:


Rino Mostacci M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Director of Planning and Urban Design


Jim Baird M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Commissioner of Development Services


Catherine Conrad
Town Solicitor


Andy Taylor
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

- Figure 1: Parks Canada Rouge National Urban Park Study Area
Figure 2: Rouge Park boundary as recommended by Governance,
Organization and Finance Review
Figure 3: Rouge Park boundary as recommended by the Rouge Park
Implementation Task Force
Figures 4 and 5: Land Ownership in the Rouge Park

Appendix A: Statement of Intent – Towards Cooperation and Collaboration in the
establishment of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley

Appendix B: Council Resolution April 13, 2010 on the Rouge Park Alliance
Governance, Organization and Finance Review for the future management
of the Rouge Park as a National Park

Appendix C: Council Resolution December 13, 2011 on the Pickering Airport Lands
(Markham) Proposed Demolition of Vacant Heritage Structures.

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