



Media Backgrounder: Information on Rouge Park

Rouge Park may be the last chance to create a large federal park in southern Ontario – an area with 34 per cent of Canada’s population, 77 per cent of its land in agriculture and human settlement uses and yet 1/400th of its land protected in National Parks.

There is more than 100 km² public lands – protected by different organizations, conservation authorities, municipalities, the federal government, and the province – within the provincial Greenbelt’s natural heritage system designation, both within and surrounding Rouge Park in Toronto, Pickering, Markham and Uxbridge.

Widespread support for a National Rouge Park began in [2009](#). In 2012, environmental groups and several thousand Canadians asked the federal government to support a nature-first Rouge National Urban Park.

A coalition of environmental groups, including Environmental Defence, Ontario Nature, Friends of the Rouge Watershed (FRW), the David Suzuki Foundation, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Nature Canada, Sierra Club Canada, and Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition, examined the proposed Rouge National Urban Park legislation.

Ecojustice, on behalf of this coalition, compared the proposed federal Rouge National Urban Park legislation (Bill C-40) with the *Canada National Park Act* and the *Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act*.

The analysis identified five areas where Bill C-40 needs amending:

1. Our highest priority amendment is that ecological integrity and health must be clearly stated as the first priority of the Minister in park management (section 6);
2. Imperative language is needed in the purpose section to signify the duty to preserve the parkland for future generations, and to dedicate the park to the people of Canada for their benefit (section 4);
3. Definitions are needed in the legislation for ecological integrity and health and science-based management (section 2);
4. In the management plan section of the Bill, ecological protection and restoration language should be included in the vision and objectives (section 9); and
5. The public consultation requirements should be broadened to include the development of parks policy and regulations (section 8).

The ecological significance and potential of Rouge Park should not be downgraded or underestimated due to its near urban location. Many of Canada's national and provincial parks, such as Thousand Islands National Park and Point Pelee National Park, are small and are surrounded by development yet are still managed under legislation that protects their ecological integrity as the first priority. Rouge Park should be afforded an equivalent high level of protection.

The federal government's draft Rouge National Urban Park legislation, [Bill C-40](#), began second reading in June 2014. Parks Canada held public open houses on the Rouge National Urban Park management plan on September 9th in Markham, September 10th in Scarborough, September 16 in Pickering, and September 18th in Toronto.

The Standing Committee on Environmental Sustainable Development presented the committee report on November 6, 2014.

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:

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