

Memorandum

TO: Members of Committee of the Whole
FROM: Erin Mahoney, Commissioner of Environmental Services
DATE: April 5, 2018
RE: **Rouge National Urban Park – status update**

This memo provides an update on Rouge National Urban Park activities with an emphasis on the status of land assembly and work towards a Service Agreement for providing base municipal services.

In 2014, York Region endorsed Memorandum of Agreement advancing the establishment of Rouge National Urban Park

The Rouge National Urban Park was established in 2015. The park is situated in close proximity to 20 per cent of Canada's population, and provides unprecedented opportunities for Canadians to connect with the park's natural, cultural and agricultural heritage. A map of the Rouge National Urban Park is included as Attachment 1.

In [February 2014](#), staff provided Council with an update on the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which included preliminary information on the management of Rouge National Urban Park and outlined the process by which lands would be transferred to Parks Canada. The agreement enabled all parties (municipalities and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority) to transfer lands to Parks Canada and the Memorandum of Agreement was subsequently signed by the Regional Chairman. At that time, Council requested that staff report back in the future on any supplemental agreements with compensation for municipal services.

Rouge National Urban Park Act was updated in 2017 identifying ecological integrity as a priority while protecting agriculture

The *Rouge National Urban Park Act* came into force in May 2015. The park was established with the purpose of:

- Protecting natural and cultural heritage;
- Promoting agriculture; and

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- Providing lands for Canadians to discover and connect with nature.

In June 2017, the Government of Canada tabled amendments to the *Rouge National Urban Park Act* placing ecological integrity as the first priority. This amendment also provided greater certainty for farmers by replacing one year leases with longer term leases extending to 30 years.

Municipal, Regional and Conservation Authority staff continue to meet with Parks Canada to provide input into Draft Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan

In February 2015, Parks Canada undertook extensive public consultation and released a draft Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan. In January 2018, Regional staff participated in a meeting to provide input to the final draft of the management plan. Currently, the Landholders Table Working Group, consisting of York Region staff (e.g. Transportation Services, Environmental Services, Long Range Planning), Parks Canada, City of Markham and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) staff, meet to discuss operations (e.g. park signage installation), capital projects and other matters as necessary. As identified in the management plan, Parks Canada intends to create a Service Working Group with municipalities and the TRCA to align operations, projects and other interests going forward.

Parks Canada continues to assemble core lands for the largest urban National Park in North America

Parks Canada continues to work with stakeholders to assemble core lands to comprise the largest urban National Park in North America. Once completed the park area will consist of 79.1 km². Parks Canada now directly manages or has interest in nearly 80 per cent of lands identified for Rouge National Urban Park. Key milestones in the consolidation of lands for the park include:

- April 1, 2015 – Government of Canada announced the transfer of 19.1 km² of Transport Canada lands to Parks Canada (north end of park) – the very first lands to make up Rouge National Urban Park in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)
- July 11, 2015 – Government of Canada committed 21 km² of new lands from City of Pickering and the Township of Uxbridge to Parks Canada (east side of the park) - increasing the land base of Canada's first national urban park by over 36 per cent
- June 18, 2016 – Ontario government reaffirmed its commitment to transfer 6.5 km² (1,600 acres) of land to Parks Canada and relinquished reversionary rights to 15 km² (3,700 acres) of lands originally purchased by the Province and subsequently transferred to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

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- October 21, 2017 – Ontario government announced the transfer of the 6.5 km² of land to Parks Canada, relinquishing rights to 15 km² of TRCA lands and transfer of an environmental easement on 1.1 km² of valley land owned by City of Markham.

Significant investment by York Region contributes to environmental enhancements in Rouge National Urban Park

The Region has previously made a significant investment in the park through Greening Strategy initiatives including reforestation, and also delivered major environmental restoration projects as part of the Southeast Collector Enhancement. Between 2010 and 2015 the Region contributed \$6.1 million to environmental restoration work in the Bob Hunter Memorial Park and other areas including:

- Prairie projects;
- Tree planting; and
- Wetland creation

In addition, the Region committed funds to build supporting infrastructure including parking facilities, three pedestrian bridges, three parking areas, trail works, signage and access improvements.

In February 2018, Region staff met with the TRCA and Parks Canada to review potential land transfer opportunities from TRCA to the Region to facilitate immediate works. The priority item discussed was the need to further review access requirements for future inspections of the York Durham Sanitary Sewer (YDSS).

Staff continue working toward confirming compensation payments for municipal services and securing a Service Agreement

As National Urban Parks are exempted from property taxation, Regional staff (Legal Services, Environmental Services and Finance) and City of Markham staff have been working with Parks Canada on an alternate compensation arrangement for municipal services (sometimes referred to as Payment in lieu of Taxes - PILTs). Discussions have also included development of a joint Service Agreement.

Staff have identified properties located in City of Markham that Parks Canada currently owns or is in the process of acquiring. Staff confirmed the 2016 assessment information as determined by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, including current ownership and corresponding property tax revenues to the City of Markham, York Region and Education Boards. Parks Canada will make an annual payment (the “Alternate Compensation Payment”) to City of Markham equivalent to the amount of the associated annual property taxes.

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In 2016, preliminary findings indicated the compensation payment to the City of Markham for lands owned by Parks Canada was \$488,961 of which the Region's share was \$238,004 (in 2016 dollars). Overall the total compensation payment for all park lands, assuming Parks Canada acquires the remaining properties in York Region, is estimated at \$829,037 with the Region's share totaling \$410,605. The actual compensation payment amounts will be based on all the lands transferred to Parks Canada.

In 2017, City of Markham received a compensation payment for 2016. At this time Finance staff are working with City of Markham and Parks Canada to verify the payment amount.

Staff working toward securing a Service Agreement with Parks Canada

Region staff and City of Markham staff have been meeting with Parks Canada to discuss the principles and details of a Service Agreement, which would align the provision of base municipal services (e.g. emergency services, garbage collection, animal control etc.) with the compensation payment. Any enhanced services will be covered by supplementary agreements as necessary.

City of Markham continues to work with Parks Canada on remaining outstanding issues including; ownership and management of community assets, preservation of buildings, recreational interests and trails.

Staff anticipate Regional land transfer to occur in 2019 as compensation payments and the Service Agreement are finalized in the coming months

Parks Canada will continue to undertake due diligence on land transfers to the Park. City of Markham and York Region will continue to collaborate and align the timing of land transfers (likely to occur in 2019), including York Region minor parcels associated with previous road jog eliminations. In mid-2018 City of Markham will convene a meeting with Parks Canada and York Region staff to verify and confirm the appropriate compensation payment and finalize the Service Agreement.

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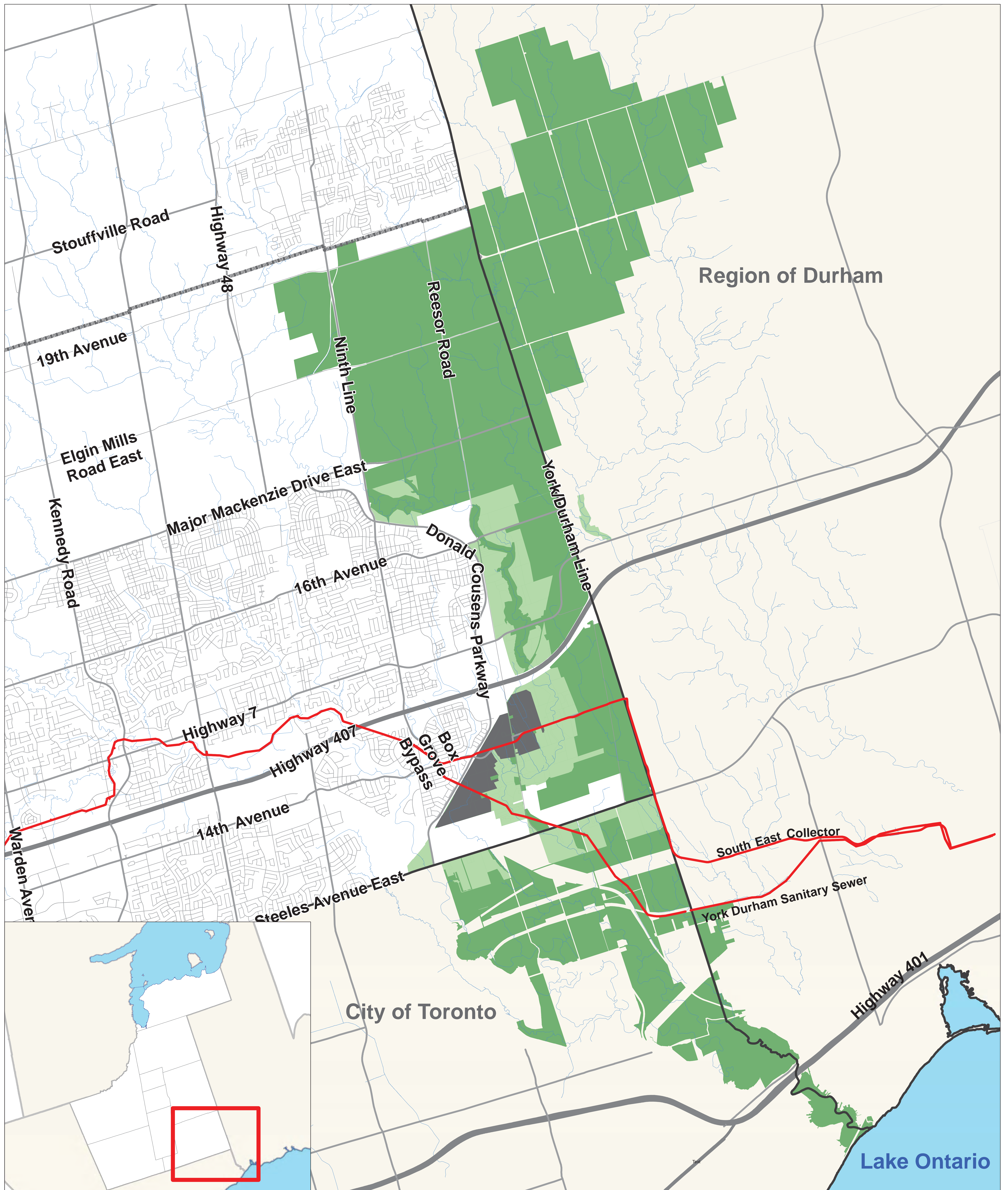
Staff will continue to provide input into the refinement of the Rouge National Urban Park Management Plan, and participate in operations meetings. It is anticipated that a Rouge National Urban Park Update report, including details on a Service Agreement, will be prepared for Council in Q1 2019.

Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.
Commissioner Environmental Services

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Attachment

eDocs# 8207676



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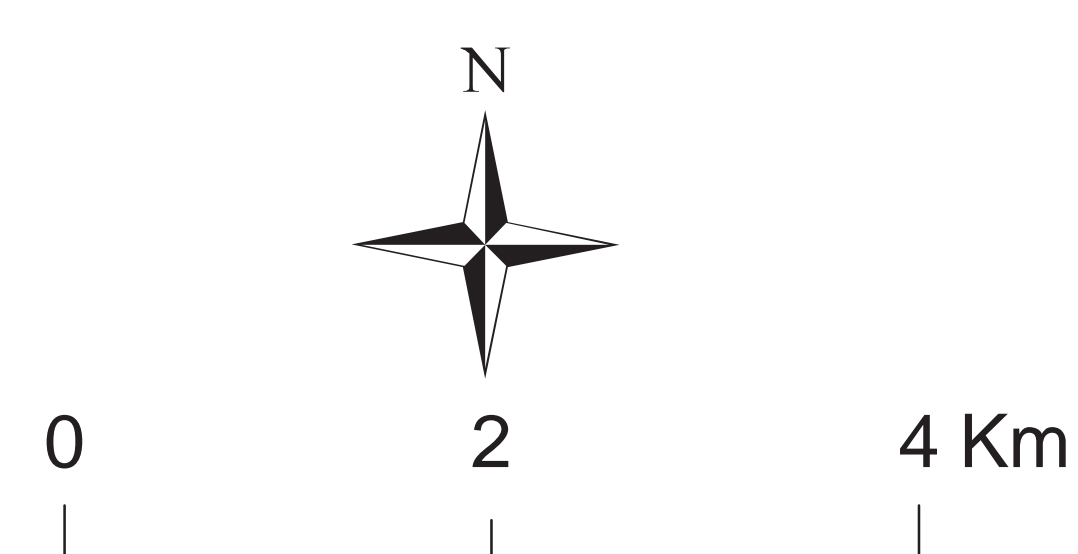
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- Legend**
- Rouge National Urban Park
 - Rouge Park
 - Toronto Region Conservation Lands
 - Bob Hunter Memorial Park
 - Municipal Boundary
 - Regional Boundary
 - Roads