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Bill to Create Canada's First National Urban Park Remains Flawed

Senate committee rejects all amendments to Rouge National Urban Park Act

Toronto, ON—Leading environmental conservation groups in the province stand by Ontario's decision to not transfer provincially controlled lands to the federal government for the proposed Rouge National Urban Park until environmental safeguards are improved.

The groups had hoped that the Senate Committee would amend the draft park law to prioritize nature conservation and meet international standards for a protected area but this did not happen today.

The bill fails to meet the fundamental requirement that a protected area must prioritize nature conservation as laid out in international standards, and fails to meet or exceed the environmental policies of the existing Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and Rouge Park Plans. The flawed *Rouge National Urban Park Act* represents a missed opportunity to effectively protect an ecological treasure for Canadians today and in the future.

As a result, the groups support the province's position that it cannot transfer its substantial Rouge Park lands (approximately 25 km²) to Parks Canada unless these changes are made. Unfortunately, as a result the new Rouge National Urban Park may be less than half the park's announced size, will not include the beautiful Rouge Valley system and will not be connected to Lake Ontario.

The groups will continue to work with the province to ensure the Rouge lands under its jurisdiction are well-protected; work cooperatively with farmers on solutions; and to encourage the federal government to strengthen the law to enable all lands to be transferred to the Rouge National Urban Park, and fulfil the promise of protecting this natural treasure, now and in the future.

The groups issuing this statement are: Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society–Wildlands League, David Suzuki Foundation, Environmental Defence, Friends of the Rouge Watershed and Ontario Nature.

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