

away from all environmentally sensitive areas, particularly the network of water courses and their supporting table lands. With wise planning and buffer zones around all rivers and tributaries, we will ensure that towns like Markham retain their environmental quality and natural heritage.

The park proposal put forward by the Save The Rouge Valley System organization is based on proven environmental planning principles that must be respected if the Rouge Valley System is to be maintained as a healthy and productive ecosystem.

The proposal encompasses 4,338 hectares of watershed area. This 4,338 hectares encompasses only 12 per cent of the entire watershed area. Of this 12 per cent, well over 75 per cent of the land is owned by the Government of Ontario. Most of the remaining lands are flood prone and therefore appropriate for acquisition by the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

I recently spoke with Stephen Marshall of the Save The Rouge Valley System in Markham. Mr. Marshall feels that the proposal put forward by his organization could best be achieved through a joint federal-provincial effort. He also said: "A provincial or joint federal-provincial park would really put Markham on the map. As Markham grows this park with increased protection of other significant natural areas will ensure that our community will continue to be a liveable healthy and beautiful community".

Never before have I witnessed such widespread public concern over an environmental issue as I have with this one. It is obvious that people are aware of what is at stake here. To lose this beautiful gift from nature to a garbage dump or another subdivision or a major highway would be criminal. It would not be an admirable legacy to pass on to the next generation of Canadians.

In September 1988 the federal government offered to contribute \$10 million toward saving metro Toronto's Rouge River Valley as a provincial park or ecological reserve. At the time former environment minister Tom McMillan nicely summed up the situation when he said: "It would be a major achievement for our generation to

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ensure that it (the Rouge) survives forever". That was in *The Globe and Mail* on September 16, 1988.

The rate of urbanization and development is accelerating in the Rouge Valley and has far surpassed any meaningful progress by any one level of government to provide environmental protection. Stream bank erosion, illegal dumping and sewers channelled directly into the water courses have degraded the Rouge River substantially. If this abuse is allowed to continue much longer, it will be too late to save the Rouge from gradual destruction. As more and more precious farm land is converted into housing projects and as the habitat of wildlife grows smaller and smaller, the time to make a difference and stop this madness grows shorter and shorter. We need urgent action and we need it yesterday.

To this end, Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for Scarborough Centre for introducing this motion and I urge all members to support it as a positive first step toward saving the entire Rouge ecosystem from harmful development proposals.

Our ultimate goal for the Rouge must be a park of the kind advocated by the Save The Rouge Valley System group which, as I mentioned earlier, is based on environmentally proven standards.

The 4,338 hectares of parkland envisioned, most of which is publicly owned land, constitutes all of the ground over which the Rouge River drains. This relatively small tract of land is vital to the preservation of the Rouge River ecosystem.

This proposed national heritage park envisions four broad management areas with complementary objectives. First, a natural reserve to protect and enhance all animal and plant life; second, passive recreation to provide high quality, low-impact outdoor education and recreation opportunities; third, a historic reserve to preserve the cultural heritage of the Rouge Valley system, including all archaeological evidence of native cultures; and finally the development of secondary tourism attractions that complement the exceptional natural and cultural assets of the area.

In its interim report of August 1989, the royal commission on the future of the Toronto waterfront recommended that the Rouge River Valley be protected as a natural heritage park. Spurred by thousands of phone calls, letters, and a record-breaking attendance of hundreds of Save The Rouge supporters at public meet-