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INSPIRING CHANGE

November 26, 2015

The Honourable Catherine McKenna
Minister of the Environment and Climate Change
Environment Canada
200 Sacré Cœur, 2nd floor
Gatineau, Québec
K1A 0H3

Dear Minister McKenna,

RE: Amendments to *Rouge National Urban Park Act*

On behalf of Nature Canada, Ontario Nature, and Environmental Defence we wish to congratulate you on your appointment as Canada's Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Our organizations appreciate and support the government's election platform commitments to improve the management of Canada's National Parks by protecting ecological integrity, restricting development inside parks, and increasing science spending in National Parks by \$25 million per year. We also look forward to working with you to address the top priorities relating to National Parks identified by Prime Minister Trudeau in your Mandate Letter.

An issue of significant concern to Nature Canada, Ontario Nature and Environmental Defence is the legislative and policy regime guiding protection and management of Rouge National Urban Park. Our organizations appreciate very much that the Prime Minister has directed you in your Mandate Letter to "work with the Ontario government to enhance the country's first National Urban Park," in part through "improved legislation to protect this important ecosystem and guide how the park will be managed."

We agree that the recently passed *Rouge National Urban Park Act* is deeply flawed because it fails to establish the primacy of ecological integrity in park management and therefore ignores provincial, national and international standards for protected areas. A priority for our three organizations is to support amended legislation so that the park realizes its full potential to conserve biodiversity, showcase healthy local food production and connect urban dwellers in the most heavily populated region of Canada. To that end, we respectfully request that the government introduce a bill into the House of Commons to achieve these goals early in the 2016 legislative session.

We are encouraged by the Prime Minister's recent meeting with Premier Wynne and are pleased that the government is committed to addressing this issue by working collaboratively with the province of Ontario to make the restoration and maintenance of ecological integrity the

top priority in managing the park. We welcome the federal government's leadership in this regard and will be supportive of actions taken.

In keeping with restoring the primacy of ecological integrity, we also look to your ministry to address two related matters. First, we ask you to ensure that the legislation and management plan governing the park "meet or exceed" the environmental protection standards for the Rouge watershed set out in provincial policy (i.e., Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Greenbelt Plan, Rouge Park and Watershed Plans). Second, we urge you to expand the size of the park by adding adjacent public lands that are currently under federal jurisdiction. Inclusion of these adjacent lands would enhance landscape connectivity between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine, as well as permanently protect Ontario's Greenbelt and make it far more likely that biodiversity and ecosystem services will be conserved.

In closing, we wish to thank you again for the government's clear commitment to improving the state of Canada's National Parks generally and Rouge National Urban Park specifically. Progress on this front will clearly demonstrate to Canadians that the new government is dedicated to protecting the natural heritage of which we are all so justifiably proud.

We would be pleased to meet with you or your staff to discuss how we can assist you in achieving early introduction and enactment of legislation to amend the *Rouge National Urban Parks Act*.

Yours sincerely,



Eleanor Fast
Executive Director
Nature Canada



Caroline Schultz
Executive Director
Ontario Nature



Tim Gray
Executive Director
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cc. Hon Brad Duguid, Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, Ontario
Daniel Watson, Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada Agency