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friends of sam smith park

The Honourable John Gerretson
Minister of the Environment
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Friends of Sam Smith Park
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September 30, 2008

Attention: The Honourable John Gerretson, Minister of the Environment

Established in 2006, ***Friends of Sam Smith Park*** is a community group of local residents and park users whose goals are to protect, enhance and preserve Colonel Samuel Smith Park and the Lakeshore Grounds, with a particular emphasis on plant and wildlife habitat.

We emerged as a formal group from an ad hoc assembly that gathered together to oppose a large regional skateboard facility that was proposed for an environmentally sensitive area around what is known as the Power House. The area contains meadow, woodlot, understory shrubs, wetland and creek and is the prime wildlife corridor and riparian pathway for migrating birds in the park.

Citizen opposition was so large and vocal that the City was forced to reconsider its plans. Councillor De Baeremaeker studied the issues and his report, "A Place for Nature, A Place for Youth" from 2006, recommended that this proposed location be abandoned for environmental reasons and that the habitat, in fact, should be enhanced. The report was accepted by the local Councillor who formally confirmed that a new location would be sought.

Now the City is proposing to build yet another large cement facility for active recreation, a \$2 million ice-skating track, immediately north of the Power House, just meters away from that ill-chosen location.

The lush canopy provided by the deciduous and coniferous trees that grow there is part of the continuing wildlife corridor that includes the southern meadow, the riparian

pathway along North Creek, the spruce grove, the regrettably narrow, previously contested and sparsely treed gap between the quadrangle and the school and the orchard and wooded areas to the north. It is inconceivable to believe that a wide cement path in that spot with a foundation base containing freezing tubes and a surface area of 13,000 square feet would not require the removal of trees and cause major damage to remaining root systems. There would undoubtedly be habitat disturbance in other forms – additional lighting, music, noise from the zamboni and compressor pumps, additional activity and the probability of noisy skateboard use during the other three seasons (school maintenance staff are already finding homemade plywood ramps hidden among the trees for use in front of the school!). There would be an increase of fast food litter from a concession stand that would inevitably pop up there.

We have already seen destruction of the habitat north of the Power House in the form of understory removal. The shrubs and ground plants that used to be there and provided cover and feeding spots for wildlife, particularly birds, have mostly been removed. It is not hard to imagine what might happen to the remaining understory if the plan goes ahead. In an urban area, we should be fostering the growth of native plants and wildlife, not promoting developments that detract from them.

Colonel Samuel Smith Park is primarily a **nature** park, conceived and designed as such from its earliest beginnings. It is imperative that projects like this are not implemented without the input from residents and park users in the form of a Citizen's Management/Advisory Committee and without proper environmental consideration.

Friends of Sam Smith Park is concerned about the environmental degradation that such a project would create and strongly support the application by *Citizens Concerned about the Future of The Etobicoke Waterfront* dated September 10th, 2008 to have the City of Toronto's planned ice skating track in Colonel Samuel Smith Park designated as a project to which the Environmental Act applies.

Yours sincerely

Allan Valk
Chairperson, Friends of Sam Smith Park