



Citizens Concerned about the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront

For Immediate Release

Queen's Park urged to intervene in park controversy

TORONTO, June 16 – A citizens' group opposing a \$2.5 million concrete skateboard/skating facility in a west end waterfront park is asking the Ontario Ministry of the Environment to intervene in the dispute.

The move follows the City of Toronto's decision to select Colonel Samuel Smith Park at Lakeshore Boulevard West and Kipling Avenue in Etobicoke for the 4,800 square metre project.

Citizens Concerned about the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront (CCFEW), a watchdog group which has monitored waterfront issues for almost two decades, has asked the environment ministry to designate the project under the Environmental Assessment Act.

Toronto's decision to locate the skateboard/skating facility in the naturalized park setting violates past decisions made under the Environmental Assessment Act, as well as the official master plan for the park, according to CCFEW's submission to the ministry.

CCFEW also claims that the environmental impact of the facility has not been evaluated in the context of Toronto's approved natural heritage policies – a case of Toronto disregarding its own rules.

The group charges the municipality with a lack of transparency and consultation during the decision-making process, and claims that there has been no adequate evaluation of alternatives to the Col. Sam Smith Park site. If the ministry were to designate the project, the City would be compelled to look at other sites for the facility, according to the group.

CCFEW president Brian Bailey said today he is absolutely convinced the facility would impair the environment and have an adverse impact on wildlife, particularly migrating birds.

"We can no longer stand by and watch the irrecoverable loss of green space that was originally intended for natural regeneration," he said.

Bailey explained that the thrust of the Environmental Assessment Act is providing for the protection, conservation and wise management of the environment.

"The legislation is designed to ensure that environmental problems or opportunities are considered and their effects are planned before development or building takes place," he said.

Bailey slammed critics who have attempted to portray CCFEW as being against the concept of a skateboard project. "We support the idea of

skateboard facility for young people, but skateboard projects don't belong in a naturalized waterfront part setting. It's that simple."

He said he would favour location in a less secluded urban environment where such a large expense of concrete pavement would not be incongruous. Ruth Grier, a former Ontario environment minister, is a strong supporter of CCFEW's submission to Queen's Park.

She said she disagreed strongly with Toronto's assertion that no significant habitats or species would be "significantly impacted" by the proposed facility.

"A biologist's report paid for by the City indicates that 121 migratory bird species use the park's habitats. The same report recommends that no vegetation be removed from the site from April to July, the migratory bird period in this area of the province," she said. "We need some explanations. The City is planning this project in a relatively isolated area of the park, with no through traffic. People are concerned about safety, security and surveillance, for example. Even the natural environment assessment report warns of a risk of vandalism to trees near the facility, and calls for plantings to provide noise buffers."

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