



October 26, 2005

Chairman and Members
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Re: Colonel Sam Smith Park

We write to share with you our concern about the City's recent plans to build a regional skateboard facility in Colonel Sam Smith Park. Col. Sam Smith is one of the waterfront parks in south Etobicoke for which CCFEW has raised money, organized clean-up days and tree plantings and where we conduct regular bird walks. We shared the Authority's pride when you received an international waterfront award for this park.

With the TRCA we were members of the Lakeshore Grounds Design and Management Committee which, along with a Technical Working Group, met regularly for several years to develop a Master Design and Implementation Plan for the park. The Plan called for the establishment of a Design and Management Committee and a Public Advisory Group. Unfortunately the City, despite repeated requests to do so, has not created either of those bodies and in recent years consultation with CCFEW and community residents has been a hit and miss experience.

Now the Parks Department is recommending that a \$500,000 one and a half acre skateboard facility be constructed in an area south of the Power House and bordering the part of the park that is designated a natural heritage area. There has been one public meeting organized by the local Councillor at which four parks were identified as possible locations for such a project. At this meeting many questions were raised by those present, the majority of whom did not favour Col. Sam Smith as the site of a skateboard facility. Since then Councillor Grimes and the City's Manager of Parks, Recreation and Forestry have made it clear that their preferred site is Col. Sam Smith and that the final decision will be made by them without further reference to City Council.

We understand that the Parks Department has contracted with a biologist to prepare answers to the concerns presented by CCFEW and others at the public meeting but we have been refused information about the terms of reference of this study and have been told that it will not be made public until after the decision is made about where to locate the skateboard facility. A local resident has filed a Freedom of Information request with the City with respect to this.

The goal of the Master Plan for Col. Sam Smith Park is "To conserve the heritage features, evoke historical land uses and restore ecological integrity to the site while providing a place that is distinctive, accessible and conducive to the public's education, recreation and well-being." There are detailed clauses about how to "restore, improve

and establish ecological systems and units” and until now the Authority and the City have done a wonderful job of doing just that. Under the heading of “Public Recreation Principles” the Plan says that passive recreation facilities should dominate, that facilities should be developed in a manner that is compatible with existing heritage and environmental features, that “single purpose facilities which occupy large land areas should be discouraged at this specific site”.

CCFEW does not believe that a major skateboard facility meets any of these criteria. We are concerned about the effect a massive concrete structure will have on bird and wildlife habitat. We think that there should be a comprehensive storm water management plan. We note that the City describes a similar skateboard facility in Willowdale as having the advantage of being visible from two major streets – Leslie and Cummer. The Power House location is only visible from an internal park road and, given the vandalism that has damaged signs and lookout platforms in the park for which CCFEW raised funds, we are concerned that security fences and lights will be constructed in the future. This would greatly alter the nature of Col. Sam Smith Park.

TRCA has made a significant investment in this park. The leadership and expertise that you have contributed over the many years of debate and planning led to the creation of a unique natural waterfront in south Etobicoke. Colonel Sam Smith Park as it is today will be seriously compromised if the City continues with its skateboard plans and so we need your intervention to protect this priceless asset. We ask that you refer this matter to the Waterfront Advisory Board for further consideration and we request an opportunity to appear before the Board when the issue is next discussed.

Thank you.

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