



NEWS RELEASE

**Ted Arnott, MPP
Wellington-Halton Hills**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 20, 2015

Liberals putting politics ahead of public policy, says MPP Arnott

(Queen's Park) – The Rouge National Urban Park could be a national treasure and Ontario's Liberal Government should stop playing politics with it, says Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott.

In a statement in the Ontario Legislature on April 16, Mr. Arnott, who serves as the Ontario PC Critic to the Minister of Infrastructure, once again called out the Liberal Government for their insistence on playing political games and their refusal to work cooperatively with the Federal Government to create North America's largest urban park.

"Unfortunately, the Minister of Infrastructure is continuing to play politics with the Rouge Park project," said Mr. Arnott. "He's breaking the agreement and even using his recalcitrance as a Liberal fundraising strategy."

"By putting politics ahead of good policy, the minister is putting at risk almost \$144 million committed by the federal government for this initiative," Mr. Arnott continued. "This is money that would be used to protect the environmental integrity of this land and ensure that the Rouge National Urban Park is enjoyed by the people of this province for decades to come."

On January 26, 2013 the Ontario Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Government to create the Rouge National Urban Park. Approximately two-thirds of the land would have come from the Provincial Government.

However, last year, the Ontario Government suddenly backtracked on its commitment, under the pretence that the legislation to create the park did not include adequate environmental protections.

In a March 20 editorial, the *Globe and Mail* blasted the Ontario Government, saying: "Ontario's justification for pulling out of the deal doesn't hold up to scrutiny."

Mr. Arnott believes that the creation of the Park would protect these valuable lands for future generations.

"The creation of the Rouge National Urban Park would provide strong protection measures for the land between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges moraine, as we know Parks Canada maintains high standards," Mr. Arnott argued. "We also know that the Rouge National Urban Park would be protected by dedicated year-round park wardens. These wardens would ensure the ecological, environmental and cultural integrity of the park by enforcing rules against illegal dumping, poaching, polluting, hunting, vandalism and the theft of cultural artifacts – all issues that have plagued the park for many years."

Mr. Arnott's statement followed up on his questions to the Minister in Question Period earlier this month.

"Today we call upon the minister to stop playing games, stop delaying, find another issue to fundraise on and stop holding the Rouge Park hostage," concluded Mr. Arnott. "Let's instead take the next step forward and work together to create the greatest urban park in North America."

(Attached: The Hansard record of Mr. Arnott's statement in the Ontario Legislature, April 16, 2015)

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Mr. Ted Arnott: It has now been over two years since the Liberal government agreed to transfer land to the federal government to create the Rouge National Urban Park, which would be the largest urban park in North America. The creation of the Rouge National Urban Park would provide strong protection measures for the land between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges moraine, as we know Parks Canada maintains high standards.

We also know that the Rouge National Urban Park would be protected by dedicated year-round park wardens. These wardens would ensure the ecological, environmental and cultural integrity of the park by enforcing rules against illegal dumping, poaching, polluting, hunting, vandalism and the theft of cultural artifacts-all issues that have plagued the park for many years.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Infrastructure is continuing to play politics with the Rouge park project. He's breaking the agreement and even using his recalcitrance as a Liberal fundraising strategy.

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By putting politics ahead of good policy, the minister is putting at risk almost \$144 million committed by the federal government for this initiative. This is money that would be used to protect the environmental integrity of this land and ensure that the Rouge National Urban Park is enjoyed by the people of this province for decades to come.

Today we call upon the minister to stop playing games, stop delaying, find another issue to fundraise on and stop holding the Rouge park hostage. Let's instead take the next step forward and work together to create the greatest urban park in North America.