

Mayor, ministers have pivotal meeting on park

By Mark PavilonsEditorLocal JournalismInitiative Reporter

King Mayor Steve Pellegrini is optimistic following a meeting with provincial officials regarding the East Humber Park project. The property, located at the northwest corner of King and Bathurst, has been the focus of efforts for several years. I am optimistic following a pivotal meeting with two provincial ministers aimed at advancing the highly anticipated East Humber Park project. The meeting aimed to discuss the park's potential impact on the community and the environment, the mayor said. East Humber Park has garnered attention as a vital green space for residents and visitors alike, promoting outdoor activities and conservation. Local advocates have rallied for the project, underscoring its importance for enhancing community well-being and biodiversity. I believe this meeting marks a crucial step towards realizing the vision for East Humber Park. There is a growing consensus on the need for accessible green spaces, especially in near-urban areas, the mayor added. The ministers expressed their commitment to reviewing the project's proposals and considering them for inclusion in the 2026 provincial budget. Residents are hopeful for a positive announcement that could transform East Humber Park from a vision into reality.

From the outset, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan recognized the importance of not just maintaining but also improving or restoring the ecological functions of the moraine, as well as creating new opportunities for public recreational access. The Conservation Authorities Moraine Coalition's 2015 report card identified the need for public authorities to take action to achieve these objectives. Such opportunities have been few and far between. That's why there is growing excitement about the proposal to create a new, publicly accessible green space in the heart of the moraine: the East Humber Headwaters Park. The property, over 500 acres (207 hectares) of largely vacant land in York Region, spans the entire width of a narrow corridor of the protected moraine area between King City and Richmond Hill. The property is uniquely important in that it provides an unbroken link between the east and western ends of the moraine, and includes the headwaters of the East Humber River. The vision for the proposed park includes restoring much of the landscape back to natural moraine habitat, allowing it to again provide critical ecological functions as a headwaters area. The proposed East Humber Headwaters Park is a can't miss opportunity to create a landmark public space for millions of GTA residents. That's why the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the Township of King, the Regional Municipality of York, and the City of Toronto have passed resolutions strongly supporting the project. The idea has also been embraced by local groups like Concerned Citizens of King Township and Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM), as well as provincial organizations including Ontario Nature, EcoSpark and Earthroots. Local proponents need the Ontario Government's support for this park to become a reality. The land is privately owned, having been in the same family for nearly 80 years. The landowner is willing to work with the provincial government to exchange the property for less ecologically sensitive development land outside of the moraine and owned by the province. TRCA staff noted opportunities like this are rare, and often fleeting. As the GTA's population continues to grow and expand, it is vital that we seize the chance to create outstanding public spaces for all to enjoy. We urge the Ontario Government to heed the tremendous opportunity presented by the East Humber Headwaters Park and join with us to enhance the Oak Ridges Moraine and make this landmark public space a reality, said Maria Augimeri, chair, Toronto and Region Conservation. The idea has been circulating since 2021 and has had the support of King Vaughan MPP Stephen Lecce. Families in King and Vaughan are incredibly proud of the natural beauty of the Oak Ridges Moraine, and I am committed to advancing the expansion and protection of our green spaces, said Lecce. We are taking action to protect Ontario's pristine natural environment by working to create the East Humber Headwaters Park for families to enjoy now and for future generations. This historic expansion and protection one of the largest near urban parks in the country would position the Township of King and the entire province as a leader in conservation and as a steward of Ontario's natural heritage. This initiative delivers on the objectives cited in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, which recognizes the importance of improving or restoring the ecological functions of the moraine, while also creating opportunities for public recreational enjoyment and access. MPP Lecce will continue to work constructively with King Mayor Steve Pellegrini and council, in addition to local conservation authorities and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to support progress and delivery of this regional environmental priority.