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Date: **Tuesday, April 27th - 6:30 pm**

Location: **GARDEN BASKET PLAZA
(Suite 203) 2nd floor**

Featuring: **Guest Speaker Adriano Giordano
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Rouge Park addition only start: Heath

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

Five years after it pledged 3,400 acres, enough to double the length of Rouge Park, the province has finally handed over the land.

The ceremony took place at the Finch Meander, a bend on the Rouge River in Scarborough where former Liberal Premier David Peterson committed the province in 1990 to protecting the river to its headwaters in the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Because it transferred properties it owned along the river in Markham and Scarborough, and because the federal government has dedicated a connected corridor to the moraine through Markham, Pickering and Uxbridge, the province can say Mr. Peterson's pledge has been fulfilled, at least in part.

But environmental groups and the Town of Markham still want most of a 3,000-acre former agricultural preserve in south-

east Markham added to the park. "We've only just begun," said Regional Councillor Jack Heath, who predicted another announcement expanding Rouge Park boundaries. "It'll be the jewel of the east end."

Ministers at the handover Wednesday suggested the park will be included in the province's proposed Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt. This would place the park under the same regulations as the moraine and Niagara Escarpment, providing legislated clout it lacks today.

Rouge Park is "the green door for the eastern GTA," a wilderness in the city and "a gift we must leave to our children and their children," Municipal Affairs Minister John Gerretsen said.

Natural Resources Minister David Ramsay praised volunteers working to preserve the river and said the expanded park will enhance life in Greater Toronto. "We know that a healthy environment and a strong economy go hand in

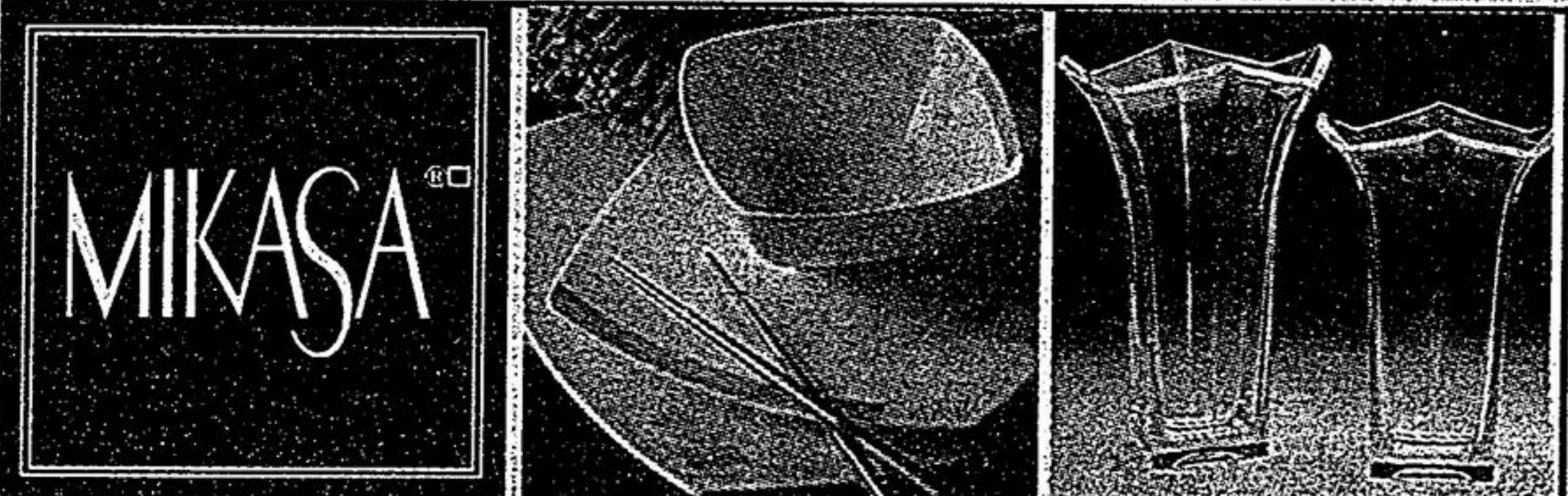
hand," he added.

The donation to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority — the largest since the park was formed in 1994 — includes 1,423 acres along the river's Little Rouge tributary in Markham, 79 acres along the southern end of Milne Dam Conservation Area and 289 other acres in Markham which will go to the town but be part of the park.

Properties totalling 1,747 acres in Scarborough and Pickering were also added.

Jim Fought, executive director of Ontario Nature (formerly the Federation of Ontario Naturalists) and a member of the provincial task force forming a greenbelt plan, called it an important step. "This is a signal from the government that they mean business."

"I think it just took time," said Gerry Phillips, the latest minister responsible for the corporation, of the long-delayed land transfer. "We're transferring \$35 million worth of land here."



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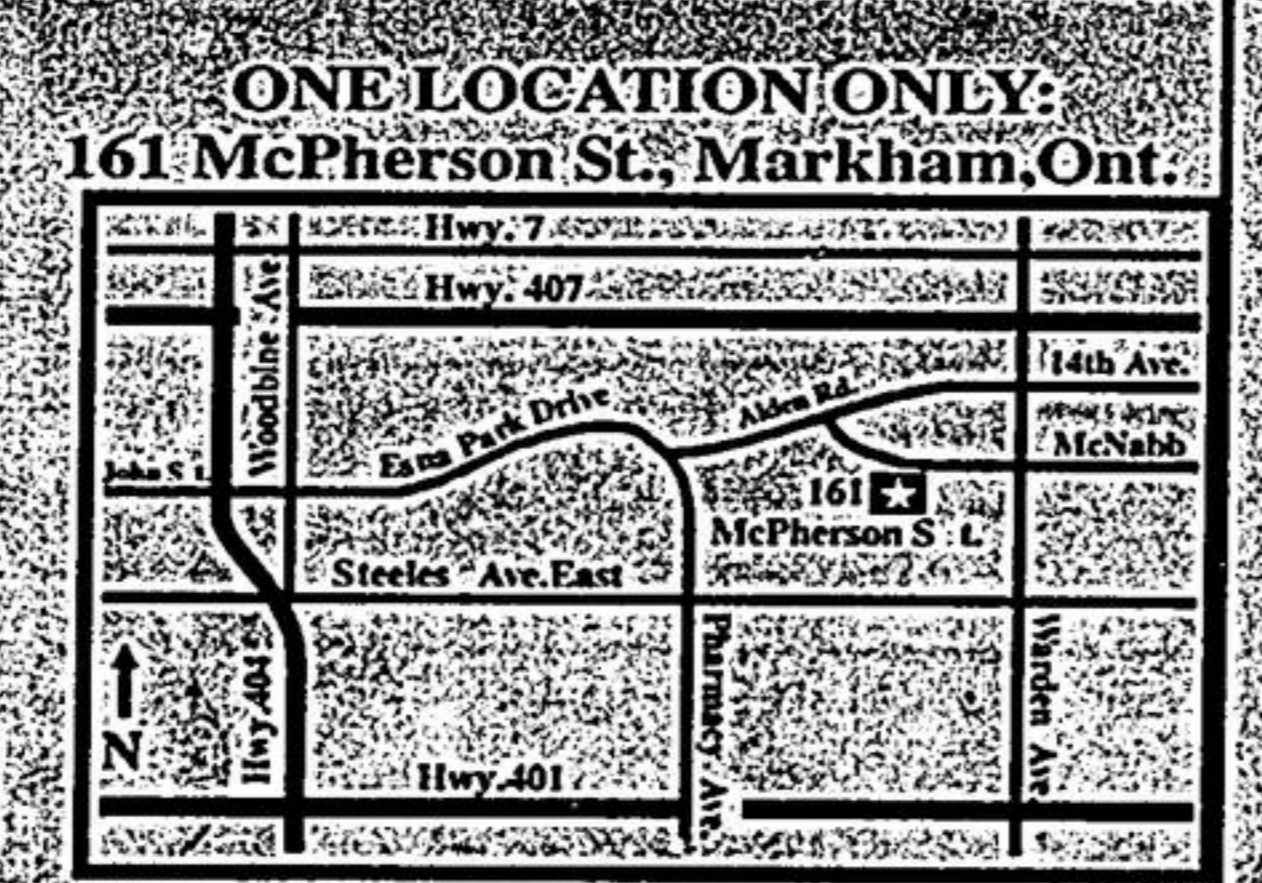
- Tues. Apr. 27 9:30am-8:00 pm
- Wed. Apr. 28 10:00am-8:00 pm
- Thurs. Apr. 29 10:00am-8:00 pm
- Fri. Apr. 30 10:00am-8:00 pm
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