

TORONTO, Sept. 14, 2013 /CNW/ - The world's largest BioBlitz was launched today in what will be Canada's first national urban park, with the signing of a new collaborative agreement between Parks Canada and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). On behalf of the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Canada's Environment Minister and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, Mr. Corneliu Chisu, Member of Parliament for Pickering-Scarborough East, and Ms. Janet Carding, ROM Director and CEO, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize an exciting partnership between the two organizations to build deeper connections between Canadians and their natural and cultural heritage.

"Parks Canada has cultivated an excellent relationship and already has a successful track record of collaboration on significant projects with the Royal Ontario Museum," said MP Chisu. "This formalized relationship will allow us to explore even more ambitious initiatives to help connect Canadians, and especially residents of the GTA, with the country's natural and cultural heritage."

"Biodiversity is an excellent connection point between the ROM and Parks Canada, and it is fitting to launch our partnership with Parks Canada at the world's largest Bioblitz," said Janet Carding, ROM Director and CEO. "The BioBlitz is a wonderful opportunity for citizen scientists to contribute to the future national urban park, plus de découvrir plus de 145 cultures mondiales." Il les façons pour nos utilisateurs d'ation. BioBlitz and for the Museum itself as we continue to find new ways for our users to access our expertise and unique resources in natural history and world cultures."

The MOU signing kicked-off the 2013 Ontario BioBlitz; an extraordinary event that engages nature lovers of all ages as citizen scientists, with a goal of documenting all life within the park, while educating Ontarians about the importance of our biological diversity. The World's largest BioBlitz is hosted by Parks Canada in the future Rouge National Urban Park, in collaboration with the ROM, the Toronto Zoo, the existing Rouge Park, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the Rouge Valley Conservation Centre, Ontario Nature and the Biodiversity Institute of Ontario.

"Nowhere do we have a greater opportunity to share our nation's greatest natural and cultural treasures with Canadians - including new Canadians, urban Canadians, and young Canadians - in the Greater Toronto Area," added Minister Aglukkaq. "The 2013 BioBlitz is the perfect example of what can be done when partners join forces and hundreds of citizens dedicate precious time to their community and their country."

"Rouge National Urban Park will be one of the most significant environmental projects ever undertaken in Ontario," said Tracy MacCharles, MPP for Pickering-Scarborough East. "The Ontario government has protected this important part of the Greenbelt for many years and the BioBlitz helps educate local residents about biodiversity and conservation."

The future Rouge National Urban Park will be created, managed and administered in a way to ensure protection of the area's rich natural and cultural heritage, while at the same time offering residents of Canada's largest city outstanding experiences for generations to come. Rouge National Urban Park will also provide Parks Canada the opportunity to better engage with urban Canadians and help them build meaningful connections to Canada's network of treasured places and iconic landscapes.

For additional information on today's announcement, please see the accompanying backgrounder at www.parkscanada.gc.ca under **Media Room**.

SOURCE Parks Canada