

Canada's First Municipal Geopark Declared

April 9, 2008

Metcalfe Geopark Almonte Ward, Mississippi Mills, Ontario

- WHAT** On April 7th, the Council of the Town of Mississippi Mills approved the designation of Metcalfe Park, in Almonte ward, as a Geopark. With the Council's declaration, Metcalfe Geopark became the first municipal Geopark in Canada
- WHERE** Almonte ward (population 4400) of Mississippi Mills is located about 55 km west of Ottawa in eastern Ontario on the Mississippi River.
- WHY** The designation of Metcalfe Geopark was made in 2008, during the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE), as a local contribution to national and international efforts towards a better public understanding of our geological heritage. Canada's Honorary Patron of the IYPE is Dr. Roberta Bondar (OC, O.Ont., MD, PhD, FRCP, FRSC).
- GEOPARK PLAN** Plans are now underway to move additional large blocks and boulders from the Almonte area to Canada's first municipal Geopark in 2008. Large specimens will be on display at Metcalfe Geopark to represent the various rock types that underlie the regional landscape. It may take several years to put in place all of the 20 or so large samples to tell the story of the region's rich geological heritage. Understanding today's picturesque countryside, billions of years in the making, is a journey back in time to ocean depths, towering mountains, colliding and splitting continents, and a landscape locked in ice.
- WHO** Allan Donaldson in Ottawa (Professor Emeritus, Department of Earth Sciences, Carleton University, and Chair, Friends of Canadian Geoheritage), and Neil Carleton of Almonte (geoheritage volunteer and classroom teacher, R. Tait McKenzie Public School), have been promoting the creation of this park since 2004 when they launched the Almonte Geoheritage Project, in collaboration with the Ottawa-Gatineau Geoheritage Committee.

NEXT STEPS

The first two phases of the project included the exploration of the Almonte area geology, the creation of brochures for walking geotours, field trips to Metcalfe Park, and the relocation of the first large specimens to the Park.

The next phase includes fund raising to move additional large blocks or boulders to the site with the heavy equipment that's needed. This includes a geoescue of significant samples from the Highway 417 expansion at the west end of Ottawa.

An official ribbon cutting ceremony for Metcalfe Geopark will be planned for later in 2008 with the participation of the Mayor, Council, and a representative of the IYPE.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Letters of support for the designation of Metcalfe Geopark were received by the Town from:

- the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists - Mike McPhail, President;
- the Mississippi Mills Chamber of Commerce - Julie Argue, Information Officer;
- as well as relatives of the late Dr. Archibald Metcalfe, for whom Metcalfe Park was named, from as far away as North Dakota and Washington.

LOCAL NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

The progress of the Almonte Geoheritage Project and the development of Metcalfe Geopark have received great coverage in our weekly newspaper, *The Almonte Gazette*.

"Geopark is passed by committee", Phil Ambroziak, Associate Editor, *Almonte Gazette*, April 1, 2008, p. 1, 12.

"Potential for 'geopark' discussed at meeting", Phil Ambroziak, Associate Editor, January 1, 2008, p. 1,2.

"Efforts to form a 'geopark' within Almonte continue", Phil Ambroziak, Associate Editor, November 27, 2007, p. 13.

"Geoheritage Project receiving support from local community", Phil Ambroziak, Associate Editor, October 12, 2004, p. 7.

"Almonte Geoheritage Project gets off ground", Ashley Kulp, Reporter, *Almonte Gazette*, August 24, 2004, p. 3.

GEOHERITAGE PARKS, TRAILS, GARDENS

Metcalfe Geopark is Canada's first municipal Geopark. Across Canada there are a variety of geoheritage parks, gardens, and trails, including:

Johnson GEO Centre and GEO Park (Johnson Family Foundation), St. John's, Newfoundland;
RockWalk Park (Haileybury Mining School), Haileybury, Ontario;
Peter Russell Rock Garden (University of Waterloo), Waterloo, Ontario;
Waterloo GeoTime Trail (City of Waterloo), Waterloo, Ontario;
Regina GEOrock Garden (City of Regina), Regina, Saskatchewan.

METCALFE PARK

Metcalfe Park in Almonte, located by the lower falls in town on the Mississippi River, was named in honour of the late Dr. Archibald Metcalfe (1869-1962):

- local Physician for 63 years (M.D.C.M. 1896 Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario);
- Town Councillor and Mayor (at least 7 terms);
- driving force to establish the Almonte hydro electric generating station;
- recognized by Ontario Hydro in 1954 for "his contribution to the program of municipal Hydro systems of the province by his devoted service as Hydro Commissioner".

MISSISSIPPI MILLS

The Town of Mississippi Mills in eastern Ontario was created on January 1, 1998, by the amalgamation of the town of Almonte with the townships of Pakenham and Ramsay, including the village of Pakenham. The new community covers approximately 523 sq km and has a population of about 12 000.

CONTACTS

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