




In February 2022, Friends of Swan Lake sent out a questionnaire to ratepayer groups within Markham, soliciting their views on the conditions within parks in their areas designated as having natural settings and adjacent to a major water body. The questionnaire was based on the founding principles cited in the City of Brampton’s recently adopted Eco Park Strategy and Lake Enhancement Program.

The following report summarizes the responses from three area associations.

Park	Major Water Body	Respondent's Association
 Milne Dam Conservation Park	Rouge River, Milne Reservoir	Milne Dam Conservation Park Ratepayers Assoc.
 Toogood Pond Park	Toogood Pond, Bercyz Creek, Little Rouge Creek	Normandale Community Residents Association
 Swan Lake Park	Swan Lake	Friends of Swan Lake Park

## Observations on the Natural Spaces Component

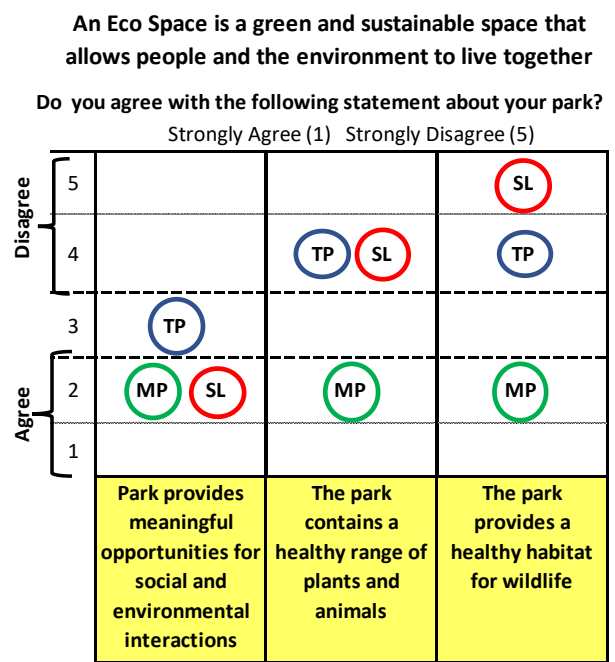
All three parks contain areas designated by Markham as “Natural Spaces, Wildlife Places”.

Toogood Pond was viewed as being primarily a natural setting while Milne Park and Swan Lake Park were described as “mostly natural setting, with some recreational facilities”. It was reported that Toogood Pond and Swan Lake Park provide a good balance between natural spaces and human interaction while it was indicated that Milne Park would benefit from more natural spaces away from the houses and trails, free from human interaction.

The adjacent chart summarizes the views expressed related to the natural environmental setting within each park.

Milne Park and Swan Lake Park were reported to provide meaningful opportunities for social and environmental interactions.

Toogood Pond and Swan Lake Park were viewed as not containing a healthy range of plants and animals nor a healthy habitat for wildlife. All three parks were viewed as containing invasive plant species. Several species were noted in Swan Lake Park while Hogwood was thought to be present at Toogood Pond. Markham’s Phase 1 Natural Heritage Inventory and Assessment Report (May 2021) reported several types of invasive plants within Milne Park as well.



### Use of Land Based Elements

All respondents indicated that cycling was permitted on the pathways within the park but also noted that the pathways were too narrow to adequately support both pedestrians and cyclists.

Overall, the condition of the pathways was rated “good”.

At Milne Park and Swan Lake Park some of the pathways were deemed not accessible to visitors with walking mobility issues due to the nature of the terrain whereas at Toogood Pond some pathways were considered not accessible due to maintenance.

		How do you rate the pathways in your park?			
		Very Good (1) Very Poor (5)			
Poor	5				
	4				
Good	3			MP TP	
	2		SL		MP SL
	1	MP			
		Boardwalk	Asphalt or Concrete	Stone or Gravel	Dirt

### Observations on the Water Quality

Respondents were asked how they would describe the water quality within the major water body.

How would you describe the water quality in your major water body?	
Clear water; wide range of plants and fish	
Moderately clear water; good range of plants and fish	
Poor water clarity; limited range of plants and fish	MP TP
Water dark green; only a few plants and fish	SL

Milne Reservoir and Toogood Pond were described as having “Poor water clarity, limited range of plants and fish”. This description aligns with the scientific classification of “Eutrophic”.

Currently Swan Lake is described as having “water dark green, only a few plants and fish” which aligns with “Hypereutrophic”, the poorest classification.

Markham recently approved a long-term water quality improvement program for Swan Lake that, if successful, would increase the water quality to Eutrophic level, the same level observed for Milne Reservoir and Toogood Pond.

**Do you agree that the water body in your park reflects well on Markham's attention to:**

The respondents were asked if the local water body reflects well on Markham's attention to environmental factors.

None of the respondents felt that the current water quality reflected well on Markham's attention to the local ecosystem, the habitat for a variety of species nor on the care for the aquatic environment.

All respondents indicated they would like to see water quality improved so that it is safer for human interaction.

Two of the three respondents indicated improved water quality was also expected to improve aquatic life within the water body but also provide general environmental benefits.

		Strongly Agree (1) Strongly Disagree (5)		
Disagree	5	SL	SL	SL
	4	TP	TP	TP
	3	MP	MP	MP
Agree	2			
	1			
		Local Ecosystem	Habitat for a Variety of Species	Aquatic Environment

Why would you like to see water quality improved?		
TG SL	MP SL	MP TP SL
For general environmental reasons	To improve aquatic life	So that it is safer for human interaction

### Engagement with the Major Water Body

The respondents were asked to outline their understanding of the currently permitted water-based activities in their park and to indicate what additional activities they would like to see supported by Markham. None of the respondents were advocating for swimming.

All respondents indicated that they either have or would like to see interaction with the major water body to include summer water engagement activities such as fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and boarding and ice skating in the winter.

Permitted and Desired Water Interaction Activities				
Desired	SL	TP SL	MP TP SL	
Currently Permitted	MP TP	MP		
	Fishing	Canoeing, Kayaking, Boarding	Skating	Swimming

All respondents indicated there was the need for greater access within the park for fishing. Respondents noted the need for improved viewing at Toogood Pond and at Swan Lake and for improved access to Swan Lake for canoeing and kayaking.

All agree that water related activities are not encouraged and indicated that more could be done within the park to encourage and support interaction with the water body.

There are sufficient access points to the major water body			Do you agree that the amenities in the park encourage and support interaction with the water body and that water related activities are encouraged.		
Strongly Agree (1) Strongly Disagree (5)			Strongly Agree (1) Strongly Disagree (5)		
Disagree	5	SL	TP SL	SL	
	4	MP TP			
Agree	3				
	2			MP TP	
	1		MP		
		For fishing	For Viewing	For Canoeing, Kayaking, Boarding	

Do you agree that the amenities in the park encourage and support interaction with the water body and that water related activities are encouraged.			
Strongly Agree (1) Strongly Disagree (5)			
Disagree	5	TP SL	TP SL
	4	MP	MP
Agree	3		
	2		
	1		
		Supporting Amenities	Water Related Activities Encouraged

### Concluding Comments

All respondents agreed that their park would benefit if Markham were to adopt a program like Brampton's Lake Enhancement Program that is focused on encouraging and supporting water-based activities.

Respondents for Milne Park and Swan Lake believe that their park would also benefit if Markham were to adopt an Eco Park Strategy like Brampton's.

Would your park benefit if Markham adopted a program similar to Brampton's Eco Park Strategy and Lake Enhancement Program?		
Yes	MP SL	MP TP SL
Don't Know	TP	
No		
		Eco Park Strategy
		Lake Enhancement Strategy

Respondents provided the following additional comments:

- Conflicts on trails between pedestrians and cyclists. Busy trails. Would be great to have separation.
- I strongly support your initiatives around Swan Lake. Markham has tremendous assets that are poorly managed by the city, in fact, the city is discouraging winter skating on the ponds. New developments are being approved with virtually no parks or recreational facilities which make preserving and enhancing the existing assets even more important. We should support local politicians that support parks, recreation, and green initiatives.

### Summary

Respondents indicated overall satisfaction with the mix of environmental and social interaction supported within their park but indicated more could be done to improve the terrestrial habitat and in making pathways safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

The respondents indicated overall dissatisfaction with the water quality and the limited range of water-based activities currently supported and encouraged within the park. Respondents were also of the view that more should be done to improve water quality and human engagement with the water body.