



Mark Holland, M.P.
Ajax – Pickering

For Immediate Release

August 23, 2010

Ottawa breaks laws, demolition moratorium in Pickering

PICKERING – News of the Harper government’s decision to demolish dozens of buildings in north Pickering, including heritage structures, comes on the one year anniversary of its failure to answer access to information requests put forward by Ajax-Pickering MP Mark Holland on behalf of his constituents about Pickering’s Federal Lands. Under federal Access to Information laws, failure of the government to respond within 30 days, without notice of extension, is a clear breach of the Accountability Act.

“This is how Mr. Harper’s government chooses to answer questions put to it by my community,” said Holland, “with bulldozers.”

“The fact that Ottawa chooses demolitions over information it is by law required to provide shows yet again the contempt that this government has for not only our community but our democracy,” said Holland.

In total, the demolition list includes 42 structures that are currently boarded up. They are a legacy of mismanagement by Transport Canada, which failed to fulfill its responsibilities as a landlord to maintain properties in good condition over decades, while enforcing a “no re-rental” policy after original tenants vacated that meant homes were boarded up and left to rot. Due to Ottawa's blatant disregard for its own accountability laws there’s no way of knowing which structures are genuinely unsafe and which ones are tenantable.

“These boarded-up homes and heritage properties are *Monuments of Mismanagement* by the government,” explained Holland, “and Ottawa seems only too happy to tear them down in order to de-populate and silence our community.”

Apart from access to information requests submitted by Holland to the government last year, questions from other community representatives have also gone unanswered. Last year, the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade wrote to the Prime Minister asking that he release the airport needs assessment study promised years ago and announce a decision on the future of the Pickering Lands. Both requests were ignored.

Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and the Liberal Party of Canada, added his voice to the chorus of those calling for answers. In a visit to Pickering last month, he spoke candidly on the airport proposal, saying that based on the information available “there’s no business case for an airport.” Ignatieff also signed a letter with MPs Mark Holland and Dan McTeague (Pickering – Scarborough East) calling on the Prime Minister to release the airport needs assessment study and come clean on any plans for Pickering Lands.

Holland’s record on protecting the community living on federal lands include helping to secure a moratorium on all demolitions and evictions as well as a commitment by the government to hold an open consultation process with the community on future land use, which included conducting an independent airport needs assessment study. While the current Harper government has disregarded the commitments of the previous government, Holland remains willing to work with Ottawa in the best interests of the community and his constituents.

Holland appreciates the efforts of many in Pickering, including Pickering City Councillor David Pickles, who is currently seeking the support of City Council to demand that Ottawa stop these demolitions, reinstate the moratorium on all demolitions and work with the community to come to a decision on the future of Pickering Lands.

- 30 -

For more information:

Karl Maretic

Office of Mark Holland, M.P. for Ajax-Pickering
613-995-8614