

## Timeline: 2013-2017

Airport Re-announcement and the Rouge National Urban Park / More Land to RNUP and More Studies

### Airport Re-announcement and the Rouge National Urban Park

2013

- **Jan.-Mar.** – Demolitions are non-stop. Among the many bulldozed structures are Dr Fish's charming house in Brougham, the big brick Miller house on Old Brougham Road, Altona's 1911 schoolhouse, the exquisite fieldstone Brophy house on Brock Road...
- **June 11, 2013** – Finance Minister Jim Flaherty in a hastily convened press conference at the Pickering Site Office, near Claremont, announces that the airport will go ahead after all. The area retained for it is almost twice the size of Pearson. He says that some 5,000 acres will go to the new Rouge National Urban Park, and that the rest of the land will be used for "economic development." He says "NO" when asked if agricultural uses are part of the plan. He says he has based his decision on the findings of the GTAA's Needs Assessment Study of 2010.
- Some 15 members of Land Over Landings, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, and Green Durham Association, having learned about the press conference through a leak, show up to hear the news. While the announcement is under way, we're forced to stand in a field behind orange barriers, well out of sight and out of earshot, watched by police.
- **June 12** – In an interview on CFRB's NewsTalk 1010, Jim Flaherty says: "it takes 10 years to build an airport" [not true; many are operational in far less time]. He says the last study "was done for Transport Canada 2011" [not true; the study was started in 2007 and delivered to Transport Canada in March 2010; the government sat on it until July 2011]. He claims the study "said we'd need it [the airport] by 2027" [not true; only a "most likely" scenario was put forward and even that had conditions attached]. When asked if he expects much local opposition, he's dismissive ("Well, there'll be some...") and changes the subject.
- **June 18** – Land Over Landings hosts a Call to Action meeting at Brougham Hall, pulling in a standing-room-only crowd. People line up to volunteer for work committees.
- **June 24** – Transport Canada holds the first of two "public information" meetings at a local golf club. Hundreds of people pack the noisy, stifling room, everyone shouting to try to be heard. There is no presentation. TC staff "man" easels holding misleading maps. Answers to questions are mostly inaudible and mostly useless. Land Over Landings signs up dozens of new members.
- **June 27** – The second TC "public information" meeting is held at the golf club. There is a far smaller crowd, as everyone is now aware that there's no info to be had. Interesting development: Mr Flaherty's unequivocal pronouncements of

June 11 and June 12 are already being watered down by TC. They say they must “retest” passenger forecasts to confirm date of need for airport, etc. So everyone is now asking: WHY this announcement NOW? Land Over Landings signs up many more members.

- The next weeks pass in a flurry of media interviews and meetings with individuals and organizations eager to help fight this irresponsible airport-and-development plan.
- **July 30** – Land Over Landings holds a public information meeting at P’lovers, in Port Perry. It’s the first such meeting of what might be a series, in all communities around the Federal Lands.
- **July 31** – TC has invited public input “on the future management and development of the remaining Pickering lands still owned by Transport Canada.” 500 words maximum. Today is the last day for online submissions/comments. We comment formally and many of us comment as individuals. There’s no assurance that we will ever be told the results.
- **August 17** – PACT POW (Pickering-Ajax Citizens Together Protecting Our Water) invite us to join their MAYDAY rally. MP Elizabeth May, Green Party of Canada leader, is keynote speaker. Afterwards, she visits our booth, pledging her personal support to fight an unneeded airport on prime farmland in Pickering.
- Close to 150 people gather at a garden party in Clarendon to fête Land Over Landings’ honorary chair, Lorne Almack, on his 90th birthday. In the crowd are many original members of People or Planes, including 95-year-old former POP leader Charles Godfrey. Plans for public-awareness events on the airport situation start to take shape.
- **August 18** – Land Over Landings sends a large contingent to Honeywood where Food & Water First are celebrating the end of the mega-quarry threat. We join with them in a call to action to save prime farmland across the province. Driving the point home, Bill Lishman flies his ultralight between the Pickering Lands and Honeywood. He and Carl Cosack (leader of the mega-quarry fight), as well as Dale Goldhawk, of Zoomer Radio’s Goldhawk Fights Back, are speakers at the event. Our fight takes on a whole new dimension.
- **September 1, 2, 4** – The Pickering airport / preservation of farmland issue gets prominent coverage in the *Globe and Mail*, the *National Post*, and *Alternatives Journal*.
- **September 18** – Land Over Landings writes to Transport Minister Lisa Raitt, requesting the release of the results of TC’s online public “consultation” in July.
- **October 9** – NDP MPs Malcolm Allen, Dan Harris, and Matthew Kellway tour the Lands with Land Over Landings and a busload of supporters and media representatives. Their intention is to learn more about the area slated for an airport and development, and the difficulties of farming on the Lands under Transport Canada’s one-year leases. All three MPs give the protection of these Lands their full support.
- **October 18** – *Maclean’s* magazine publishes two hard-hitting articles on the Pickering airport issue. “The imaginary airport that won’t leave Pickering alone” details the 41-year saga. “Turbulence ahead at Pickering Airport proposal” challenges Ajax-Pickering MP Chris Alexander to either confirm his earlier opposition to an airport (the position that helped get him elected) or to publicly admit that he’s gone over to the other side.
- **October 22** – Land Over Landings hosts a public information meeting in Clarendon, packing the Community Centre. Guest speakers Carl Cosack and CBC’s Donna Tranquada describe how Food & Water First came into being, after smart and tireless

grassroots action in Melancthon Township stopped a major hedge fund's plans to replace 2,316 acres of prime farmland with a mega-quarry. Land Over Landings' goal is to change the federal government's plans to replace 13,600 acres of prime farmland with an airport and industrial development. F&WF is fully behind our cause. Our goals are the same: the protection of the land that feeds us and of the water we drink. Thank you, F&WF!

- **November 6-12** – Members of Land Over Landings are guest speakers at the Ajax-Pickering chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women. We meet with politicians at the federal and municipal levels. We participate in a "Foodie Drinks" event in Toronto, where we make good connections and broaden our supporter base.
- **December** – Land Over Landings mourns the loss of honorary chair Lorne Almack, who died peacefully on December 8, at the age of 90. He was an inspiration to us, a wise and steady guide and counsellor right to the end.

## 2014

- **January 15** – Transport Minister Raitt replies to our September 2013 letter but doesn't provide the requested report on last July's online public consultation.
- **January 27** – In a packed Council Chamber, Land Over Landings is joined by Green Durham, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, and the Claremont & District Community Association, to support a motion before Council demanding transparency, clarity, and answers from the federal government on its plans (if there are plans) for the Federal Lands. The speeches are powerful, councillors give strong supporting statements, and the motion is passed unanimously.
- **February 11** – The federal budget mentions the Pickering Federal Lands (last item at the bottom; an afterthought?). No money is attached to the Lands but there is an admission that "the Government is consulting with a broad range of stakeholders," and apparently, 600+ submissions were received from the public since the June 2013 announcement. Also, meetings will be held "in the coming months ... to ensure development benefits local businesses." In other words, closed discussions have been taking place since the announcement – the public is locked out and only businesses are consulted.
- **February 13**, Vaudorf, near Stouffville – We get warning of an announcement only hours beforehand but pull together a good group and are there to greet the Prime Minister at the appointed hour – only to learn that he has been whisked in earlier. He makes a general infrastructure announcement he could just as well (and far less expensively) have made from his office in Ottawa, then slips out the back way to avoid encountering us (maybe even to avoid seeing us through the heavily tinted and reinforced windows of his limo). What was that all about? Why Vaudorf? Transparency, please!
- **March 3** – Uxbridge Council unanimously endorses a motion demanding, among other things, transparency from Ottawa in its plans for the Federal Lands, and an undertaking that the Provincial Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine protection policies will be respected. Thank you Uxbridge Council!
- **March 18** – Whitchurch-Stouffville Council passes a resolution endorsing the Pickering motion. Thank you Whitchurch-Stouffville!

- **May 26** – Ajax Council passes a resolution calling on Ottawa to ensure (a) an open, transparent process re the future of the Federal Lands; (b) no adverse effects on Ajax’s residents and natural environment or on the watersheds of the Lands; and (c) a plan consistent with earlier Federal undertakings (i.e., the federal Green Space Preserve) and with Provincial Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine policies. Thank you Ajax!
- **May / June** – We have many meetings with federal MPs and, with a provincial election in the offing, a number of local candidates. A common thread in all these meetings: agreement with us that preserving prime farmland is vital to our future.
- **June 16** – We attend an invitation-only federal government celebration of the announcement of Bill C-40, the Act to create the Rouge National Urban Park – and move one step closer to seeing a quarter of the Federal Lands and their farms protected from an airport or any other kind of “economic development.”
- **July 16** – Land Over Landings launches a video in praise of the Federal Lands, featuring the song written for us by Peter Byberg: “The Land That We Love.”
- **August 18** – We launch an online petition on change.org: “Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Stop the Pickering Airport!” While our paper petition is being read in the House of Commons on a regular basis, the online one will be e-mailed to the Prime Minister and selected federal, provincial, and municipal politicians and will act as a constant reminder that this issue is still very much alive.
- **August 21** – We meet with Transport Minister Raitt and other Conservative MPs at the third of three roundtable sessions in Markham. The first is with business (including reps of airlines and local airports). The second is with local mayors and Durham’s regional chair. Our meeting includes Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Green Durham Association, Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, and Land Over Landings. We ask for immediate preservation of those parts of the Lands that Transport Canada has now deemed “surplus” to any airport requirement, now or in the future. We later hear, through the grapevine, that ours was the longest of the meetings, that our groups were the best prepared and the most passionate, and that our presentations were the most convincing. We also hear that in the other meetings, no appetite was shown for a commercial airport at Pickering (one or two local politicians being the exception). The Minister promises us a synopsis of the round-table meetings and of the online public consultation of last year.
- **August / September / October** – We focus on forging new connections and strengthening existing ones with Food & Water First, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine, the David Suzuki Foundation, Environmental Defence....
- **November/December** – We tour the Rouge Park with two NDP MPs, briefing them on the Federal Lands while doing so, as the York portion of the Lands is slated to become part of the Rouge National Urban Park (although the Province is disputing the proposed legislation and holding back its own land transfer). We also meet with federal Conservative MPs and brief federal Liberal hopefuls on the potential of the Federal Lands.

## More Land to RNUP and More Studies

2015

- **January 28** – Land Over Landings joins the Greenbelt Alliance to co-host a town hall meeting on threats to the Greenbelt, of which a Pickering Airport has been identified as a major one. We share the podium with Faisal Moola, Ontario director general of the David Suzuki Foundation, and with senior representatives of the Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition, Environmental Defence, and the Ontario Soil Regulatory Task Force. The Brougham Hall is filled to capacity for the event. Lawyer David Donnelly, of Environmental Defence, tells the assembled crowd: “You [Land Over Landings] are fighting one of the great campaigns in Ontario land-protection history, and I wish you every success in stopping this mindless, unnecessary, and costly airport.”
- **March 27** – Our chair is a panelist at the 2015 Forum of the Ontario Farmland Trust. We learn that farmland protection is making significant strides in the U.S. We also hear firsthand about California’s drought in the Central Valley, which is the source of close to half of Americans’ fresh produce and much of ours. The situation there is becoming desperate. Our position: why are we, in Canada, not protecting farmland as a priority, and not preparing to deal with the fall-out of this drought?
- **April 1** – The formal transfer of 4,722 acres of the Federal Lands from Transport Canada to Parks Canada for the Rouge National Urban Park is announced. The farmland within the Park will remain in agriculture in perpetuity and the areas of natural habitat will be protected. Which leaves just under three-quarters of the Lands still at risk. Our focus is now on them.
- **May 27** – Land Over Landings’ submission to the provincial Coordinated Land Use Review Panel recommends that all Class 1 farmland within the Federal Lands not needed for any airport be immediately added to the Greenbelt.
- **June 11** – Land Over Landings incorporates, to be able to seek major funding for an in-depth study of the economic potential of agriculture on the Federal Lands. We’ve been told by experts that the potential is even greater than we thought; now we need the hard proof to sway the last few skeptics. At our Inaugural General Meeting a new board is voted in, and special guest speaker Bill Lishman, with 43 years behind him of fighting this airport, gives talks on passion and perseverance.
- **July 11** – Prime Minister Stephen Harper announces in Pickering (LOL was among the invited guests) that the federal government “will double our contribution” to the Rouge National Urban Park by transferring 5,200 additional acres of farmland and natural habitat from Transport Canada to Parks Canada. This means that, of the original 18,600 acres expropriated for an airport in 1972, more than half have now been placed under the Park’s permanent protection. As for the rest, the PM says that the government “will only support projects on these lands, including an airport, if they are backed by a sound business plan and are in the best interests of this community.” Needless to say, this is cause for celebration. More than half the Lands protected! Following in POP’s footsteps, we break open the champagne and drink a toast to the protected Lands before getting back down to work.

- **July 13** – Transport Minister Raitt, in a follow-up meeting to the one of last August 27, says that within the month Transport Canada will appoint an independent advisor to sound out the market, consult with private and public interests, look at economic development opportunities, and what type of airport might be needed, and when. To report within 12 months. Meanwhile, Transport Canada will assess aviation needs across the GGH. The Minister says: “There is a need to know if ... there is a business case for a future airport” and states that no decisions have been made as to timing or type.
- **July 31** – Transport Canada announces in Pickering (we were among the invited guests) the appointment of Dr Gary Polonsky, past-president of Durham College, past founding president of UOIT, as the government’s independent advisor. Dr Polonsky describes his role as “listener” – he will meet with any individual, group, or organization with ideas concerning the future of the remaining Lands. His mandate: to study their economic development potential. His deadline: June 2016 (or thereabouts). Within days, a federal election is called, and Dr Polonsky’s study is put on hold until a new government is in place. We pass some “summer reading” to him, including *Paper Juggernaut*.
- **Sept. 15** – This is the deadline for submitting concerns about the draft revision to the Pickering Airport Zoning Regulations (PASZR) issued in July by Transport Canada. We submit a detailed response, asking pointed questions about the Wildlife Hazard Zone, which crosses the Rouge National Urban Park (how can wildlife control be applied in a national wildlife sanctuary?!), and about the missing Noise Exposure Forecast contour maps. We also publicly release a PASZR factsheet and our research papers on the PASZR and on Wildlife Control.
- **October 19** – Federal election night: The country gives Justin Trudeau’s Liberal Party a landslide victory. All local area Liberal candidates (Jennifer O’Connell, Mark Holland, Jane Philpott) are elected. All have publicly stated that they are opposed to an airport on the Lands.
- **November 18** – We meet for 2 hours with Dr Polonsky, the Independent Advisor, and also present him with our written Submission. We respond to the discussion questions prepared by Transport Canada; all are skewed towards an airport. We get a good reception and have a frank discussion. We express concern over the fact that the commercial tenants on the lands – the true stakeholders – have not been invited to participate in this exercise and we ask that Transport Canada remedy the situation. We learn that Dr Polonsky’s cut-off date for submissions is now February 29, and that his new reporting date is the end of March.
- **December** – We meet with our MP, Friends of the Greenbelt, and David Crombie, former mayor of Toronto, who has been a staunch supporter from the very start. The meeting with David Crombie results in a plan to build support in Toronto for our farmland preservation crusade.

## 2016

- **January 11** – Ten members of our youth wing send a letter to the Prime Minister, asking him to cancel the airport and save the Lands for food production for future generations.
- **January 13** – We meet with our first Toronto councillor – Glenn De Baeremaeker, a true supporter of our cause – and start planning next steps.

- We learn from tenants on the Lands that Transport Canada has not contacted them to meet with the Independent Advisor. The tenants decide to make contact themselves.
- **January 26** – We host a large meeting in Toronto of like-minded groups, all aware of the need for food security for the GTA. Inspiring discussion. Many suggestions point to ways to achieve our goal.
- **February 7** – A breakfast meeting of the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade. The topic: “All About Airports.” We learn that the GTAA’s consultants are forecasting unprecedented growth over the coming decades, in population, trade, GDP, air passengers... Climate change mitigation isn’t mentioned until we raise the topic after the presentation. The consultants reply with more talk of growth. The inflated forecasts they quote are a reminder of how this whole airport thing started in the first place.
- **February 16** – A search of the Federal Government’s “Buy & Sell” website turns up a call for tenders for five senior consultants for a “Pickering Lands Aviation Sector Analysis.” How can there be an aviation sector on Lands with no airport?! The project’s “proposed initial period” ends August 31, 2017. How many years of further study after the initial phase? How many millions more tax dollars will go on this latest analysis?
- **February 22** – We take Dr Polonsky on a tour of the remaining Lands and discuss the past, the blighted present, and the possible bright future. We also turn over to him a Submission Supplement containing more arguments, more data, more ammunition.
- **February 25** – MPs Mark Holland and Jennifer O’Connell meet with Transport Minister Marc Garneau to brief him on the Pickering file and make the point that no area MPs support a Pickering airport.
- **March 2** – It’s been 44 years since the first airport announcement. There have been some gains (more than 50 per cent of the Lands will now be protected within the Park) and the remaining Lands are still agricultural and unspoiled by urban develop. But the battle won’t be over until we’ve saved the lot.
- **March 31** – Dr Polonsky submits his report to the Transport Minister. What does it say and will it ever be made public?
- **April / May** – Busy months. We meet with: the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture; Jeff Leal, Ontario Minister of Agriculture; Celina Caesar-Chavannes, Whitby MP and Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister; MPs John McKay and Gary Anandasangaree; and MPPs Tracy McCharles and Granville Anderson. Virtually unanimous support for our plan to commission an in-depth economic study of the agricultural potential of the Lands.
- **June 15** – Our Annual General Meeting features young environmental and food-security activist Jayden Rae, on the common good, and Toronto Deputy Mayor Glenn De Baere-maeker, on a campaign we’re jointly planning, aimed at persuading Ottawa to cancel the airport and protect *all* the Lands within the Rouge National Urban Park.
- **August 6** – The *Toronto Star* runs an op-ed piece by a corporate-jet pilot who blames the failure to build Pickering airport on 45 years of “myths and emotion.” Letters to the editor fill an entire column as well-informed writers from all over trounce the pilot’s arguments. The *Star* runs the letters under the heading: “An idea that shouldn’t get off the ground.”
- **August 13** – We launch our new website, optimized for use on all devices from desktop computers to smart phones. It will be the new repository for our documents, worldwide news links, and more.

- **September** – As we draft a formal Request for Proposals for an agricultural/rural-growth economics study of the remaining Pickering Federal Lands, we get support for the study from all local mayors (except Markham’s); all Pickering councillors except one; many councillors from other municipalities, including Toronto; many MPs, including Cabinet ministers; the Indigenous Peoples Commission of the Liberal Party of Canada; and an ever-growing list of individuals and organizations concerned about food security, climate change, farmland preservation, and water protection. See the list on the Resources page.
- **September 9** – Today, Land Over Landings issues its RFP for an agricultural/rural-growth economics study of the remaining Pickering Federal Lands. The study’s aim: To show that a practical, viable, non-destructive alternative to an airport and “economic development” exists for the Lands – and that the alternative vision can start creating employment and sparking economic recovery in the area right away, instead of in another generation from now – if then. (That’s the current best guess of Pearson’s consultants...)
- **September 14** – The Pickering-Uxbridge Federal Liberal Association (PUFLA) unanimously passes a policy proposal calling for the Liberal Party of Canada to “oppose the conversion of the Pickering Lands into an airport/economic zone ... and protect the farmland, watersheds, and natural habitat of the remaining lands ... under the management of Parks Canada, as an agricultural preserve.”
- **September 27** – Two meetings, called by an MP outside the Pickering-Uxbridge riding, one for municipal and provincial “government counterparts,” the other a public townhall, both to discuss “the possibility of a Pickering Airport,” are cancelled after a flurry of complaints from area residents.
- **October 12** – Public tenders close on our study’s RFP and now the hard work of reviewing and assessing the submissions begins.
- **November 4** – We learn that Pickering’s Planning Department staff have completed an omnibus amendment (OPA 27) to Pickering’s Official Plan to bring it into line with the policies of other levels of government. One section refers to the Federal Lands: “To ensure greater certainty and to remove speculation about the site’s future, staff recommend that Council request the Federal Government to move forward with the planning and implementation of the airport. The location of an airport in the City of Pickering is a strategic element necessary to establish a more predictable long-term land use vision for the City. The proposed airport site, although smaller in size, will act as a catalyst for economic growth and job creation in the City.” This is a policy about-face for Pickering. LOL leaps into action to protest this tone-deaf political posturing.
- **November 6** – We broadcast a call to action: “Pickering to Ask Feds to Fast Track Airport?!” The amendment is to be debated at Pickering City Hall on November 14. The media are on it.
- **November 14** – People from all over the area and downtown Toronto pack Pickering City Hall’s council chamber, the overflow filling the lobby. After 30 deputations during a marathon evening that runs well past midnight, Council agrees on a rewording of the amendment so that it coincides with the City’s previous (and unvarying) position. Mayor Ryan, publicly pro-airport, is visibly peeved, stating that if the airport doesn’t happen, it “will probably mean joining the City of Toronto.” A mayor devoid of imagination or ideas. There is widespread news coverage of our success in reversing the amendment.



- **November 18** – Many of us return to City Hall to make our presence felt as Council formally votes on the decision of November 14. The decision is ratified.
- **November 28** – Transport Canada quietly releases Dr Polonsky's report, called "Jets & Jobs." Our preliminary assessment (and it seems the universal reaction): the report says nothing new and there will be no jets or jobs anytime soon. The airlines aren't interested, investors need a solid business case before they think about Pickering, the pro-airport lobby is small. We start to dig into the details to prepare a formal response.
- **December 19** – We announce the names of the winning bidders for our study: Econometric Research Ltd., of Burlington, teamed with JRG Consulting Ltd., of Guelph – well-respected consultants with long and pertinent experience. On the same day, we formally launch a fundraising campaign to cover the cost of the study: \$85,000.
- **December 21** – In 3 days we're at 39% of our goal!
- **December 31** – We receive partial results of an ATIP request to the federal government. The records confirm that just under \$160 million dollars [not adjusted for inflation] were spent on administering the Federal Lands over the past 18 years. We're still awaiting a response regarding the first 27 years, and on two other related ATIP requests.

## 2017

- **January 1:** The title of Dr Polonsky's report was "Jets & Jobs" and those words are the closest anyone will get to jets and jobs at Pickering in the foreseeable future. Our formal response is titled "Better still... *Real Jobs Now!*" The J&J report purported to be even-handed, but close study shows it to be anything but. In the sections discussing the input from conservation/agricultural stakeholders, neutrality has gone missing, our positions are misrepresented, contradicted, undermined. *How did this happen? The why we can guess.*
- **January:** We spend the month meeting with our political representatives at the federal and municipal levels, being interviewed for news articles, being filmed for a documentary short, planning fundraising activities. Margaret Atwood offers a \$1,000 matching challenge, met within hours. The list of those supporting our ag study grows and grows, the names on it get more and more impressive.
- **January 27:** The *Hamilton Spectator* breaks the news that Pearson is planning on being a mega-hub airport, working with existing area airports as a "coalition of airports." Pickering airport, which doesn't exist, doesn't figure in the plan.
- **February 8:** The GTAA unveils a design for a proposed transit hub – Pearson, GO Transit, the TTC, and local bus services all coordinating to get passengers (and workers) quickly and easily to the airport and home again. Sounds like a major part of the mega-hub plan.
- **February 16:** Our chair delivers a well-received talk on our story and study to a larger-than-usual audience for the Toronto Reference Library's "Fragile Planet" series.
- **March 2:** We mark the 45th anniversary of the airport announcement and expropriation with a special issue of our UPDATE newsletter, postings on Facebook, and (by invitation) an op-ed article in the UK's *International Airport Review*. It must have struck a chord. Within days, the article has been shared by 242 readers, far more than for most articles on the site.
- **March 9:** We hold a hugely successful fundraising evening at Herongate Barn Dinner Theatre. Proceeds from ticket sales and a silent auction net more than \$8,000 for our study.