

Timeline: 1972-1975

Airport Announcement / People or Planes

Airport Announcement

1972

- **January** – An environmental assessment of the Pickering site is rushed through in 72 hours, in the snow.
- **March 1** – A federal-provincial agreement is signed.
- **March 2** – The North Pickering Development Project, requiring the expropriation of 18,600 acres for a major 6-runway international airport, and a further 25,000 acres for a new city to the south of it, to be called Cedarwood, is jointly announced by Ottawa and Ontario. Pickering is described as “ideal” and the logical choice. The public is not told that Pickering had formerly been deemed unsuitable in every way except for its proximity to Toronto.
- North Pickering and area residents get the news as they’re driving home from work or milking their cows.

People or Planes

I hope that opposition to this affront against common sense eventually will be nationwide, the largest single protest movement in Canadian history. It should be. It can be.

~ Scott Young, Canadian journalist, 1972

1972

- **March 3** – Local residents meet at Melody Farm (originally Ever Green Villa, home of Eli Barclay). **People or Planes** (POP) is born.
- **March 6** – Pickering Township passes a resolution protesting the choice of the Pickering site.
- **April, June** – POP meets with federal and provincial ministers, starts a barrage of media releases, publicity stunts, fundraising events, presentations, exposés, and legal arguments that will be kept up for 3 years.
- **Sept. 6** – Expropriation notices start going out to residents.
- **Nov. 23** – The Swackhamer Hearings begin, under Expropriation Act.
- **Dec. 29** – The Swackhamer Report criticizes the government’s decision to build an airport, and slams the choice of Pickering as the airport’s location.

1973

- **January, March, April, May, June** – Transport Minister Jean Marchand states that the upcoming inquiry into the Pickering airport will address its need and location.
- **June** – In Brougham, POP stages an “equal opportunity” hanging in effigy of Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Davis.
- **Oct. 23** – Ottawa announces that the Gibson Inquiry into the expropriations will *not* consider need or location of the airport, despite Transport Minister Marchand’s months of assurances that it would.

1974

- Expropriations begin.
- A City of Toronto report condemns the Pickering airport plan.

1975

- **Jan.** – The Gibson Inquiry Report supports the government side but recommends expanding Malton first. The Ministry of Transport, having claimed that expansion was impossible, shelves the report.
- **Feb. 20** – To keep the Pickering airport plan alive, Transport Minister Marchand proposes a 1-runway “minimum airport” instead.
- **April** – POP’s lawyer meets with the Ontario Cabinet to show how Ottawa has misled Ontario.
- Premier Davis asks Ottawa to delay demolitions on the site. POP holds Bulldozer Tea Party to recruit members and teach them how to disable demolition equipment.
- **Aug. 1** – Despite Ontario’s concerns, demolitions begin. Ontario complains to Ottawa. Demolition is stopped on 4 houses. Barbed-wire fences and barricades go up to keep out protesters.
- **Sept. 15** – POP hosts a moving-out party for Ernie and Edna Mae Carruthers. Three POP women immediately occupy the vacated farmhouse to prevent its demolition, attracting Canada-wide media coverage. They will stay put for 11 days.
- **Sept. 18** – Ontario elects a Conservative minority government. POP’s chairman, Dr Charles Godfrey, wins in Durham West.
- **Sept. 24** – Ontario announces that it will not, after all, provide infrastructure for an airport whose need is unproven and whose full costs are unknown.
- **Sept. 25** – A furious federal government shelves the airport plan. But hundreds of properties have already been expropriated and dozens of family homes, barns, and heritage structures have already been razed. Ottawa keeps the land.
- **Oct. 5** – Phase 1 of Mirabel, nearing completion, late and massively over-budget, is officially opened by Prime Minister Trudeau, who says that Torontonians will soon be “on their knees” and begging for a second airport. Planes won’t be able to land at Mirabel for another two months.