



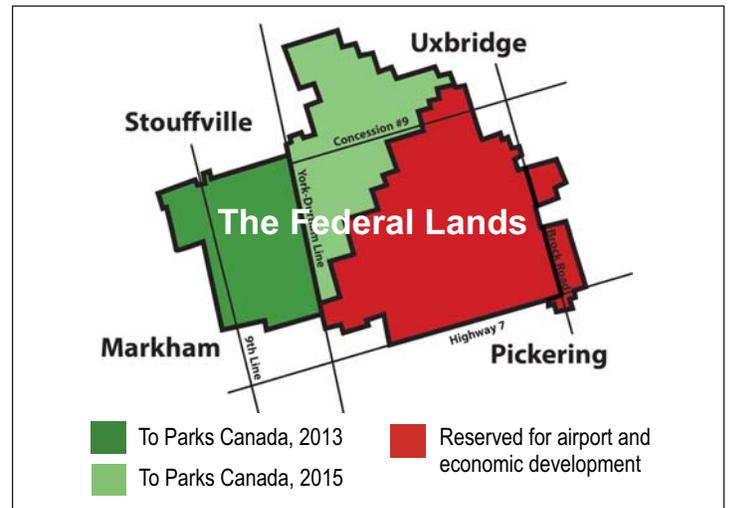
# Pickering's Federal Lands: Runways or Food Hub?

## Who We Are



In 1972, the federal government expropriated 18,600 acres (7,530 ha) of prime farmland in North Pickering for an international airport that wasn't needed. Fierce opposition led by grassroots movement People or Planes helped to stop demolitions and runway construction in 1975.

**Land Over Landings** took over the fight in 2005 to ensure that this vast tract of best farmland, sitting in limbo in federal hands, will stay agricultural into the future – growing food, not runways.



## Protecting the Lands, Step by Step

Four decades of efforts to ward off airport threats and save the farmland are at last bearing fruit. On June 11, 2013, Ottawa added the York Region portion of the Federal Lands to the new Rouge National Urban Park, thereby preserving from development a quarter of the airport site (most of it farmland). We turned our attention to the rest.

On July 11, 2015, a further 5,200 acres (2,104 ha) were added to the Rouge NUP. More than half the Lands are now permanently protected within a national park dedicated to the preservation of nature, culture, and agriculture.

However, the rest of the site – more than twice the land area of Pearson International – remains earmarked for an airport and “economic development.” Transport Canada is launching yet another study to see if an airport is needed, and an independent advisor has been appointed to study the economic development potential. The good news? For the first time, a Prime Minister has publicly stated that, to be considered, any proposal – for an airport or anything else – must have “a sound business plan and be in the best interests of the community.”

## The Remaining Lands

They are mostly Class 1 farmland, the rarest and most productive farmland there is. They are partly within the Greenbelt and on the Oak Ridges Moraine, areas protected by the Province but not by the federal government, which can override provincial legislation if it so chooses. They are a mix of highly productive farm fields, clear streams, natural habitat, and wildlife corridors, and are an important rest stop for migratory birds.

They border on the groundbreaking Rouge National Urban Park, which promises to become a nature-lover's paradise, a sanctuary for wildlife, and an agricultural jewel.

Yet they risk being levelled to create a barren site of runways, terminals, warehouses, traffic, and sprawl. Wouldn't it be far wiser to exploit this enviable natural resource as a safe, reliable, long-term food source for Canada's largest urban centre? Which option makes more sense to you?

## The Ethical Obligation

To those whose homes and land were seized in the 1970s for an “urgently needed” international airport that wasn't needed at all, any plan to use the expropriated land for residential/commercial/-

industrial uses, a private airport, or a (*still* unneeded) reliever airport for Pearson would be unethical, a shameful breach of trust.

The land was taken for a “public need” that never materialized. Ottawa has a moral duty to ensure that the uses considered now will truly serve a public need. Sprawl doesn't qualify. Industrial/commercial operations serve few, then are gone. Non-hub airports struggle and tend to need subsidies. Betting on an idea of short-term benefit to a few would simply add insult to injury. But continuing to put this outstanding natural resource to its best use – food production – would deliver health and prosperity to generations.



## The Importance of Looking Ahead

Knowingly destroying farmland flies in the face of common sense and reveals an alarming lack of concern for the welfare of our children and grandchildren.

Within 30 years, a further *2 billion* people will be living on our planet, yet the world's farmland is being depleted or destroyed at an unprecedented rate. Ontario alone is losing 351 acres (142 ha) of farmland from production daily. The combined effects of population explosion and dwindling foodland will be felt in every part of the globe. And a changing climate and more extreme weather events will make this bad situation worse.

Around the globe, concern is growing over the issue of food security, driving investment in local-food initiatives in efforts to safeguard populations from the effects of supply-chain disruptions and food shortages. Fresh food and clean water are destined to become the future's most precious commodities. Access to them will be among the world's most pressing concerns.

## What If...?

What if these remaining Lands continued to be put to their best and highest use, and their Class 1 soil, clean watersheds, and the wildlife that depend on them, were all permanently protected?

What if this area on the GTA's doorstep, minutes by rail from downtown Toronto, were planned and developed as a **food hub**?

What an ideal complement to the Park! The 200+ crops that can be grown here would create jobs of all kinds – skilled and unskilled, full- and part-time, on the farms and in those service areas that farming needs and generates. And these jobs wouldn't evaporate as habits and trends changed. We will always need food. And as our numbers grow, the need for food will also grow. Just think of what a food hub could involve and provide:

- fresh vegetables & fruit
- fresh meats (beef, pork, lamb, chicken, turkey)
- exotic meats (venison, emu, rabbit, duck, quail)
- fresh milk, eggs, cream, butter, cheese, yogurt
- greenhouse-grown vegetables for winter months
- more-diversified field crops (cereal grains, hay)
- farmers' markets & pick-your-own
- food processing, storage, delivery
- seed, fertilizer, and feed suppliers
- equipment sales & services
- farm fairs & events, farmhouse B & Bs
- pubs & restaurants specializing in local food
- vineyards & wineries, hops & craft breweries
- honey, beeswax, emu oil, wool, & goat's milk products
- an agricultural research centre or college
- veterinary services
- trails for hiking, biking, skiing ...

Saving the Federal Lands for food production isn't just a nice idea. The time is fast approaching when ensuring secure and reliable local food sources will be at the top of every agenda. For the sake of our children and the generations to come, the farmland of the entire federal site (not just half of it) must be protected as a current and future source of fresh food.

**A food hub is the *only* plan that guarantees long-term economic growth on and around the Lands. The basic requirement – farmers working the Lands' prized Class 1 soil – is already in place. As a food hub, this once-prosperous farming area would thrive again, helping to meet a vital and growing need in a challenging new century.**

**Please join us and add your voice to the cause – because food *IS* a growing concern.**

**Fact:** Airports and buildings don't need prime farmland. Farmers do.

**Fact:** Farmland is a finite resource.

**Fact:** Prime farmland can't be created or restored to its original state by human effort. Once gone, it's gone for good.

**Fact:** No farmland, no farmers. No farmers, no food. No food, no us. It's that simple.

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