

## A LANDMARK MEETING IN TORONTO



Alexis Whalen

On January 26, leaders of the food security, farmland preservation, and environmental movements in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area answered the call to discuss **the future of the Federal Lands**.

David Crombie, author of the recently released report to the Province, *Planning for Health, Prosperity and Growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2015-2041*, and Wayne Roberts, recognized father of the Toronto food movement, brought decades of experience to the table. They were joined by leaders of FarmStart, Food Forward, and Sustain Ontario, and representatives of the City of Toronto, Toronto Green Communities, Toronto Youth Food Policy Council, Environmental Defence, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, Abundance GTA, First Story Toronto, and the universities of Guelph, Ryerson, and York.

And that future? Not an airport, we all agreed. Instead, it was clear to everyone that the Lands present a golden opportunity to the Golden Horseshoe, a chance to restore vitality and jobs to an economically depressed area, a chance to plan and develop a nearby food source for Canada's most heavily populated urban centre.

If half the federally expropriated lands can be called Toronto's backyard (and they can, now that they're in, or committed to, the Rouge National Urban Park), we can be Toronto's garden! These remaining 9,000 acres of foodland, watersheds, and habitat can work in tandem with the Park, incorporating farming, food processing, tourism, and a multitude of agri-food spinoffs as a regional food hub, giving an enormous economic boost to the entire area (see box at right).

As we talked, ideas germinated, enthusiasm grew, roots and branches extended in every direction. An inspiring meeting of the minds and a solid step towards a shared goal.

## MORE SUPPORT FOR OUR AGRICULTURAL STUDY

- Stephen Bocking, Director, School of the Environment; Professor, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, Trent U.
- Wayne Caldwell, Interim Dean, Ont. Agricultural College, U. of Guelph
- Donald Gibson, creator of Foodland Ontario ad campaign
- Tim Grey, Executive Director, Environmental Defence
- Phillip Groff, Executive Director, Sustain Ontario
- Janet Horner, Executive Director, Greater Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance
- Karen Landman, Assoc. Prof., School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, U. of Guelph
- Burkhard Mausberg, CEO, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
- Don Mitchell, Mayor of Whitby
- Phil Mount, Research Associate, Centre for Sustainable Food Systems
- Ontario Greenbelt Alliance (117 orgs.)
- Ricardo Ramirez, Chair, FarmStart; School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, U. of Guelph
- Wayne Roberts, food analyst, visiting scholar, U. of Toronto
- Alan Wells, past Chair, Rouge Park Alliance

**Agricultural stakeholders have asked for other types of support for agri-food infrastructure, including regional food hubs ... The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has also undertaken work on the concept of regional agri-food strategies ... to create the conditions for sustainable agriculture.**

– David Crombie, Coordinated Land Use Review Panel Report, December 2015, p. 95

**MP RESPONDS TO YOUTH LETTER**

Pickering-Uxbridge MP Jennifer O’Connell has sent personal replies to all signatories of an open letter sent from our Youth members to Justin Trudeau.

The letter appealed directly to the Prime Minister to protect the Lands as “permanent sources of fresh food and water.”

“We weren’t involved in the earlier decisions and neither were you,” our youth wing wrote. “Yet all of us have been left with the consequences. The question is, what will be the legacy?”

MP O’Connell replied: “I’m proud to have supported Land Over Landings, and opposed the construction of an airport throughout my time as an elected official. ... Along with my regional Liberal colleagues, I believe strongly that the region and the GTA would benefit from the protection of this land for natural and agricultural uses.”

We are all still awaiting a response from the Prime Minister himself but are heartened by this reply from our MP and former Pickering Regional Councillor, our new champion in Ottawa.

The full letter from MP O’Connell and the letter to PM Trudeau can be found on our website’s Be Informed! page.

**LAND OVER LANDINGS ON PARADE**



With the “winter” part of the Claremont Winter Carnival notably absent, the community rallied nonetheless, and we were there as usual! Special thanks to Corrie Almack, who provided and drove the tractor (Lorne would be pleased) and helped assemble the float. More thanks to Alison Bezubiak, who repainted our “This Land Is Your Land” sign showing 5,000 more acres saved, and to all who walked in the parade, including special dog Aubrey, whose No-Airport T-shirt got a bit muddy, thanks to four short legs.



**T-SHIRTS FOR SALE!**



**T-shirts! Get your T-shirts here!** All sizes, bright colours, our logo in green and black on the front, No Pickering Airport in red and black on the reverse. Just \$15.

Wear your cause proudly and tell the world you believe in Land Over Landings, Because FOOD is a **GROWING** Concern! (Thanks for showing it off, Pat Horne.)

And thanks to Saunders Productions of Green River for providing such quick service at such a great price.

**Food for Thought**

After our January 26 meeting with David Crombie and others, Wayne Roberts, father of the Toronto food movement, referred to **Land Over Landings** as leading “the province’s major farmland protection crusade.”

That’s exactly what this is, Wayne!

**Land Over Landings**  
**Because food is a**  
**GROWING concern!**

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