

MARKING (NOT CELEBRATING) 44 YEARS...



Alexis Edghill Whalen

March 2 marks 44 years since expropriation for an airport that was never built. Local heroes like Mike Robertson (pictured here with his granddaughter) rose up and fought back, until People or Planes grounded the airport in September 1975. Mike is still preaching the message of farmland, food security, and a healthy environment – not for himself, but for the next generations. “It’s all about the future,” says Mike. “It’s always been all about the future.”

WE SUPPLEMENT OUR SUBMISSION TO THE INDEPENDENT ADVISOR

On February 22 we took Dr Polonsky on *our* tour of the Lands and provided him with a perspective quite different from the narrative offered by Transport Canada when *they* showed him around.

We saw forests, watercourses, wetlands, rolling fields, and the four communities that could benefit from a regional food hub.

The most powerful moments came when we viewed two farms a few kilometres apart – one within the Federal Lands, the other just outside, both operated by families that bought their farms in North Pickering prior to 1972, and at roughly the same time. The expropriated farm, leased back by its original owners for decades, reflects the weariness and uncertainty that characterize life on the Lands, and the grueling reality of trying to run a business, plan for the future, and make ends meet on one-year leases. The other farm, just outside the depressed federal zone, is clearly prosperous, with brightly painted barns and shiny equipment.

On that day, we also gave Dr Polonsky the Supplement to our Submission: many more strong arguments to support our case and a list of the growing numbers of farm, environmental, and political

MORE SUPPORT FOR OUR AGRICULTURAL STUDY

- Michael Chong, Conservative MP, Wellington – Halton Hills
- Carl Cosack, North Dufferin Agricultural & Community Taskforce (NDACT)
- Avia Eek, Holland Marsh farmer; Councillor, King Township; Chair, GTA Agricultural Action Committee; member, York Region Agricultural Liaison Committee
- Mary Fragedakis, Toronto City Councillor; city rep. with Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance
- Lisa Kates, Food Forward; co-founder and partner, Building Roots
- Mustafa Koç, Professor of Sociology with research interests in food security and food policy, Ryerson University
- Gail Lawlor, President, Energy Matters (environmental consulting); Vice-President, Durham Sustainability
- Mike Layton, Toronto City Councillor; rep. on Parks and Environment Subcommittee on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
- Stephen Leahy, journalist; co-winner, 2012 Prince Albert/United Nations Global Prize for reporting on Climate Change
- Joe Mihevc, Toronto City Councillor; Chair, Board of Health
- Mitch Morawetz, farmer and land-use planner, President, Durham Region Federation of Agriculture
- David Morley, international development leader; lecturer, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto
- Kyla Schwartz-Lam, Communications and Operations, Toronto Youth Food Policy Council
- Christie Young, Executive Director, FarmStart

... and more.

leaders who agree with our call for an agricultural study to show the true economic potential of these Lands. With yet another aviation study on the horizon, bizarrely called “Pickering Lands Aviation Sector Analysis” (although it’s supposed to be about the whole Southern Ontario aviation system) and expected to take 2-3 more years (they all do), you have to wonder how many millions (tens of millions?) of dollars will be spent in trying, yet again, to prove the need for an airport here, when the generator of the region’s economic strength and prosperous future is right under our feet.

Dr Polonsky’s report will be submitted to Transport Canada by the end of this month. Will the department choose to release it publicly later in the spring? Or next fall? Or in 3 years’ time? Or not at all?

A link to the Supplement is on the home page of our website.

MEANWHILE, IN OTTAWA...

Two former Pickering councillors who are now in Ottawa picked up where they left off with the Pickering airport file. MPs Jennifer O’Connell and Mark Holland wasted no time in meeting with Transport Minister Marc Garneau to brief him and to present the case for No Pickering Airport.

When Mark Holland, now representing Ajax, was an MP under the previous Liberal governments, he championed the cause of keeping the Federal Lands green. Jennifer O’Connell was always a strong supporter of Land Over Landings, taking a stand *against* an airport and *for* farmland while on council, and now as Pickering-Uxbridge MP.

According to MP O’Connell, the meeting was largely to inform the new Minister of the file, to emphasize the strong opposition to an airport among area MPs, and to suggest that many studies would need to take place before any airport could be considered, as there has not yet been a proven business case for an airport. She also said they proposed a study to determine the economic potential for agriculture and agri-business on the Lands, and that there should be long-term farm leases to allow investment and sustainable farming practices on the Lands.

Ms O’Connell is also reading our petition into the House of Commons. We thank these two farsighted MPs for their longstanding efforts to protect the Lands for the benefit of future generations.

Food for Thought

Environmentally sustainable farming will be key to tackling a 70 per cent increase in demand for food by 2050 The task at hand is immense, the globalised nature of the food supply chain means that no country, region or continent is immune to food insecurity.

– Dr Thani Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, Abu Dhabi, third Global Forum of Innovations in Agriculture, February 2016

NEW FACE ON EXECUTIVE



Mary Delaney

Welcome to Reid Williamson of Whitevale, recent Waterloo grad in Environmental Studies. Reid spoke at our founding meeting last June, volunteered at our Eat-Think-Vote event in October, helped create and present our Soil Workshop in November, was a signatory of our Youth Letter to Justin Trudeau in January (it prompted a front page article in the *News Advertiser*), joined us at an Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade breakfast meeting (topic: “All About Airports”) in February, and will attend the Ontario Farmland Trust annual forum with us in April.

Reid fills the position left vacant by Michael Fearon, who, regrettably, has had to step down although he remains committed to the cause. We thank Michael and welcome Reid.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in June. We ask you to consider running for office and contributing to the success of our cause.

More details in the next UPDATE.

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

landoverlanding@gmail.com
www.landoverlandings.com
905-649-2433

