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UPDATE #8

Jan. 31, 2014

SINCE OUR LAST UPDATE...

Minister Raitt Replies, Jan. 15

Land Over Landings wrote to Transport Minister Lisa Raitt on September 18, requesting release of the comments solicited from the public by Transport Canada after the June 11 airport announcement. In our letter we asked for some (uncharacteristic) transparency on the part of Transport Canada.

Minister Raitt replied on January 15. Her letter was largely a repetition of the announcement and of other replies we've received on this matter from Ottawa. There was no direct response to our request. You can find a link to Minister Raitt's letter on our home page at www.landoverlandings.com.

The one new piece of info was this: "Department officials and I continue to seek and receive the views of various interests on the future management and development of the remaining Transport Canada lands. Transport Canada will communicate its findings once that engagement process is complete."

So whose views are being sought? Who, in Transport Canada, is identifying these "various interests"? Will Land Over Landings' views be sought? or those of the City of Pickering? Durham Region? Toronto? the Province? Has this "engagement process" been publicized? Or are the discussions taking place behind closed doors, so that all the public will get are Transport Canada's "findings" once the deals have been made and the details settled? *Plus ça change...* We are preparing a response.

"Demand for Clarity on Federal Lands" Motion Approved by Pickering City Council, Jan. 27

First, a *huge* thank you to everyone who turned out for the Council meeting on such a blustery, cold night. The weather put paid to our planned outdoor rally, but we met each other and members of the media in the foyer, and then packed the Council Chamber. It was a standing-room-only crowd, with people lining the back wall, sometimes two deep.

The motion was the work of David Pickles, city councillor for Ward 3 in Pickering. The main deputations were by Jim Doyle, president of the Claremont & District Community Association; David Masters, treasurer of both the CDCA and Land Over Landings; and Mary Delaney, chair of Land Over Landings. In addition, Kevin O'Connor, president of Friends of the Rouge Watershed, and Brian Buckles, director of Green Durham Association, spoke in favour of the motion.

Councillors themselves then spoke in turn about the issue. It was reassuring to hear their concerns and comments, which mirrored our own. Such as:

- The Federal Lands are publicly owned, so the public should have a say in how they are used.
- There's no justification for an airport here.

FIELD AND FARM TO FORK

On January 23, members of Land Over Landings met again with Federal NDP Agriculture Critic Malcolm Allen. Mr. Allen, along with Urban Affairs Critic Matthew Kellway, had toured the Federal Lands in October. Mr. Allen is working on a Pan-Canadian Food Strategy to strengthen the system from farm to factory to fork. Learn more and sign his petition at <http://malcolmallen.ndp.ca/farm-to-fork>.

On this occasion we had dinner at Bistro67, in Whitby – a full-service, green-certified, teaching and learning restaurant located in Durham College's new Centre for Food and providing a "field to fork" culinary experience. This fabulous new restaurant offers dishes featuring produce from the region, all prepared and served by students in the culinary and hospitality programs.

Durham College President Don Lovisa is justifiably proud of the programme, the restaurant, the food, the green certification, and the partnerships with various local producers, such as Algoma Orchards. Algoma is donating 480 apple trees to the Whitby site, which will soon feature vegetable gardens and a green roof with a bee-keeping operation! *Bravo!*

Find out more about the Centre for Food and Bistro67 at: <http://www.durhamcollege.ca/academic-schools/centre-for-food>

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It's the place to go for always-up-to-the-minute info on what we're up to and what others are saying and doing in support of our cause.

- Transport Canada has not been forthcoming in terms of its plans for the Lands, nor has it provided feedback on the public-input exercise of last July.
- Since the 1970s, Ottawa has never complied with demands to produce a business case for this airport plan.
- Transit / light rail to Pearson would cost less than a new airport and would *also* create jobs.
- While there's a lot of talk about the job boom a new airport would create, there's never any talk about the debt that would be incurred to build it.
- Pearson should be expanded first because the infrastructure's already in place, whereas nothing yet exists in Pickering. And the City has no budget for an airport, so who will pay for the infrastructure – roads, sewers, etc.? The cost to taxpayers would be astronomical.
- There's huge opposition to an airport and, once the town of Seaton starts to take shape, its new residents won't want an airport right beside them either.
- It's a false economy to spend our way to job creation.
- We need to stop wasting our resources, always preferring to build something new even when our existing infrastructure is underused.

The motion received unanimous approval by Council. We thank Councillor Pickles and Pickering Council as a whole for doing the right thing. We see this motion as one necessary step on the road toward our goal of preserving these irreplaceable Lands.

You can find links to the motion and the deputations of David Masters and Mary Delaney on the home page of our website.

COMING UP...

Invitation to an Open Meeting, February 19, Brougham Hall, 7:30 p.m.

After the airport announcement last June, it became necessary for us to change our modus operandi so that we could react almost instantly to whatever came our way. That meant an end to monthly meetings with their wide-ranging agendas, open to anyone who wished to attend. We're very aware that our new structure (committees and working groups) has caused some of our long-term members to feel sidelined and less informed than before. So our next executive meeting will be open all supporters who wish to attend. We'll be able to cover more topics and go into more detail than we can in our newsletter, and there'll be plenty of time for comments and questions. *Hope to see you there!*

Food for Thought

No other municipality in Ontario has the economic benefit of 18,000 acres of Canada Land Inventory Class 1, highest-fertility foodland. This natural, irreplaceable resource [the Federal Lands] is capable of supporting a profitable, tax-paying, job-creating community, an agricultural industry of food growers, processors, and marketers.

~ Lorne Almack (open letter to Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, October 15, 2013)

10th ANNUAL FARMLAND FORUM, GUELPH, MARCH 7

We'll be sending several delegates to this conference, hosted by the Ontario Farmland Trust. "Farmland Forever: Toward Permanent Land Protection in an Evolving Policy Environment" will focus on Central Ontario, where the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe have created a framework for coordinating land-use planning across the whole region. The intent: to rein in urban expansion and preserve important agricultural and natural resources.

Speakers/panels will debate whether current policies effectively curb sprawl and protect farmland, how permanent current farmland protection policy is, and whether all stakeholders can find a way to work together to protect farmland. Timely topics.

For more info, go to:

<http://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/get-involved/events/annual-farmland-forum/2014-farmland-forum/>

LAND OVER LANDINGS Because Food is a *GROWING* concern

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