



Airport ! / No Airport ! / Airport by Stealth?

Airport !

- 1967** Trudeau government decides to build an international airport north of Montreal, to relieve Dorval.
- 1968** Trudeau government decides to build an international airport near Toronto, to relieve Malton (now Pearson). Site search begins. Public informed 3 months later. New airport said “imperative” before 2000.
- 1969** Pickering *twice* eliminated as unsuitable site. Main contenders: Orangeville, Sutton, Port Perry, Guelph.
- 1970** No workable site found. Cluster of smaller airports proposed by consultant. Malton expansion nixed.
- 1971** Confusion reigns. Feds want airport west of Toronto, Ontario wants it east to fit with new regional plan. Feds cave in. Once-acceptable sites now *unacceptable*; unacceptable site suddenly fine. Concern about major airspace conflict between Pickering site and Malton evaporates overnight.
- 1972** Environmental study of Pickering site (a provincial reserve for agriculture and recreation) rushed through in 3 days in mid-winter. More than 29 sq. miles (18,600 acres) involved.
- Mar. 2:* Ottawa and Ontario jointly announce Pickering as new airport site, to general shock and disbelief.
- Mar. 3:* People or Planes (POP) born. Anti-airport fight launched.
- Sept. 6:* Expropriation notices go out.
- Nov. 23:* Swackhamer Hearings begin under Expropriation Act.
- Dec. 29:* Swackhamer Report roundly criticizes decision to build airport, slams choice of Pickering.
- 1973** Transport Minister Jean Marchand states – in January, March, April, May, and June – that upcoming inquiry into Pickering airport will address need and location.
- Oct. 23:* Gibson Inquiry’s terms of reference released: Inquiry will *not* consider need and location.
- 1974** Gibson Inquiry Report accepts all Ministry of Transport (MOT) arguments, mostly rejects others – but does recommend expanding Malton first. MOT, having claimed expansion impossible, looks for bureaucratic way out.
- 1975** *Feb. 20:* Transport Minister Marchand announces 1-runway “minimum airport” for Pickering. POP’s lawyer reveals to Ontario Cabinet how Province has been misled by the feds on many aspects, including ultimate cost of airport. Premier Davis asks feds to delay. They don’t.
- Aug. 1:* Demolition of houses and barns begins. Ontario government’s protests ignored.
- Sept. 15:* Three POP women make “last stand.” Occupy Bentley-Carruthers house to prevent its demolition. Action attracts nationwide media coverage.
- Sept. 18:* Ontario elects Conservative minority government. POP chairman wins in Durham West.

No Airport !

- 1975** *Sept. 24:* Ontario Cabinet rejects airport. Ontario informs Ottawa that deal is off.
- Sept. 25:* Angry federal government announces shelving of Pickering airport. POP celebrates historic win.
- Oct. 5:* Official opening of Mirabel International – behind schedule, way over budget, only partly built. No planes can land yet. Trudeau says that Torontonians will soon be “on their knees,” begging for second airport. Phase 1 opens to air traffic 2 months later. (Phase 2 never built. Traffic diverted from Dorval to help make Mirabel viable, greatly hurting Dorval. Mirabel fails anyway. In 1985 and 2006, Ottawa deeds or sells back almost 90,000 acres of expropriated land. Today, Mirabel serves only cargo carriers; passenger terminal and parking have been demolished. Dorval, expanded, modernized, and renamed Trudeau International – what irony! – continues to meet Montreal’s domestic and international air passenger needs.)



Airport by Stealth?

- 1976** Transport Minister announces that, without Pickering to relieve Malton, air traffic will be diverted to Mirabel, overflying Toronto. Says Malton will not be allowed new air carriers for at least 5 years. Malton accuses MOT of stalling improvements to Malton to create a need for Pickering. MOT sub-group says Malton expansion would cost more than building a whole new airport. MOT Minister supports statement, insists on new airport.
- 1977** Transport Canada (TC) releases Contingency Plan, stating Malton faces fierce congestion, urgent action needed.
- 1978** House of Commons told by TC Minister that Malton expansion will not be allowed; study into 4th runway stopped.
- 1984** After years of inaction, Ottawa moves to sell off large part of Pickering site but conservationists balk. Sale would open development floodgates and destroy some of Canada's best agricultural land. Plan dies.
- 1995** TC launches study of airport systems within Greater Golden Horseshoe. Conclusion: airport will be needed in Pickering between 2012 and 2025.
- 1998** TC initiates regulatory action to protect option of developing Pickering airport.
- 2001** Land classified as airport site under Aeronautics Act. Feds announce 7,200 acres will be Green Space in perpetuity (no great concession, as land is buffer area). Never formalized by Ottawa.
TC contracts Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) to "undertake interim planning work" to help government decide whether "to proceed with a regional/reliever airport."
- 2004** Zoning regs passed for an airport on site. GTAA submits *Pickering Airport Draft Plan* for large 3-runway airport. TC stops re-renting vacated properties, foregoes revenue, boards houses up instead.
- 2005** Zoning regs go into effect. TC orders many evictions; residents cry foul, courts agree. Land Over Landings born.
- 2007** *May 9*: TC announces new GTAA study re need for the airport the GTAA had just planned. As likely developer and operator of the airport, GTAA has clear conflict of interest. No matter.
- 2010** *Mar.*: GTAA submits *Needs Assessment Study: Pickering Airport, Final Report* to TC, which orders 46 demolitions.
- 2011** *Jul. 11*: TC releases Study's recommendations: site should be retained for a future airport, needed "most likely" between 2027 and 2037. But could be as late as 2041. Or later. "If and when required," anyway. (So could be *never...*) Study used outdated and skewed data and inflated traffic forecasts from TC. No matter.
TC orders 50 more demolitions, citing safety issues but clearly aiming to create a "greenfield" (i.e., development-ready) state on the Lands.
Dec. 23: *Toronto Star* reports: "Plans for the land remain vague, but a footprint for the airport is expected to be completed by next spring, according to Paula Fairfax, a Transport Canada spokesperson."
- 2012** *Mar. 2*: Airport announcement's 40th anniversary. Boisterous celebration in Brougham (one of the expropriated hamlets) to mark POP's impressive achievements in the 1970s.
Dec. 31: Demolitions numerous and ongoing. Ottawa otherwise silent.
- 2013** *June 11*: Finance Minister Jim Flaherty announces 27% of site to go to new Rouge National Urban Park, but airport will be built too. Claims the Needs Assessment Study called for airport "by 2027." Land between park and airport to be developed; farming ruled out. Land Over Landings puts out Call to Action; supporters line up to oppose this irresponsible decision. We get nationwide media attention.
- 2014** Land Over Landings partners with other farmland preservation groups, holds public awareness sessions, petitions the House of Commons, meets repeatedly with politicians of all stripes, at all levels, to make the case for foodland over runways for the long-term benefit of the GTA. Gets lots of media attention, earns growing respect, support.
- 2015** *July 11*: PM Harper announces 5,200 more acres to go to Park. Over half the farmland saved, and a PM finally states that sound business plan essential for any development (including airport) on remaining Lands.
July 13: TC Minister announces plan to appoint independent advisor to look at economic development opportunities and if business case for airport exists. Meanwhile, TC will look into overall GGH transport needs.
- 2016** *Mar. 31*: Independent Advisor submits his report. LOL and many others have made detailed submissions, arguing for farmland preservation in this time of climate change, and creation of a food hub. Meanwhile, TC quietly tenders new aviation sector study, no details made public. Independent advisor's report remains under wraps.