

Timeline: 2018-

The Vision and the Future

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- **Jan. 18** – It was the only airport-vs-farmland battle longer than ours. French President Emmanuel Macron puts an end to over 50 years of strong and persistent opposition to the construction of an airport on the farmland outside Notre-Dame-des-Landes, Brittany. The land will remain in agriculture, and the existing Nantes airport will be expanded. A mighty precedent!
- The Pickering *News Advertiser* publishes an op-ed piece by our chair: “Time to stop misleading Pickering residents about airport jobs.” There are no such jobs on the horizon, as Pearson’s latest Master Plan makes perfectly clear.
- **Mar. 2** – It has been 46 years since the airport announcement. We mark the day with a special edition of our UPDATE newsletter, remembering lost heroes of this interminable fight.
- **Mar. 22** – A 19th-century heritage house in Brougham, the charming former home of Dennis and Mary Jean Mann, is bulldozed today. Just another in the latest spate of demolitions, fulfilling a contract from last year involving 15 properties, all to be gone by March 31.
- **Mar. 27** – We lose another dear friend, neighbour, and hero of People or Planes, Tommy Thompson of Whitevale, husband of the doughty Isobel, head of POP communications during the 1970s resistance. (Isobel passed away in March 2011.)
- **Apr. 3** – This morning we formally release the report of our Ag Study, “A Future for the Lands.” Our consultants present their findings to a packed Brougham Hall, an invitation-only crowd of MPs; municipal stakeholders from across the area; leading food, farming, and environmental NGOs; farmers; educators; and local business owners. It is an august gathering, hosted by the Hon. David Crombie, who ends his opening comments with: “I have a thought today – *that we’re about to win.*” Our own mayor and local councillors fail to attend.
- **Apr. 5** – This evening, the Brougham Hall is packed again, but this time with supporters and donors to the Study, so that they too can hear the findings first-hand from the consultants. The day has been punctuated by messages of thanks, support, and praise from those who attended the first session.
- **Jun. 20** – Our Chair delivers the keynote address at the Ontario Farmland Trust’s AGM, in Guelph, where she recounts the history of the Lands and gives an overview of our study report. The leader of the Green Party of Ontario, Mike Schreiner, is in attendance and strongly supports our cause.
- We hold our own AGM later that day. Our new executive is voted in, and students from l’École Secondaire Ronald-Marion, in Pickering, unveil a GIS (Geographical Information System) map of the Lands that thrillingly brings to life our vision map of North Pickering Farms, using photos and detailed business plans for the (virtual) businesses that could be thriving there.

- **Aug. 8** – We submit a brief to the Standing Committee on Finance, calling for an end to the Pickering airport project and the transfer of the Lands to a public custodian who would oversee the creation of a food hub and agri-tourism destination. We learn that we will be invited to present at a hearing.
- **Oct. 4** – Two members of our executive deliver a presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance at a pre-budget hearing in Oshawa. Our submission is well received.
- **Dec. 10-11** – Four members of our executive travel to Ottawa for a series of meetings arranged by our MP, Jennifer O’Connell. The first is with Transport Canada (9 representatives, including the Minister’s special assistant). The meeting goes well, although it’s a discussion, not a decision-making meeting. Next up is a meeting with MP Wayne Easter, chair of the Finance Standing Committee (he had been in Oshawa in October), who gives us solid support and advice. Then comes Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, who also gives us solid support, and offers to speak to the Transport Minister about our cause.
- **Dec. 12** – We release *Then/Now/Next: 21st-Century Reasons to Cancel Pickering Airport*. It lists and explains 12 powerful reasons for the cancellation. We used it as the basis for our meetings in Ottawa.

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- **Jan. 10** – While we await word on the federal government’s plans to restore/repair the façade of the Bentley House (the decorative balustrade over the porch had rotted and been removed), there is good news on the Bentley-Carruthers House, the site of the Last Stand in 1975. Now in RNUP, it has undergone a condition assessment, and a conservation strategy has been drawn up. (Both houses have Federal Heritage Building designation.)
- We join Stay Grounded, a global network of 100+ organizations acting to counter damaging aviation growth in a time of climate change, and pushing for a more just transportation system.
- **Jan. 11** – Letters go out to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Food and Agri-food (the latter at his specific request), making the case for creating, at the very least, a long-term interim agricultural plan for the Federal Lands if the much-delayed KPMG study results in a recommendation to continue holding them for a potential airport.
- **Jan. 20** – We submit comments on Ontario’s Bill 66; specifically, on the draconian proposals in Schedule 10 that would put the Greenbelt and Moraine at risk. The Federal Lands, as they currently stand, are exempted, but parcels of land around them could be opened up to urban development under Schedule 10, with serious ramifications for the area’s farming in general and for our vision for the Lands specifically. Creating agricultural islands kills rural/agricultural communities.