

# Timeline: 2018-

The North Pickering Farms Vision / An "Aerotropolis" in a Time of Climate Change?!

## The North Pickering Farms Vision

2018

- **Jan. 18** – French President Emmanuel Macron resolves more than 50 years of strong and persistent opposition to using farmland outside Notre-Dame-des-Landes, in Brittany, for a new airport. He cancels the airport plan. The land will remain in agriculture, and Nantes' existing airport will be expanded. A mighty precedent! It was the only airport-vs-farmland battle longer than ours.
- 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. Part of 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, who was head of POP communications during the 1970s resistance. (Isobel passed away in March, 2011.)
- **Apr. 3** – 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.*" Pickering's mayor and our local councillors are the only invited Durham municipal politicians who are no-shows.
- **Apr. 5** – The Brougham Hall is packed again, but this time with supporters and Study donors, so that they can hear the findings directly from the consultants. The day has been punctuated by messages of thanks, support, and praise from those who attended the first session.
- **May** – The City has hired Proof Inc. to do a public telephone survey on the topic of the 407 corridor. The calls, analysis, and "insights work" will cost about \$80,000. Over a 2-week period, 550 Pickering residents are surveyed. We obtain a copy of the survey and find that it never refers to the corridor but is all about an airport. One survey call that we know of is terminated when the resident is found to be living on the Lands. One survey question asks responders to choose who they consider more trustworthy: Land Over Landings (yes, we are mentioned by name) or Pickering's mayor.
- **Apr. 27** – The owners of Buttonville Municipal Airport, citing unresolved issues with their development plans for the site, announce that the airport will continue to operate "until at least the spring of 2023 and possibly longer."

- **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, a strong supporter of our cause, receives a copy.
- We hold our own AGM later that same 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 illustrated map of North Pickering Farms, using photos and detailed business plans for the (virtual) businesses that could be thriving there. Our vision has never seemed more possible.
- **Aug. 8** – We submit a brief to the federal Standing Committee on Finance. It calls 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. Subsequently, we learn that we will be invited to present at a formal hearing.
- **Sept. 27** – Don Gibson, a steadfast supporter, dies at 90 years of age. He was the last owner of Brougham’s Bentley House before its expropriation, and the creator of Ontario’s hugely successful and still running Foodland Ontario marketing campaign, with its memorable slogan, “Good things grow in Ontario.”
- **Oct. 4** – Two members of our executive present to the federal Standing Committee on Finance at a pre-budget hearing in Oshawa. Our submission and our vision for the Lands are 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 and fact-finding meeting, not a decision-making one. 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. We turn over to everyone copies of our North Pickering Farms brochure, with its illustrated map of our vision, and copies of *Then/Now/Next*. (see next entry).
- **Dec. 12** – We release to the public our report called *Then/Now/Next: 21st-Century Reasons to Cancel Pickering Airport*. Among the twelve powerful reasons are climate change, the need for food security, the need to provide rich, affordable farmland to new farmers, the need to protect Rouge National Urban Park, the need to consider the facts on the ground and not the pipedreams of climate-change deniers....

## An “Aerotropolis” in a Time of Climate Change?!

2019

- **January** – We join Stay Grounded, a global network of 100+ organizations acting to counter damaging aviation growth in a time of climate change, and advocating for a more just transportation system worldwide.
- **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 has rotted and been removed), there is good news on the Bentley-Carruthers House, the site of the Last Stand in 1975. Now within the RNUP’s borders it has undergone a condition assessment, and a conservation strategy has been drawn up. (Both Bentley houses have Federal Heritage building designation.)
- **Jan. 11** – We write letters 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 the land 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 in particular. Creating agricultural islands kills rural/agricultural communities.
- **Jan. 24** – In the face of huge protest, the Ontario government backs down and removes the worst parts of Bill 66.
- **Mar. 29** – We introduce our new Youth Wing members, led by Sari Saredidine. Ten in all, so far. These young people are full of fresh ideas, high principles, intelligence, determination, energy, and hope – a welcome breath of fresh air in this ongoing battle.
- **Apr. 9** – The Toronto Region Board of Trade hosts a lunch-time event called “The GTA’s New Economic Engine.” The old claims of needing a Buttonville replacement or a Pearson reliever have been replaced by a far grander vision: an aerotropolis, commandeering every inch of the Pickering Lands for runways, terminuses, offices, hotels, entertainment and exhibition complexes, transportation corridors, and much more. The speakers? Dr John Kasarda, the man behind the aerotropolis concept, and Dr Richard Florida, an urban theorist – both Americans, who clearly know very little about the Lands. We fill seats at our table with guests representing political, environmental, and agricultural spheres. An opening slide indicates that the speakers have been sponsored by a group of seven property developers. To our amazement, Land Over Landings is a prominent part of Kasarda’s presentation. He calls us articulate and impressively effective, then spends time trying to discredit our Ag Study (because it didn’t include an airport-agriculture comparison!) and refuting our concerns about (a) aviation emissions (his aerotropolis will add an “infinitesimal” amount to the global total) and (b) the loss of farmland (the amount of cropland “is going up dramatically in Canada!”). His first claim is a tacit admission of climate-change denial; the second avoids the context that would show it to be false. We post our reports on our website and on social media and the response is massive (and angry).

- **Apr. 23** – The Toronto *Star* features the Pickering airport story in its “Big Debate” section. Kasarda makes the YES case, further raising our profile by praising us as “an articulate, well-organized, and vocal anti-aviation group” and as “strong opposition.” Thanks! He repeats his misleading and erroneous claims about emissions and cropland. The NO side, written by Paris Marx (a student at McGill U.) makes strong points: “In the face of a warming world and the disruptions to food production that will accompany it, we should preserve the farms that surround our cities, not tear them up for speculative megaprojects that won’t yield the returns promised in over-optimistic reports and seductive slide shows.”
- There’s an online poll attached to the *Star*’s debate article: (Pickering airport: YES or NO). The NO side goes from neck-and-neck to trailing.
- The wonderful Lois James, mother of the successful “Save the Rouge” campaign, passes away at 95. In 2003, she became a Member of the Order of Canada for her lifelong effort to save the Rouge. How great it is that she saw it saved, within Rouge National Urban Park.
- **Apr. 24** – At Durham Regional Council, a pro-airport “emergency” motion of Mayor Ryan’s is distributed at the start of the meeting. There has been no advance notice, it is not on the agenda, and there is no opportunity for public input. The mayor of Whitby and a small number of councillors raise objections but are overruled. Pickering’s mayor says there is “one voice of opposition” (us) but that the silent majority is ready for an airport. He rejects any move to delay the motion, claiming: “The people have had their say!” Not true, of course. The vote passes 21-6. We had been alerted about the motion by a supporter who happened to be in the audience. We follow the live-streamed proceedings and get the word out immediately via social media.
- **Apr. 25** – Pickering’s mayor, in a *News Advertiser* op-ed, waxes eloquent on the wonders of the Federal Lands: “Pickering is sitting on an economic treasure of immense potential. It’s not oil or gold or even a highly-educated workforce, though we do have that. No, it’s land.” Regretfully, he hasn’t had an epiphany. “It’s land that can be connected with the nation’s largest airport as it nears capacity to create an economic development zone that would enhance a vast area of the GTA. Unlocking the growth potential of the Airport Lands and surrounding area will provide our city with the gift of choice.” Bizarrely, although he mentions Kasarda’s presentation, he never actually comes clean about what, precisely, he’s referring to – namely, a big airport on the “Airport Lands.” He hides behind weasel words: “economic opportunities” and “economic potential.” Why is he afraid of straight talk?
- **Apr. 27** – The *Star*’s Big Debate prompts many letters to the editor. One or two NO letters are published during the week. On Saturday, five airport letters, ours among them, and all of them NO, take up the bulk of the Letters page, surrounded by climate-change discussion. A few days later, the online poll will show the NO side pulling ahead and eventually bypassing YES by a considerable margin. YES has barely budged after the first few days. Perhaps the arguments made by the letter-writers were instrumental? Facts trumping fiction?
- **Apr. 29** – We get our hands on a copy of Durham’s Special Regional Committee minutes for March 21, 2019. The minutes explode all claims that the airport matter was an emergency, needing an urgent vote on April 24. The airport isn’t mentioned in the minutes. The priorities that are? “Recogniz[ing] community concerns.” “Greater focus on agriculture.” “Keeping greenspaces green.”

- The GTAA's 2018 Annual Report on Pearson, "Count on Us," contains wording that shows their continuing confidence that no new airport will be needed in the foreseeable future to handle Toronto's forecasted air traffic growth. Pickering isn't mentioned, and hasn't been mentioned since the annual report for 2006. Interestingly, among the risk-factors under "caution regarding forward-looking information," are "the use of telecommunications and ground transportation as alternatives to air travel; [...] the availability and cost of jet fuel; [...] carbon emission costs and restrictions; adverse regulatory developments or proceedings; environmental issues [...]." In other words, they aren't blind to present-day risks, although reference to them is mostly confined to the small print.
- **May 1** – Peter Bethlenfalvy, MPP (PC) for Pickering–Uxbridge, writes to Transport Minister Marc Garneau regarding the Federal Lands. His letter is touted by Mayor Ryan but, in fact, it treads a fine line and doesn't come out in support of an airport. Bethlenfalvy asks, instead, for certainty in the near term, the release of the KPMG study, and, if no airport is found to be needed, the return of the lands "to the people of Pickering–Uxbridge so that the people can truly benefit from them." We write to him to say we agree, except for the matter of returning the lands, and we explain why such a move would chiefly benefit developers.
- **May 22** – Pickering's mayor has been crediting insider information as the reason for his confidence that an airport will be approved. The *News Advertiser* claims: "a groundswell of support for an airport in Pickering is gaining momentum, ahead of any release of a federal aviation study, and ahead of this year's federal election." Pickering-Uxbridge MP Jennifer O'Connell corrects the record regarding the study's report: "It was never designed to be before or after an election." She clarifies that the KPMG aviation sector analysis study is not yet complete. "It was designed to gather information for the minister. There's other politics at play."
- **May 25** – Pickering's Final Property Tax Bill for 2019 is arriving in mailboxes, accompanied by a flyer whose entire back panel extolls the benefits to be had from a Pickering airport, although the airport itself is never mentioned (just suggested by the photo of travellers wheeling luggage against a background of windows showing clear skies). The text is all about "the development of the airport lands" – not exactly the same thing. Why is the City so afraid of straight talk?
- **Jun. 2** – Former Ajax Mayor Steve Parish and former Environmental Commissioner for Ontario, Dr Dianne Saxe, are our AGM's guest speakers. The Claremont Community Centre is packed for the event. Dr Saxe raises awareness of the climate crisis we face, and Steve Parish is scathing in his criticism of the aerotropolis idea, calling it a failed tactic to ramp up enthusiasm and get the powers-that-be onside, and he decries Durham Region's recent pro-airport push, stating that the people have *not* had their say in this matter. Our Chair delivers a blistering indictment of recent activity at the local political level and calls on everyone to write to the Transport Minister to refute local politicians' claims about the need for, and the growing support for, the airport.
- **Jun. 16** – Transport Canada takes delivery of the KPMG Study. (There is no announcement but we learn of the date shortly afterwards. The news demolishes the repeated claims of airport proponents over many months that the report was already on the Minister's desk.)
- **Jun. 17** – Transport Minister Marc Garneau recently tweeted that "climate change is real." Today, the House of Commons passes a motion by Catherine McKenna, Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, declaring a national climate emergency.

- **Jun. 25** – Whitby’s Town Council unanimously passes a climate-change-emergency motion, joining an ever-growing number of cities that have done the same. The only bizarre part is that, on May 27, the same council had passed a pro-airport motion (only one “no” vote), despite an impassioned climate-change-related protest by well-versed Mayor Don Mitchell, who then voted for the motion himself.
- **Jun. 26** – Pickering residents start receiving a glossy publication called “Pickering’s Your City Magazine.” The mayor is given star treatment on the cover and centre spread, ahead of two pages on the April aerotropolis event and a further article: “An airport in Pickering: a resident’s perspective.” The aerotropolis article mischaracterizes (among other things) the findings of our economics study. The perspective article mischaracterizes airport opponents’ arguments and otherwise rehashes proponents’ usual talking points. It is pure propaganda (edited by a pro-airport official in the mayor’s office).
- **Jun. 27** – While Pickering’s mayor, in yet another op-ed piece, continues to claim that Pickering’s residents want an airport, local sleuths are uncovering how property developers have found ways to continue funding the election/re-election campaigns of favourite municipal candidates despite changes in funding legislation. Important to keep in mind: The two presenters at the April 9 aerotropolis event in Toronto were sponsored by seven big-name property developers.
- **Jul. 2** – In his own op-ed, Regional Chair John Henry envisions “an airport 10 to 15 years away, which will give technology time to allow for tractors run by batteries to be remotely operated by farmers sitting in their offices.” This is the same Regional Chair who uttered these immortal words about his Pickering airport vision: “Imagine stepping off an airplane and into nature.”
- **Jul. 4** – We launch a new feature on our website to correct the myriad untruths being promulgated by some pro-airport fanatics.
- **Jul. 5** – We celebrate the launch of Common Ground Garden on a piece of Mike Robertson’s High Perspective hang-glider field. The best and highest use for this rich soil!
- **Jul. 11** – Stouffville’s mayor writes to his constituents: “I can assure you though that I am listening to residents on social media and in many other settings. The general consensus I am hearing is opposition to an airport in Pickering.”
- **Jul. 15** – Jane Philpott, former Liberal and now Independent MP for Markham-Stouffville, states that new feasibility studies on high-frequency VIA Rail service in Ontario and Quebec, to be funded by Ottawa, are moves in the right direction and consistent with Canada’s need to shift to a low-carbon economy. She confirms her opposition to the building of an airport on the Pickering Federal Lands “because of the need to protect our environment and some of the finest agricultural land in the country.”
- **Jul. 23** – Durham Region furthers a coordinated effort by local councils to convince Ottawa and Durham residents that a Pickering aerotropolis is needed and it’s time to get on with it. The Region has just published its “Priorities for Federal Investment, 2019,” and the aerotropolis heads the list. The facility they envision would accommodate “indoor, year-round agriculture.”
- **Jul. 25** – Pickering’s mayor, in a new op-ed, claims: “As mayor, I truly believe in the importance of community engagement. Government should not operate in silos or in isolation. Rather, I believe we should implement a more collaborative approach where residents, businesses, community groups, and associations have a valued opinion and an active say in how we operate as a municipality.”

- The Town of Whitby continues to mislead the public with an old reference on its website (we first noticed it in 2004) to an obsolete Pickering airport announcement made by Ottawa in 2013! The text, on the Air Services page, reads: “Future Pickering Airport – Transport Canada is planning an airport in Pickering, with construction slated to begin in 2027. The airport will drive development, attract jobs and industry to the Durham Region.”
- **Jul. 26** – Transport Canada starts replying to no-Pickering-airport letters sent by supporters after our AGM. One paragraph reads: “The timing of any decision concerning the development of a potential airport on the Pickering Lands will be influenced by many market and non-market factors beyond the exclusive consideration of passenger capacities at other airports within the Southern Ontario airports system. Such factors may include, but are not limited to: shifting airline business models, regional population growth and evolving demographics, infrastructure needs and investments, as well as the interests and needs of regional stakeholders.” Climate change considerations are not mentioned.
- **Aug. 5** – We submit our comments on Durham Region’s “Climate Change and Sustainability Discussion Paper,” outlining how the Lands could help to meet the Region’s emissions-reduction targets, and pointing out how the Regional Council’s recent vote to support a Pickering airport was in direct conflict with (and would negate) the Region’s attempts to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- **Aug. 6** – Erin O’Toole, MP (PC) for Parliament-Durham, tells the *Durham Post* that “[t]he airport itself would likely be in the early 2030s... [...] But, in the 2020s, the planning the staging and construction would need to take place or at least the investments towards that. But the economic lands adjacent, could start moving forward in the next few years.[...] And there really was no need for all those decades for a second airport. But now as Pearson is getting close to its max out, and with the GTA growing in a major way in the last two decades, there is a need for a secondary, a smaller airport. But it could be a very focused airport in terms of specific destination travel or even some cargo capacity.” Guess he hasn’t heard about the aerotropolis. Oh wait, he was at the April 9 event and looking delighted with the presentations!
- **Aug. 8** – We post a new map on our website: “Where’s My House? Runway Approaches of Proposed Pickering Airport.” It’s a zoom-in map that allows viewers to see the names of facilities and businesses, and, in satellite view, identify their own properties and other places they know.
- **Aug. 9** – The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirms what we’ve been saying ever since our study was completed. “Indoor agriculture” on the Lands, a concept constantly touted by local politicians, isn’t financially competitive with similar facilities in warmer climates [e.g., Leamington and Niagara].
- **Aug. 15** – Durham Region’s Chair, John Henry, weighs in on Durham’s “once-in-a-lifetime chance” to have an aerotropolis. He writes in an op-ed: “Any [airport] development should include a strong focus on sustainability, accessibility and resilience, including clean technology, renewable energy, integrated public transit and environmental best practices.” He actually seems to believe that an airport would have no consequences for farmers on the Lands, and that indoor farming really is better: “A modern airport would also allow us to showcase one of our biggest economic drivers: agriculture. Imagine on-site farming that highlights state-of-the-art, year-round growing practices and innovation? What about a food hub highlighting greenhouses and vertical farming?” And, for good measure, he adds: “why not include an on-site climate change centre of excellence? With the site surrounded by protected natural spaces, such as the Rouge National Urban Park, Durham has

an opportunity to set the standard for noise management, stormwater retention, carbon neutrality and protection of the environment. This is not business as usual." It's clear that he's been reading our arguments, but his distorted interpretation is shocking.

- **Aug. 22** – Ajax's new mayor, Shaun Collier, is next to weigh in with why he supports an aerotropolis in Pickering. This is the mayor who said, at Regional Council, on April 24, that he didn't want an airport in Ajax; just the benefits. (Our new map shows how much of Ajax (a lot) would be under a Pickering airport's two main runway approaches.) He too addresses our concern over loss of farmland: "Innovative solutions could see retention of agricultural uses on hundreds of acres of land, reimagined (e.g. as stacked greenhouses) to produce year-round indoor farming opportunities..." Concerns about the energy needed to light and heat these facilities? None. Concerns about climate change? None apparent.
- **Aug. 27** – The prestigious *National Observer* does a great article on the situation here: "East of Toronto, a land dispute tests Trudeau's commitment to sustainability." Sandra Campbell and our Chair are quoted, as are MPs Jennifer O'Connell and Jane Philpott. Our position is well presented, and our North Pickering Farms photo collage and illustrated map are prominent.
- DurhamRegion.com publishes "Analysis: Durham lays out its priorities to the feds." The Regional Chair repeats his aspirational claims of Aug. 15. MP Jennifer O'Connell takes a more practical position: there needs to be a business case for an airport. "It's the government's position as well. They are going to make a decision based on strong evidence and a business case." Regarding the Region's priorities, she adds: "Dealing with climate change is incredibly important. Frankly, if we're not dealing with that, then none of the other items matter. If climate change isn't addressed, then the economic opportunities for Durham and the country are going to be limited. That's the overarching theme and issue we should be working on. It's critically important."
- Whitchurch-Stouffville's Council unanimously passes a motion requesting Transport Canada to reconsider the airport project if there is no clear business case for it. MP Jane Philpott is presenter of the motion. The final WHEREAS reads: "... one of the most important duties of Council is to protect the quality of life in our community."
- **Aug. 28** – As a member of Stay Grounded, Land Over Landings signs on to a joint statement urging the UN's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to take climate action.
- **Aug. 30** – We release our latest research paper: *Airports and Pollution: Environmental Consequences of an Airport on the Pickering Federal Lands*. It covers the types of pollution, aviation's challenges in the coming decades, how a Pickering airport would harm the area (not least the national park), and how the concept of a green airport is an oxymoron. Everything, from the production of its construction materials to its day-to-day operations, would contribute to the world's growing emissions tally.
- **Sept. 3** – SKIES magazine reports that Ottawa will invest \$50 million to improve air freight and logistics at Mirabel. This does make some sense: improving existing infrastructure, not creating new.
- Ajax mayor Shaun Collier announces in his public schedule that he will be attending a "GTAA Info Session: Pickering Airport" in Markham on Sept. 5. On Sept. 4 we learn that it's a private meeting with Mayor Scarpitti, the GTAA, and area mayors. Even Markham councillors haven't been advised in advance.
- **Sept. 5** – Our Chair records three radio ads with Durham Radio News; they will run for three weeks, starting on September 16, and are intended to counter an ad by the other side that has been delivering all the usual pro-airport bromides.



- **Sept. 24** – We launch our pre-federal-election campaign, warning voters of the efforts by local politicians and others to greenwash the Pickering airport (or aerotropolis) they're busy promoting.
- **Oct. 8** – Our fight to save this farmland is given full-page coverage in an article in the October issue of *Ontario Farmer*: "Plan for Pickering's 'aerotropolis' lands called 'greenwashing'."
- **Oct. 9** – A slide presentation on a New Strategic Plan for Durham Region reveals two particularly revealing details: Community-stakeholder input saw "Airport" only in terms of "concerns about environmental impact." Yet that inconvenient truth didn't stop the Region from indulging in a Big Lie, claiming that something exists when it doesn't. Listed among its *Strategic Objectives for Economic Prosperity & Job Creation*: "Leverage Existing Assets (Pickering Aerotropolis/Airport, ...)."
- **Oct. 17** – Barely a week after the slide presentation, therefore likely written and submitted well before the strategic planning findings, the *Globe and Mail* carries an insert on Durham Region by Perspective Media (based in Oakville): "Welcome to Durham Region: Think Big?" Page 5 carries a full-page article on the Toronto East Aerotropolis. All the usual hyperbole present and accounted for.
- **Oct. 21** – Federal Election Day. The Liberals are returned but with a minority government. Jennifer O'Connell is re-elected in Pickering-Uxbridge with a huge majority. Mark Holland is re-elected in Ajax with a huge majority. Helena Jaczek ("I am totally opposed to the airport." / "Not sure why this issue has been resurrected.") has a win big in Markham-Stouffville. First-time candidate Ryan Turnbull ("No airport") wins easily in Whitby. Incumbent Gary Anandasangaree ("No airport") wins in a landslide in Scarborough–Rouge Park. The only non-Liberal winners in the area (both pro-airport, both re-elected, and both in ridings some distance from the Lands) are Conservatives Erin O'Toole (Durham) and Colin Carrie (Oshawa). Although we are sad to lose Jane Philpott, we have wound up, in aggregate, with an even larger cohort of local MPs in strong support of protecting the Lands.
- **Nov. 18** – A group of us meet with Stouffville's mayor, Iain Lovatt; partly a "get to know us" meeting and partly to thank him and his council for their no-airport vote of August 27.
- **Nov. 20** – Our political team meets with our re-elected MP for a mutual briefing session before government business starts anew.
- **Nov. 29** – The GTAA announces more multi-million-dollar investments in its partnership with Metrolinx to expand rapid-transit access to Pearson – a long-overdue plan that should make huge improvements to one of Pearson's chief problems: road-traffic congestion.
- **Dec. 3** – A group of us meet with Uxbridge's mayor, Dave Barton.
- **Dec. 6** – We issue our last UPDATE newsletter of the year (our 55th since the day of Jim Flaherty's announcement in June 2013 that the Lands were to be divided between a national park and an airport (construction to start soon), with an economic development area in between. Rouge National Urban Park has taken off since then. No planes have. Farmers now have 10-year leases on the Lands and some have begun to invest in field tile drainage to improve future crop yields.
- **Dec. 16** – In one last hypocritical act before year's end, Pickering City Council, having passed a motion earlier this year supporting an airport on the Lands (and having campaigned for the airport constantly ever since), now passes another motion, declaring a climate emergency. The text is a mix of self-congratulation, empty and useless references to mitigation, and an obvious unwillingness to abandon business as usual. Sad to say, it's no surprise.

## 2020

- **January** – The year starts with a flurry of op-eds and articles by people suggesting (or claiming) that 2020 will be the year when Pickering airport gets the go-ahead. A little digging reveals that the claims are no more than wishful thinking on the part of a few. We cry foul and our complaints prompt some corrections.
- **Jan. 9** – In an op-ed on the website of the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA), a member writes: “More opposition is coming from environmentalists, questioning the wisdom of building an airport when air transportation is a significant contributor of greenhouse gases.” And he also takes aim at Durham’s Regional Chair: “Perhaps [John] Henry needs a primer on the results of the last time the federal government built a major airport.” We couldn’t have said it better.
- **Jan. 15** – We discover that the City of Pickering and an entity called Toronto East Aerotropolis are both listed as clients of Melanie Greenwood, graphic designer, who once hailed from this area but now lives and works in California. One of the items in her portfolio? A logo for the aerotropolis. Did taxpayer money go to the U.S. for a logo for a non-existent airport? As we’re looking into this, the logo disappears from the site, and only the client list remains (unchanged)...
- **Jan. 17** – We make a preliminary delegation at the Durham Region Roundtable on Climate Change, pointing out that while we fully agree with Durham’s declaring a climate emergency, there will be no point in working towards incremental emissions reduction and climate adaptation if the political leaders continue to push for a massive aerotropolis on prime farmland that is currently a carbon sink and should be a significant part of the Region’s climate action plans.
- **Jan. 22** – The Council of the Town of Newmarket declares a climate emergency. The text is short, to the point, and utterly unambiguous about the Town’s intent to do everything necessary to adapt to the difficult times ahead. The difference between this clear motion and Pickering’s denial is breathtaking.
- **Jan. 24** – The *Sudbury Star* runs a terrific – and unexpected – piece by columnist Steve May: “No new airport in Pickering in a time of climate crisis.” He asks: “Could 2020 be the year that the federal government decides, once and for all, that building a new airport northeast of Toronto is simply not compatible with achieving Canada’s climate targets?”
- **Jan. 25** – *Canadian Geographic* has confirmed that a photo-and-text submission of ours has been accepted and that the March/April issue will carry an article on Relocation, a new project highlighting the forced movement of Canadian communities.
- **Jan. 29** – Sari Sarieedine, chair of our Youth Wing, delivers LOL’s presentation before Durham Regional Council on the day that Council is to debate and vote on its own Climate Emergency Declaration. Once again, we point out that adding an aerotropolis is incompatible with the Region’s aim to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. There is some pushback to the motion by two councillors, an impassioned response by one mayor, and the motion carries, 23-2. The degree of commitment, however, remains unclear.
- Cadillac Fairview and Armadale Co. Ltd. (owned by the Sifton family) announce that the 170-acre Toronto Buttonville Municipal Airport site will be sold. Cadillac Fairview claims it wants to concentrate on developments in downtown Toronto. There is no word from Armadale, but the years of wrangling with the Town of Markham and the OMB have surely played a role in the decision.

- **Feb. 3** – Letter sent in follow-up to Jan. 29 council meeting, to provide Ajax Mayor Shaun Collier with information he requested at the time regarding constraints on successful vertical farming in North Pickering. The chair and all councillors are copied. (No one acknowledges or replies.)
- **Feb. 24** – Letters go out to all federal ministers, explaining the situation on the Lands, showing (where pertinent) how the health of the Lands tallies with certain aspects of their mandate, and (in case of a pro-airport KPMG report) asking them, as members of the Cabinet, to vote to protect this farmland.
- **Mar. 5** – Transport Canada releases the KPMG report, 400+ pages covering the period 2016-2036. “The report states that no decision has been made to develop an airport on the Pickering Lands, and that there will be no immediate need for an airport until at least 2038 ... Transport Canada will retain the land for future consideration. ... Any decision on the future of the Pickering Lands will be made based on a sound business case and demonstrated aviation demand and capacity, as well as a thorough analysis of several regional and national factors, including environmental impact.”
- The report is heavily redacted, but not so heavily as to hide the broad conclusion, that KPMG found no need for a Pickering airport during the period studied. And figures inside the report show that, with modifications and small expansions to existing facilities in the Southern Ontario Airports Network, there will be a considerable gap in 2036 between the capacity available and the demand that can be expected. The gap is so great that it suggests an airport at Pickering may *never* be needed, regardless of the carrot that Transport Canada continues to dangle.
- The report refers in passing to the potential for policy changes related to emissions but does not engage with the potential effects and fall-out of the climate crisis. Had this aspect been given due consideration, the large gap would have been vastly wider. The relief is huge, 48 years and 3 days after the original airport announcement...
- Our MP, Jennifer O’Connell, puts out a powerful news release: “An airport in Pickering cannot, and should never have been, a substitute for a real job creation and economic growth strategy that would benefit our community now. Infrastructure projects of this scale can only be viable under the right conditions, and cannot be rushed or manipulated to fit local strategic planning. The KPMG Aviation Sector Analysis clearly articulates that there is no demand for the immediate development of an airport. ... The facts are evident and publically available. It’s time for all levels of government to work together to create real economic prosperity and opportunity for our community, while protecting our environment, fighting climate change and supporting our agricultural industry.”
- Pickering’s mayor, his solidly pro-airport CAO, and Durham Region’s chair manage to spin the news 180 degrees. Mayor Ryan thinks the study has found that the airport will be needed in 2036 and he calls this “great news.” The CAO professes to be “thrilled.” Chair Henry finds the report’s conclusion “exciting” and feels “encouraged.”
- There is some local media uptake but, from a news point of view, the report really means that nothing has changed. So the limbo continues, as does the uncertainty – but much less than before.