

Timeline: 1972-2004

Airport Announcement / People or Planes / Entering Limbo / V.O.C.A.L.

Airport Announcement / People or Planes

1972

- **January** – An environmental assessment of the Pickering site is rushed through – in 72 hours, in the snow.
- **Mar. 1** – A federal-provincial agreement is signed.
- **Mar. 2** – The North Pickering Development Project, requiring the expropriation of 18,600 acres for a major international airport, and a further 25,000 acres for a new city to the south of it, to be called Cedarwood, is jointly announced by Ottawa and Ontario. Pickering is described as “ideal” and the logical choice. The public is not told that Pickering had formerly been deemed unsuitable in every way, aside from its proximity to Toronto.
- According to reports, the airport will cost \$300 million and the new city, immediately south of the airport, will have a population of 150,000 to 200,000.
- North Pickering and area residents get the news as they’re driving home from work or milking the cows.
- Amid the watercourses and patches of woodlands, there are 126 working farms on the proposed airport site. There are three hamlets: Altona, Brougham, and Green River. The site marked out for Cedarwood is almost entirely agricultural. The agricultural land on the sites is Class 1, the rarest and best soil there is.
- Local reaction to the announcements is mixed. Among the residents of Claremont, on the northeast border of the airport site, resignation is the predominant response. Brougham, on the other hand, is angry and gears up for a fight.

I hope that opposition to this affront against common sense eventually will be nationwide, the largest single protest movement in Canadian history. It should be. It can be.

~ Scott Young, Canadian journalist, 1972

- **Mar. 3** – At least 80 local residents crowd into Melody Farm (originally Ever Green Villa, home of Eli Barclay), on Brock Road, to decide what to do. They are angry.
- According to federal officials, the airport is slated to open in late 1978 or early 1979. The federal and provincial governments have set a target of two to three years to acquire all properties on the two sites. Local municipal politicians are unable to get clear responses to their many questions.
- **Mar. 6** – Pickering Township unanimously passes a resolution opposing a second international airport “at Claremont” in Pickering.
- **Mar. 7** – A thousand citizens crowd into Brougham Hall and the main floor and basement of the nearby United Church (connected by two-way radio speakers) for the first public meeting. Co-chairs

Dr Charles Godfrey and Hugh J. Miller, of Thistle Ha' farm, address the crowd: Miller: a competent lawyer will be needed to fight the airport. Godfrey: "This will be the longest, hardest fight you have ever been in. We are taking on two governments. ... Is it to be people or planes?" A resolution is passed to oppose the airport and form committees. Passing the bucket in the church and town hall yields \$948. Hugh J. Miller assumes the role of interim chair (Dr Charles Godfrey will be appointed chair by unanimous acclaim on March 11). **People or Planes (POP)** is born.

- **Mar. 17** – More than a thousand concerned residents pack the gym of a local high school to learn more from now-Chair Godfrey; Norm Cafik, Liberal MP of Ontario riding; Bill Newman, Ontario Conservative MP for Ontario South; and Clark Muirhead, an Uxbridge councillor and aeronautical engineer (who tells the crowd that Malton could easily handle any additional traffic into the foreseeable future).
- **Mar. 19** – Fundraising is already in full swing. Events-planning starts, multiple meetings with politicians are being set up. POP retains a leading Toronto trial lawyer, J. J. Robinette, to help residents fight the airport. The amount of activity and outreach that ensues is prodigious.
- **Mar. 23** – Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, during a Q&A session at Stephen Leacock Collegiate Institute in Scarborough, answers Dr Godfrey's questions this way: "If the majority of people living in this area, even only 51 per cent, didn't want this airport, then we wouldn't proceed with it." Godfrey finds this encouraging, being the first time that anyone in a senior position has said that the airport can be stopped. (Premier Davis is later quoted as saying that he finds Trudeau's suggestion doubtful.) Trudeau is also more forthcoming than Transport Canada, explaining that "we seriously considered all the alternatives [...] it was the least bad of all choices, I suppose," adding "It's not out of malice or pressure from our members of Parliament that we decided to spend \$300 million on an airport. It's because there has been a really strong demand from the whole Toronto area to build such an airport." He also says that area MPs had been lobbying him "for a long time for a second airport, but not near their own ridings." At a subsequent Q&A event he jokes that as a Montrealer he doesn't think Toronto needs a second airport but is just "keeping up with the Joneses."
- **Apr. 4** – At a public information meeting in Claremont of some 300 or 500 people (reports differ), members of POP and members of POW (Progress over Welfare) nearly come to blows over their divergent positions on the airport. POP wins a no-airport vote by a 10-1 margin.
- **Apr. 14** – Provincial Treasurer Darcy McKeough admits that the Province hadn't studied the need for a second airport. He and Premier Bill Davis had repeatedly said in recent weeks that the decision was purely a federal one, and that the Province was involved solely in the airport's location.
- **Apr. 18** – Premier Davis rejects opposition demands for an inquiry into whether the airport is necessary. This time, he claims that Ottawa is responsible for determining need for an airport and where it will be built, whereas Ontario's only role is to provide services such as sewerage. He also refuses to make provincial studies on the project available to the public.
- Since the announcements, media coverage has been non-stop and largely critical of the airport and Cedarwood plans. As summed up by a *Globe and Mail* editorial:

"It has taken more than three years for the Ontario government to admit that those long negotiations with Ottawa on a new international airport for Toronto weren't about an airport at all. They were about location.

Queen's Park evidently knew nothing, asked nothing, about airport plans and use. Ottawa bought a location. [...] The Province has an airport site but not really just where it wanted it. Ottawa has chosen

the site, but not where the federal Government wanted it. The people of Pickering have an airport site and they don't want it."

- **Apr. 24** – Stephen Lewis, Ontario's NDP leader, airs doubts as to the need for a new airport, and backs the residents who are fighting it.
- **Apr. 28** – Results of a *Toronto Star* poll: "Are you in favor of the proposed new airport scheduled to be built in Pickering Township or are you against it?" In favor: 22%; Against: 57%; Not sure: 18%. These results will prompt a screaming headline in the May 18 issue of POP's newspaper, asking: "Trudeau, will he keep his word?" He doesn't.

April, May, June, July – POP meets with federal and provincial ministers and, meanwhile, issues a barrage of media releases and stays in the public eye with highly creative publicity stunts (including a funeral march to Queen's Park), fundraising events (including a Spring Festival in May), presentations, exposés, and legal arguments that will continue unabated for 3 years. POP also refines its organizational structure to make it more efficient and begins to set up cells in the broader community. In line with local municipalities, it also applies pressure for a public inquiry.

- **May 12** – POP's Spring Festival, organized by Gord Willson and Edward Falkenberg, draws crowds to a whole range of activities, including a motorcade, over a period of a week. The City of Toronto has been invited to see firsthand the land that was expropriated. The work of fifty artists and craftspeople is showcased at three venues on or near the Lands, including Brougham Hall. A Tea Garden features a game of Airport Darts that proves popular. There are singers and musicians, a white-elephant sale, a bake sale....
- **Jul. 5** – POP minutes show that a book about People or Planes has been started by "Professor Massies and associates" at no cost to POP.
- **Aug. 31** – Minister of Transport, Don Jamieson, just prior to a federal election, announces that public hearings will be held on the choice of the airport site. He also says, "The inquiry will not have power to stop the airport."
- **Sept. 6** – Expropriation notices start going out to residents, who are also being warned by POP and others to beware of land speculators.
- **Sept. 16, 17** – POP holds an Earth Days "extravaganza," showcasing local talent (folk, rock, and traditional music), local crafts, an antiques display and auction, a "film festival competition" – an opportunity for corn roasts and picnics. The event raises \$1,000.
- **October** – Copp Clark publishes *People or Planes*, by Charles Godfrey and Hector Massey – a small book with a big and distressing story to tell, recording what happened in north Pickering in 1972 and calling for the airport decision to be rescinded. Its preface:

This is a book about Pickering, an historic southern Ontario community now living under the sentence of death. It is a protest against what many Canadians believe to be an unfair decision, and an appeal by the condemned to Canadian public opinion. In the course of human events there are times when a beleaguered people must stand up and be heard or be forever silent. Such is the feeling of large numbers of people battling against the site chosen for Toronto's second international airport.
- **Oct. 18** – POP executive committee meeting minutes show cash in hand (\$2,800), cash reserved for a technical report (\$2,500), and more reserved for a legal report (@12,000). [Impressive. This is 1972 and these are 1972 dollars! Serious fundraising efforts of all kinds are paying off.] With an election

coming up, POP's publicity committee is having 30,000 information sheets printed for distribution around Greenwood and across the city of Pickering. A recent survey shows that most candidates are against the airport. The exec. committee is meanwhile working closely with lawyer Robinette in preparation for the upcoming public hearings.

- **Nov. 23** – Toronto lawyer J.W. Swackhamer, Q.C., as commissioner, opens the hearings under the Expropriation Act. POP participants make their case.
- **Nov. 27** – Jean Marchand takes over as Minister of Transport as the public hearings into the siting of the airport proceed.
- **Nov. 30** – Federal opposition leader Robert Stanfield calls for a halt to expropriations and for reconsideration of the airport site.
- **Dec. 29** – The Swackhamer Report is out, criticizes the government's decision to build an airport, and slams the choice of Pickering as the airport's location.

1973

- **January, March, April, May, June** – Transport Minister Jean Marchand states many times over this period that an upcoming inquiry into the Pickering airport (the findings of the first one having been ignored) would address both need and location.
- **Jan. 15** – Out of the public eye, Transport's Deputy Minister writes to the Minister: "In some ways the word 'inquiry' is misleading because it is meant to be more of an effort to harmonize formally the plans ... before initiating an airport." On the same day, a Cabinet memo states: "Construction work will be undertaken during the Board's deliberations."
- **Feb. 20** – Ottawa tables estimates showing that the government has earmarked \$82 million for land expropriations in Pickering.
- **Mar. 2** – POP marks the first anniversary of the airport announcement with a townhall meeting in the community hall in Brougham. It becomes a March 2 tradition.
- **April** – Government surveying begins for the airport.
- **Apr. 25** – POP exec meeting minutes: It's reported that offers [for private property] on the airport site will be coming out on the 30th. Lorne Almack suggests getting "do not panic" letters into mail-boxes, and he will draft the content. Residents will be advised not to accept money if they don't want to sell. Surveying has already been blocked by several POP members, who removed survey stakes. It's suggested that residents put stakes everywhere, to confuse the surveyors. Isabel Thompson feels that POP has been too quiet and "should resort to violence." She points out that the Swackhamer hearing was a sham in that no one [in government] read the excellent evidence.
- **Apr. 28** – Landowners complain about the unrealistically low prices the government is offering for their properties.
- **Jun. 15** – In Brougham, POP stages an "unofficial" but dramatic "equal opportunity" hanging-in-effigy of Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Davis who, they say, bear the ultimate responsibility for Pickering's fate.
- **Jul. 24** – POP exec meeting minutes: A POP member, researching house rentals on the airport site, reports being told by an official: "It's a legal and political mess ... we cannot answer any questions."

- **Aug. 13** – The federal government adds 10% and a \$3,000 relocation allowance to its offers to residents who have refused earlier offers and who remain on their land.
- **Aug. 14** – POP exec meeting minutes: POP hosts a visit from Lisa and André Bouvette, of Ste-Scholastique, to learn about the Mirabel expropriation and its fall-out. They “report on the bitter conditions in their area. The ill informed farmers, through ignorance and fear submitted easily to Government demands. Secrecy and distrust were the biggest problem, and André felt that if people band together and do not withhold information re: prices offered them by the Government ... as a group they will make a much stronger and more effective stand.”
- **Aug. 21** – POP investigates the wisdom of putting runway tarmac on top of the TransCanada Pipeline, which crosses the lands. Newspapers have been notified.
- **Oct. 3** – An Order-in-Council establishes the promised Inquiry. Mr Justice Hugh F. Gibson is to head a three-man airport review board. The terms of reference leave no doubt that this Inquiry is already an open-and-shut case and will find in the government’s favour.
- **Oct. 23** – POP exec committee minutes: Lorne Almack reports that a Guelph study, just released, has reported that “Pickering Airport farmland is BEST in the province.”
- Ottawa announces that the Gibson Inquiry into the expropriations will *not* consider need or location of the airport, despite Transport Minister Marchand’s months of assurances that it would.
- **Nov. 17** – *The Movable Airport*, by Sandra Budden and Joseph Ernst, is published. It describes “the planning, manoeuvring and political infighting” that led to the decision to locate a new international airport near Toronto” and concludes that it was a political decision, not a planning one.
- **Dec. 11** – POP exec meeting minutes regarding the upcoming Gibson Inquiry: “At present the terms of reference would suggest a murky hearing to be held in 4 stages, briefs to be submitted by individuals, the three panel members to judge their relevance to Location, Operation and Timing, nothing being accepted on Need.”
- **Dec. 18** – POP meeting minutes re the upcoming Inquiry: “Thirty to forty briefs to be submitted before February 1 ... strategy to be mapped on the weekend by contributors. Feels a big issue should be made about payment and [that] the Government non-payment on last hearing be a strong political argument.” Earlier POP minutes showed that Ottawa had paid only part of what it owed POP for expenses incurred in preparation for the Swackhamer hearings in 1972. Pressure brought to bear by POP’s lawyer. J.J. Robinette, had had no effect.
- **December** – Exec. meeting minutes show that POP’s various teams and committees had been perpetually busy with strategy sessions, info sessions, media interviews, political and legal meetings, events and fundraisers, filming, slide show preparation, presentations, outreach to other groups, and so on, throughout the year.

1974

- **Jan. 8** – POP exec. meeting minutes: Robinette has advised that the Inquiry’s terms of reference are too narrow and he strongly suggests that participation by POP isn’t worth it. POP’s reaction: failure to participate seems wrong; it’s important to make a presentation. POP will take part regardless.

- **Jan. 18** – Federal planners submit a brief to the review board, pushing for a start on Pickering airport by mid-1975. There are soon rumours that a tender is going out for runway construction.
- POP exec. meeting minutes: It is moved and seconded that, on the advice of lawyers, POP be incorporated, resulting in tax concessions, representation as a corporate body at the upcoming hearing, and, if the fees are finally paid from the Swackhamer hearing they would be tax-free.
- **Mar. 2** – Second anniversary of expropriation is marked by POP in Brougham Hall.
- **Mar. 15** – Toronto City Council votes to allocate \$20,000 to oppose the Pickering airport before the review board.
- **Mar. 18** – The first public hearings of the Gibson Commission begin.
- **Apr. 1** – All 22 MPPs of the Ontario Liberal Party declare their opposition to the airport.
- **Apr. 2** – Executive meeting minutes show that POP has been incorporated.
- **Jun. 7** – POP's newspaper goes to press. Up to \$800 will be set aside for its printing and distribution.
- **Aug. 20** – The Gibson hearings end. Late in the proceedings, a City of Toronto report condemning the Pickering airport plan had prompted the City to make a last-minute intervention. Their doing so delayed the winding-up of the hearings by over two months.
- **September – December** – POP fills the months with fundraising, information sessions, and networking with politicians and a number of other advocacy/protest groups while awaiting the results of the Gibson Inquiry.
- **Dec. 23** – The Gibson Inquiry Report is delivered to Ottawa.

1975

- **January** – The Gibson Inquiry Report supports the government side, says that construction should begin as soon as possible so that everything is built, equipped, and ready for when the airport is actually needed – but recommends, meanwhile, that Malton be expanded, adopting a dual-runway system. The Ministry of Transport is now in a bind, having long rejected dual runways as dangerous (although the U.S. uses them without problems). Clearly, some parts of the report will have to be finessed or suppressed. A number of departments and Cabinet ministers find other faults in the report and start to question its credibility.
- **Jan. 31** – The Gibson Report is made public. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transport has enlisted the aid of the Secretary to the Cabinet, Michael Pitfield, to help craft the kind of pro-airport argument that Cabinet will buy.
- **Feb. 5** – Toronto Council votes unanimously to reaffirm its opposition to the airport and declares that the review board ignored the City's views and planning objectives.
- **Feb. 15** – Pitfield turns over his pro-airport arguments to Marchand.
- **Feb. 20** – Basing his arguments on Pitfield's paper, Marchand proposes, and gets Cabinet approval for, a 1-runway "minimum airport" instead of the earlier plan, construction to begin within the year, the target operating date to be 1980. Later expansion of the airport is not ruled out.
- **Feb. 28** – For the new, smaller airport, about 1,800 acres of the 18,600 will be needed. The federal works department announces plans to take possession of expropriated lands by May 30.

- **April** – POP’s current lawyer, William McMurtry, fully briefed by Godfrey and other POP exec members, meets with the Ontario Cabinet to show its members how Ottawa has misled Ontario on the airport file.
- **Apr. 30** – While the Ontario Minister of Transport, John Rhodes, is in Ottawa trying (unsuccessfully) to get satisfactory answers from Minister Marchand with regard to some of McMurtry’s warnings, POP holds a Bulldozer Tea Party to recruit members and teach them how to disable demolition equipment. More than 2,000 people sign on to lie down, if need be, in the path of bulldozers to block the destruction.
- **May 14** – PM Trudeau tells the House of Commons that the Gibson review cost taxpayers \$764,153.
- **May 27** – Premier Davis meets with Marchand to voice his concerns about the latest airport idea: Ontario would essentially be getting a “minimum airport” while still having to spend the full amount – several hundred million dollars – on infrastructure. Marchand’s bullying reply does not clear the air. Nor does he explain that the expropriation is nearing completion and development is about to begin.
- **Jun. 9** – Some landowners are still on their properties. Ottawa increases by 50% its expropriation offers on smaller residential landholdings (10 acres or less).
- **Jul. 10** – Provincial Transport Minister Rhodes alerts Ottawa, by telegram, that Ontario’s priorities do not “at this time” include another airport. He asks for a construction delay until a meeting with Davis can be held in Ottawa. Marchand advises Davis that Ottawa is completing plans for a full-scale airport development, perhaps as early as 1981. He writes: “Based on all the evidence ... Malton Airport will become congested again in 1981.”
- **Jul. 29** – The Ottawa meeting between Davis and Marchand takes place but Davis doesn’t budge. The Province asks that the bulldozers be held off until after the Ontario election.
- **Jul. 31** – Marchand notifies Rhodes, by telegram, that construction will not start before mid-September.
- **Aug. 13** – Despite Ontario’s concerns and Marchand’s assurances, demolitions do begin. Barbed-wire fences and barricades go up to keep protesters off the site. Ontario complains to Ottawa.
- **Aug. 21** – Marchand orders the demolitions stopped. By now, the federal contractor has pulled down twelve of the sixteen buildings in his initial contract, so Marchand has really saved only four. Another thirty-seven have been sold to private wrecking contractors, and those demolitions carry on. TV cameras capture the ensuing marches, confrontations, and demonstrations.
- **Sept. 15** – POP hosts a moving-out party for Ernie and Edna Mae Carruthers, whose farmhouse and barn are next in line for demolition. Using the party as cover, three POP women, Brenda Davies, Anne Howes, and Frances Moore, climb in a window and occupy the vacated farmhouse to prevent its destruction, staying in touch with the outside world by shortwave radio. Their actions attract Canada-wide media coverage. They will stay put for 11 days, and their protest will become known as the Last Stand.
- **Sept. 18** – Ontario re-elects a Conservative government, although a minority one. POP’s chairman, Dr Charles Godfrey, easily wins an NDP seat in Durham West.
- **Sept. 24** – Ontario announces its formal withdrawal from the airport agreement, saying it will not provide infrastructure for an airport whose need is unproven and whose full costs are unknown.

Davis cites “negative information” from Ottawa as well as his displeasure over Ottawa’s demolishing of houses when no deal has been struck.

- **Sept. 25** – In response, a furious federal government shelves the airport plan “for at least two or three years,” according to Marchand, blaming Ontario’s unwillingness to cooperate. He says he believes the airport will still be needed by 1979 or 1980, despite recent declines in air passenger growth. And Prime Minister Trudeau says, misleadingly and petulantly, that he’ll be happy to send “the \$400 million slated for Pickering” elsewhere. The three POP women open the doors to the Carruthers house, and some 200 POP members descend on the farmhouse to toast them and Charles Godfrey, and to celebrate their stunning victory.

“I’m thrilled; I’m incoherent with delight.”

~ Isobel Thompson, active member of POP (*Toronto Star*, September 26, 1975)

- **Sept. 26** – In the cold light of day, the fact remains that hundreds of properties have been expropriated and many family homes, barns, and heritage structures have been razed. Ottawa has announced that it will keep the land.

“The snake has to be killed seven times.

I have an inborn suspicion of anything federal. I don’t trust them one centimetre.”

~ Dr Charles Godfrey, POP president and spokesman (*Toronto Star*, September 26, 1975)

- **Oct. 5** – Mirabel: Phase 1 of the airport, nearing completion but late and massively over budget, is officially opened by Prime Minister Trudeau, who says that Torontonians will soon be “on their knees” and begging for a second airport. The high-profile opening is largely a face-saver. Planes won’t be able to land at Mirabel for another two months.

Entering Limbo

1976

- **January** – Because Transport Canada assumes that the shelving of the airport will be temporary, little effort is made to protect or preserve the buildings on the site. Public Works Canada calls for tenders for the sale and removal of 18 homes and 57 other buildings deemed unsafe and unfit for rental. This TC policy leads to decades-long constraints on the farming community and other tenants who remain on the Lands, and to ongoing, relentless neglect and eventual demolitions, punctuated by the department’s repeated attempts to revive the airport plan.
- The Pickering Fire Department complains that half the fires in Pickering in the previous year were on the airport and north Pickering sites and blames government neglect.
- **May** – Transport Minister Otto Lang 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 (formerly DOT) of stalling improvements to Malton to create a need for Pickering. An MOT sub-group claims that Malton expansion would cost more than building a whole new airport. Minister Lang supports the statement and insists on a new airport.
- **July** – A survey sent out to all Ontario travel agents by the Metropolitan Toronto Airport Review Committee (MTARC, secretly People or Planes) reveals that a very high percentage of agents disagree with Lang’s claims about Malton’s difficulties and the urgent need to divert traffic to Mirabel.

- **Sept. 15** – The *Globe and Mail* reports that a government official has denied that Ottawa is “holding back on Malton to justify the need for the shelved Pickering airport project.” He is reported to have said that “the Pickering airport is dead and that high priority is being given to developing the most efficient use of Malton.”
- Ontario’s Ombudsman reports that Pickering area residents were cheated and misled by government land agents.

1977

- Transport Canada (TC, formerly MOT) releases a Contingency Plan, warning that Malton (soon to be renamed Pearson) faces fierce congestion and that urgent action is needed.

1978

- Transport Minister Lang tells the House of Commons that Malton will not be allowed to expand; halts study into 4th runway.

1979

- *Paper Juggernaut: Big Government Gone Mad*, by veteran reporter Walter Stewart, is published by McClelland and Stewart. The book, on how north Pickering became an airport site, is a brutal exposé of political deviousness and lies, blinkered thinking, incompetence, and heartlessness.

“The secret files make it clear that, had the information available to the government at the time been made available to the public, Pickering airport could never have been started.” (p. 15).

- **October** – Ottawa releases the *Southern Ontario Multimodal Passenger Studies* report, which reveals that TC’s current claim – to be “landbanking” the Lands for an airport – was not the intention of the government before this year. (The intention had been an airport as soon as possible.) The report states that, with a few airport modifications and more terminal capacity, Malton would meet capacity needs until at least the late 1980s, while recommending that the Pickering Lands and the protective zoning around them “be maintained to protect the long range option for the development of a major airport at Pickering.” The report also cautions that there are “limitations implicit in any long range forecasts of travel demand” and that new forecasts show that passenger volumes “will be lower than previously estimated.” The Pickering airport issue then fades (or is allowed to fade) into silence for years.

1983

- **February** – Transport Canada officials are quoted as saying that new forecasts show no need for a third terminal at Malton until the 1990s.

1985

- **Mar. 31** – The Auditor General’s report states that the Ministry of Transport should “develop and disclose a clear plan for the use or disposition of idle land holdings such as those at Pickering, Ontario.” The AG found that the idle land “has an adverse impact on the financial performance of the Air Transportation Program” and that “the rental income is less than the interest cost on the funds that could be realized by selling the land.”

- Ottawa's Central Ontario Area Aviation Master Plan for 1985 calls for a third reliever airport, at Pickering, to handle Malton's general aviation traffic up to 2000, after which the airport would be expanded to become a major international airport by 2020.
- Ottawa's Airport Authority Group, while treating a Pickering airport as a given, recommends selling half the total site acreage. Local MP Scott Fennell (PC) persuades Transport Minister Donald Mazankowski to appoint a committee to study Pickering and to have Guelph University's Ontario Agricultural College inventory the lands. The Minister budgets \$100,000 for the Guelph study of agricultural use, current conditions, potential, and sense of community. Three members of People or Planes are appointed to the Pickering Airport Lands Revitalization Committee (PARC).
- In Ste-Scholastique, meanwhile, where Mirabel has never been completed and is struggling, the federal government deeds or sells back to farmers over 80,000 acres of expropriated land.

1986

- **June** – PARC issues its report. It recommends that the government “maximize the agricultural potential [of the Lands] by establishing in cooperation with the municipalities an agricultural preserve, through private ownership by farming enterprises with the Crown retaining development rights.” The remaining 10% (the Duffins Creek watershed) should become a conservation and ecological reserve.

1987

- **June** – MP Scott Fennell announces that half the federal land will be sold.
- **August** – There is an outcry when Public Works offers 9,600 acres to Ontario and area municipalities instead of to former owners or existing tenants, as was recommended by PARC and as was done at Mirabel. Durham Regional Council then weighs in with a majority vote requesting Ottawa to proceed with airport construction. The ensuing uproar carries on for 18 months.
- **Nov. 4** – The Regional Council of Durham votes to ask Ottawa to consider a general aviation airport on 9,000 acres of the expropriated lands. POP fights back.

1988

- **Jan. 21** – At a general meeting in a packed Brougham Hall, the following resolution by POP's Committee was unanimously adopted:

“THAT those present here tonight, and the Groups they represent, will take all appropriate, inventive and courageous means to stop the destructive planning of green lands, and

THAT our aim is to reverse the Durham Regional Council motion to the Federal Government to proceed with any airport on Pickering/Markham lands at any time.”
- **Mar. 2** – POP points out to the Region that (a) Ottawa doesn't own or operate any general aviation airports in Canada and (b) the impact on prime agricultural land for north-south and east-west roads to accommodate transportation and utility services would not only be devastating but excessively expensive.

1989

- **Mar. 15** – The new federal MP for the area, Rene Soetons, announces that the surplus land should be available for sale by late 1990. However, nothing happens.
- According to the *Toronto Sun*, the federal Transport minister has declared that everything is being considered in the search for solutions for the overcrowding at Pearson, including a Pickering airport.

1990

- The chair of Durham Region, Gary Herrema, is quoted as saying that a Pickering airport is no ghost, it's the real thing.

1991

- Transport Canada releases an Environmental Impact Statement, declaring that the best medium-term alternative for dealing with air-traffic increases in Toronto is to add three new runways at Pearson. However, TC immediately follows the Statement with an "Alternatives" document in which Pickering again figures.

1992

- The fine Bentley House in Brougham is granted federal heritage designation.
- **Aug. 28** – TC draws up a "Plan Showing Pickering Lands 1992 Disposal." A total of 243 units of land on the airport site are to be sold. They include lots all around the periphery, notably, those right across the northern part of the site, including all of Altona, and those along the north side of Hwy 7, including all of Brougham. It is a tacit admission that the 1972 expropriation was far broader than required.

1993

- **Aug. 25** – Transport Canada news release: They are "proceeding with the first stage of the sale of approximately 2,064 hectares of surplus land in Pickering." Having been declared surplus in the 1992 federal budget, it will first be offered to provincial and municipal agencies. After 30 days, any land untaken will be offered to current tenants and after that to the general public. The properties will be sold at market value. Unbelievably, the news release also quotes then Transport Minister Jean Corbeil (our italics): "Providing tenants with priority will assist in *maintaining the fabric of the community that has been established on the Pickering lands in the 20 years* since the land was acquired by the federal government." Minister, the acquisition *destroyed* the fabric of this community.
- In the news release, the Minister also states that any decision to build an airport "will be taken following completion of the Southern Ontario Area Airports Study, which is under way."
- **Aug. 26** – The *Toronto Star* reports that the sale of the surplus acres (almost a quarter of the expropriated lands) would bring the government something like \$60 million. The chair of a local group called Committee for a Pickering Airport Community (C-PAC) told the *Star* that "about 70 per cent of the tenants on the airport lands could not afford to buy their properties ... many of them could be out on the streets within five months. Hardest hit would be sole-support parents, seniors, the handicapped and marginal farmers." An advocacy group, Save the Rouge Valley, suggested the lands

be turned over to park and other passive uses. In general, the government announcement generates widespread anger and strikes fear into residents on the lands.

1994

- **Aug. 3** – TC produces a revised “Plan Showing Pickering Lands Disposal.” Now, just 238 lots are to be sold. This plan is never acted on.
- **Oct. 18** – Former Ontario Premier William Davis states in an interview that People or Planes’ influence on his government’s decision to withdraw co-operation on the matter of Pickering airport was “substantial.”
- Transport Canada announces a narrower federal government role in the airport system. Under a new National Airports Policy, the federal government will no longer operate most airports, will lease the major ones, and will transfer ownership of smaller ones to local authorities.
- In Ottawa, the Southern Ontario Area Airports Study (SOAAS) is underway, so it’s possible that the lot-disposal plans [see Aug. 3] were shelved pending the results of the study.

1995

- **March** – The Southern Ontario Area Airports Study (SOAAS) is completed and released. It makes no specific recommendations but does indicate that, based on current traffic forecasts, Pearson would reach its full six-runway capacity in the 2012–2025 time period. Transport Canada seems to view the report’s conclusions as a green light for building a future airport, and gears up.

1996

- Responsibility for developing and operating Pearson is transferred from Transport Canada to the newly created Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA), which will be headed by ex-Transport Canada officials for a number of years.

V.O.C.A.L.

1998

- **Jan.** – Roger Anderson, in his first speech as new Durham Regional Chair: “The dream of a Pickering airport is not only alive but it should become a reality and soon. ... businesses should get behind this.”
- **Jul.** – Transport Minister David Collenette announces that the Lands will be officially designated for airport use. Transport Canada initiates regulatory action to protect the option of developing a Pickering airport. The news provokes a lot of concern in the area, as critics claim the actual size of any future airport is as yet unknown. So is where its footprint will actually be.
- **V.O.C.A.L. (Voters Organized to Cancel the Airport Lands)** is formed, under the leadership of Claremont resident and businessman Stephen Frederick. A new wave of loud public protests begins.
- **Aug. 1** – Transport Canada formally publishes, in the *Canada Gazette*, its intention to declare the Pickering Lands an ‘airport site.’

- **Aug. 12** – The GTAA calls “premature” the claims by Hamilton Airport officials that a planned new runway extension there “will eliminate the need for an airport in Pickering.”
- **Sept. 20** – The GTAA’s president and CEO, Lou Turpen, says that the GTAA needs to “do something quickly” about getting a regional airport up and running in Pickering because of the uncertain future of Buttonville Airport. Apparently, the GTAA’s plans are to replace both Buttonville and Oshawa airports with Pickering, and Turpen hopes that Pickering will be operational in 2007 at the latest – in time for the Summer Olympics in 2008, if Toronto gets the nod – although he says 2006 or 2007 would be even better. He’s just waiting for Ottawa to lease the site to the GTAA.
- **Oct. 19** – It is standing room only as residents and members of V.O.C.A.L. pack Pickering’s Council chamber to help councillors decide whether to accept or reject Transport Canada’s plan to designate the federal lands as an airport site. Many line up to speak their minds before Council. Not allowed to bring their protest signs into Chambers, they fill the air and litter the floor with paper airplanes instead.
- **Oct. 20** – It is reported in the *Toronto Star* that Transport Minister Collenette “has assured Pickering councillors that a new airport is not in the cards for quite a while” and that the federal government’s own research has shown that Pearson “will be able to handle all local air travel at least until 2013 and perhaps for the next ‘15 to 20 years.’”
- **Nov. 2** – The GTAA’s Lou Turpen concedes to the *Toronto Star* that, in light of the GTAA’s expansion plans for Pearson, another airport facility may not be needed until 2040 or even 2050. This claim allows V.O.C.A.L. to point out that any process to designate the lands as an airport site are then clearly premature, and that the regional and municipal governments of York and Durham must make this point to the federal government.
- **Dec. 8** – It is reported in *The Liberal* that Durham Regional Council has asked Minister Collenette to delay the regulatory designation until local stakeholders have been consulted on “how much airport land is actually needed.” Regional Chair Roger Anderson makes clear, however, that the Region still supports the airport.

1999

- **March** – A stakeholders’ forum composed of citizens and municipal, provincial, and federal government officials is formed to work on a long-term path for the airport lands. V.O.C.A.L. is included.

2000

- **Jun. 7** – Minister Collenette decides to hold off on designating the federal land in north Pickering as an airport site.

2001

- **Mar. 23** – Minister Collenette announces immediate action to “further protect the federally owned portion of the Oak Ridges Moraine and areas around the Rouge Park as green space.
- **April** – Transport Canada advises “interested parties” that “in order to protect the property for possible future aviation requirements, the federal government has decided to proceed with the designation of the property as an ‘airport site’ under the Aeronautics Act.”

- **Apr. 5** – Transport Canada tasks the GTAA with “undertaking the interim planning work that would enable the federal government to determine” whether a “regional/ reliever” airport is needed on the Pickering lands. As part of this initiative, the GTAA commissions ArupNAPA and Landrum & Brown Inc. to show there is a business case for the new airport, which the GTAA would build and operate.
- **September** – Transport Canada announces that 7,562 acres on the north and west sides of the airport site have been designated as Green Space in perpetuity – no great concession, as no airport construction was ever planned for those buffer areas. Land transfer, stewardship, and management were to be “considered” over the following months. The plan is never formalized by Ottawa.
- Transport Canada issues many orders of “eviction for the purposes of demolition.” For the second time (the first was in 1973), the Barclay family is ordered to leave Tullis Cottage, its ancestral home, built in 1840. Demolition is scheduled. The Barclays fight back with a media campaign and assistance from local politicians and historians, and win. They are allowed to stay as long as they promise not to speak to the media for two years.

2002

- **Jan. 24** – The *Globe and Mail* comments on Transport Minister Collette’s claim that the Toronto City Centre Airport in Toronto harbour doesn’t fit the government’s long-range plans; he would prefer to close the airport, given that TC plans to build a high-speed rail link from Union Station to Pearson, leaving Pickering to take over the island airport’s regional flights. The GTAA’s Louis Turpen says that officials of communities east of Toronto will soon start “drafting a plan for a single-runway jet airport,” and it would be at least 2012 before a Pickering airport could be operational. Pickering’s mayor, Wayne Arthur, is skeptical, pointing out that air travel is in decline.
- **Mar. 28** – A GTAA spokesman tells the *Toronto Star* that the idea that the GTAA is “planning and building an airport here” is a misconception. What they are really doing is looking at a business case to see if an airport is needed and what kind it should be. “We have to make certain the airport will generate enough revenues to pay for itself, and we don’t know yet whether Pickering could do that.” He says that if they build an airport, it would likely be to accommodate general aviation, replacing Buttonville and Oshawa, plus some overflow from Pearson (which is currently expanding). Once renovations are completed on the historic Bentley-Gibson House in Brougham (very soon), the GTAA will open a Pickering Airport Site Office there.
- **September** – ArupNAPA and Landrum & Brown Inc. submit their “Pickering Lands Airport Initiative: Financial Assessment Analysis” to the GTAA. Three scenarios have been studied. The analysts conclude that all three showed that “an airport on the Pickering lands was a feasible project and could be funded from the usual sources available to the GTAA.” (Lorne Almack and Brian Buckles, of Green Durham Association (GDA), will later call the analysis “cursory” and criticize its failure to consider the potential of Hamilton airport, thus distorting the findings to make Pickering appear to be viable.)

2003

- **January/February** – The GTAA reports in a bulletin that “a few hundred people” attended info sessions in the fall of 2002, and outlines a 2003 workplan that will involve “undertaking a number of technical studies in preparation of a draft master plan. “Public workshops over the coming year will

be limited to 30 people per session. If they receive the green light from Ottawa, “the earliest that a general aviation facility could be operational is projected to be 2012.”

- **March/April** – Pickering presents the GTAA with the City’s Urban Design Award for its restoration of Brougham’s Bentley-Gibson House (now the site office). It is reported in the press that the renovation, which included a new roof, rebuilt chimneys, shutters, and front porch, and restoration of parts of the interior, was completed at a cost of \$600,000.
- **Jun. 24** – A letter from Transport Canada to participants at the series of open houses to explain the Pickering Airport Site Zoning Regulations (PASZR), advises that the input from those meetings will be posted on their website and will be reviewed by the Minister and the Special Committee of Council prior to publication of the PASZR in the Canada Gazette. In short, the public input will not stop the “enactment process” from going ahead.

2004

- The GTAA submits a detailed *Pickering Airport Draft Plan* to Transport Canada. The plan is for a large 3-runway “regional/reliever” airport on the site. The document not only includes 35 runway siting configurations and a shortlist of the preferred six but also lists 53 specific roadworks and other transportation upgrades that will be required to improve airport access.
- Transport Canada, clearly anticipating a go-ahead to build the airport, stops re-renting vacated properties on the site, foregoes revenue, and boards houses up.
- **Sept. 3** – Zoning regulations are passed for an airport at Pickering, even though Pearson has been expanded after all, and can expand again. A contemporaneous factsheet, source unknown, notes that “Transport Canada outlined once zoning is in place they have never not proceeded to build an airport.”
- **Oct. 31** – Mirabel: Passenger flights cease. Only cargo flights are left. Mirabel is dubbed one of the costliest white elephants in Canadian history.
- **Nov. 17** – The Greater Toronto Airports Authority releases its Draft Plan to build and expand an airport in Pickering over the next 28 years, subject to an environmental assessment and federal government approval. Ontario’s Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, John Gerritson, goes on record as saying that he thinks it is the wrong airport in the wrong place.
- **Nov. 19** – V.O.C.A.L. has started to get very vocal, with some 50 members demonstrating in front of the GTAA’s site office in Brougham. The GTAA’s vice president, Steve Shaw, has just said: “The forecast clearly shows there will be a demand over the next 20 or so years for a capacity Pearson can’t handle.” The first phase (two runways for general aviation and flight schools) is expected to cost \$250 million and to open in 2012. The plan is still subject to an environmental assessment and the federal government’s approval.
- Steve Shaw also says, about the phased-in approach: “The last thing we want to do is build an airport that will sit empty. You build what you need as you need it.” Premier Dalton McGuinty, meanwhile, is saying that he wants to see more details on how the region’s air needs would be met by building Pickering: “One of the questions I’m asking is: What about the future of Hamilton airport?”