

Timeline: 2005-2012

Eviction Notices / Land Over Landings / The GTAA's Needs Assessment Report

Eviction Notices / Land Over Landings

2005

- **Jan. 18** – A meeting is organized by Claremont residents Gerd Untermann and Celia Klemenz at Claremont United Church in response to the notices of eviction that many tenants are receiving. Among the two dozen or so attendees are 16 tenants (300 tenants still live on the Lands). Michael Robertson takes on a leadership role and suggests that the group call themselves Land Over Landings, to succeed People or Planes. He launches landoverlandings.com.
- **Jan. 20** – MP Mark Holland (Lib.) holds a meeting at the Pickering Recreation Centre. Says he is opposed to the GTAA's plan for a large airport but still supports a small one (to replace Buttonville or Oshawa). Land Over Landings sets about changing his mind. Meanwhile, Pickering Council has voted to seek government funding in order to hire their own experts to sit on an Environmental Assessment panel. Only Mayor Dave Ryan opposes Cllr Pickles' motion.
- **Feb. 8** – A separate protest group from Brougham, led by Gord McGregor, joins forces with the Claremont crowd. Michael Robertson is elected president, Mary Delaney vice-president, Gord McGregor secretary, and Erik von Maydell treasurer. They decide to call the collaboration **Land Over Landings – The Stewardship Group**.
- **Feb. 16** – A broadcast e-mail goes out from Land Over Landings (LOL) to report that Tullis Cottage is to be torn down (no reason given). This is the second eviction notice in four years. The Barclays are ordered to be out of the house by the end of June. A letter campaign is launched.
- **Feb. 22** – The latest developments are shared at an LOL meeting at Brougham Hall: 12 homes are on the eviction list, bids for demolitions had closed on Feb. 17, and the demolition work is to take place between March 3 and 11.
- **Feb. 24** – A Pickering councillor advises that a recent motion passed by Council requested that the federal and provincial governments cease demolitions. He says he will also speak to the area MP.
- LOL circulates information for tenants: Michael, Mary, and Gord (Head of the Evictions Committee) meet with Lucy Butts (Programme Coordinator, Transport Canada) and Vernon Moore (Properties and Facilities Manager, Public Works). LOL is told that no currently unoccupied houses will ever be tenanted again, period. Nor can tenants share the cost of necessary repairs or hire approved contractors to do repairs, even if needed as a result of "alleged or proven" poor maintenance by Public Works over the past 30 years. Meanwhile, houses in good condition will continue to be maintained. LOL urges tenants to bone up on Ontario's Tenant Protection Act.
- Transport 2000 Ontario issues a paper refuting government and GTAA claims regarding need for a Pickering airport, and argues that the government should be promoting rail instead.
- **Mar. 3** – Demolitions begin but some tenants, such as the Knapps, choose to fight their eviction and refuse to leave. Local councillors object to the demolitions. MP Mark Holland obtains a temporary halt while the community scrambles to protect heritage structures and family homes.

- **Mar. 10** – The short moratorium ends and demolitions resume. In all, 25 buildings are bulldozed, many in Brougham.
- **Mar. 11** – Murray Stroud Law Office writes to the Transport Minister on behalf of “a number of concerned residents of the City of Pickering ... concerned about the premature demolition of historical homes,” and asks that Public Works be directed to “stop evicting tenants and demolishing homes until your Ministry has established clear policies and informed our clients of them.”
- **Mar. 29** – Land Over Landings approves its new logo (designers: John Frechette, Celia Klemenz).
- **Mar.** – In his March newsletter, Mark Holland advises residents receiving eviction notices that they have the right to dispute them through the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, a provincial body.
- **Apr. 22** – Mark Holland holds a town hall meeting in Clarendon, attended by more than 200 people, all opposed to the GTAA’s airport draft plan. He tells the audience that he can no longer support even a smaller regional airport in north Pickering and that he is now committed to doing all he can to work with them to stop any airport from going ahead.
- Mark Holland writes to the Ministry of Transport, citing his meetings with Transport 2000 Ontario and others, all of whom have made similar arguments for why the airport should not be built. He also notes that a new airport seems wrong while Canada is trying to meet its Kyoto commitments and is inappropriate at a time of concern about greenhouse gases. He also highlights the site’s proximity to the “sensitive eco-system of the Oak Ridges Moraine” and the need to “be more concerned about food security and production of food closer to home.” [Dispiriting to think that these same arguments are still having to be made in 2024...] He asks the Minister for “an immediate halt to all evictions and demolitions” until a fairer, more transparent process is in place. And he asks that an objective peer review of the GTAA’s proposal be completed before anything else, including an environmental assessment. Minister Lapierre takes the peer review request to Cabinet.
- **May 19** – Transport Canada will undertake a 6-month “preliminary due diligence review of previous Pickering airport studies to see if more work is required to determine need.”
- **May 21** – Jerry Degen, a Toronto flight safety expert, raises the issue of a potential disaster if airplanes experiencing engine problems were flying near Pickering’s nuclear plant.
- **Jun. 1** – Minister Lapierre responds to the Murray Stroud letter, giving a rote description of how Transport Canada is committed to managing properties in “a prudent and fiscally responsible manner” and that Public Works “ensures that all occupied properties are fit for habitation.” He does, however, point out, as Mark Holland has done, that tenants have recourse to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.
- **Jun. 13** – Mirabel: Developers unveil plans for a giant amusement park – Lac Mirabel – to be built on the airport site. (The plan will die in 2010. Part of the site will be turned into an ICAR motorsport racetrack instead.)
- **Jul. 15** – LOL takes Mark Holland on a tour of the Lands and the properties under eviction/-demolition notices. Three days later he sends a letter to Minister LaPierre, saying that his tour “was an eye opener, and it has reinforced my view that the present practice of vacating and demolishing these homes is unacceptable.” More eviction notices go out, including one for Tullis Cottage again.
- **Jul. 22** – Five families present their cases before the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, describing their experiences at the hands of Public Works.

- **Aug. 5** – The *Pickering News Advertiser* reports that the environmental assessment of the airport site, initially expected by the GTAA to start in April, may not start this year at all, as Transport Canada has to “undertake due diligence of the work ... done so far” and has not yet begun. Transport Canada states that a decision on an airport would not be made “until at least 2009.”
- **Aug. 30** – A new Land Over Landings executive is formed: Chair Gord McGregor, Vice-Chairs Mary Delaney and Gerd Untermann, Treasurer Erik von Maydell, and Secretary Gabrielle Untermann. Formal meeting minutes are kept from this point on. Multiple copies of *Paper Juggernaut* are collected by Gerd for distribution. Plans are set in motion to have information booths at every possible local event.
- **Sept. 13** – At the Tribunal, the Beelbys hear Transport Canada state that “only” 40 houses have been slated for demolition.
- **Sept. 17, 21** – V.O.C.A.L. holds meetings on the evictions situation.
- **Sept. 26** – Tenants John McGrath and Linda Ramsay, fighting eviction, describe to the chairman of the Ontario Rental Housing Committee, how they have been treated by Public Works, and how their house has been allowed to deteriorate because of specific activities and subsequent inaction by Public Works itself.
- **Sept. 27** – The Knapps’ eviction is upheld by the Tribunal. Public Works had deemed their family home of 27 years “unviable,” but the story behind that summation is one of landlord negligence, described in detail in the September 19 edition of the *National Post*.
- **Sept. 28** – Transport Canada announces that the Pickering Airport Site Zoning Regulations have gone into effect.
- The name “Land Over Landings” is registered as a business.
- Through an Access to Information request, the Beelbys find Public Works work orders showing payment for repairs that had never been done on their house. They also find a Public Works estimate of \$104,000 for “necessary repairs,” later reduced to \$76,000. (The home inspection company had estimated \$19,500.) This is one of many such stories and examples describing what was happening on the Lands. Mark Holland had requested this documentation so he could present it to Transport Minister Jean Lapierre and request an investigation and moratorium on evictions and demolitions.
- **October** – The Federal Liberal caucus supports an immediate moratorium on further evictions and demolitions until the entire process can be reviewed.
- **Oct. 6** – Mark Holland declares at a town hall meeting that “management of the Lands should be transferred from Public Works.”
- LOL writes to the Transport Minister about having “documentary and photographic evidence that there have been irregularities in the federal government’s administration and maintenance of the buildings” on the Lands, and supports Mark Holland’s request that Public Works “should no longer manage these lands and homes” and that “they should be removed immediately from this position of responsibility and held accountable for their actions in an open, public investigation.”
- **Oct. 11** – *National Post* article: “Last tenant moves out, new roof goes on: Ottawa spends millions upkeeping vacant homes.” The article reveals that remaining tenants have many stories to tell of waste and malfeasance by Public Works, including examples of houses being nicely refurbished and

then left vacant and unlocked, or new wells dug for tenants but never hooked up. Mark Holland: "Houses that are beautiful and in excellent shape are empty. I don't know what is going on. The way the Lands have been managed – 'questionable' is a kind term." He wants Transport Canada to turn over management of the Lands to a professional firm.

- **Oct. 18** – The Knapps appeal the Tribunal's Sept. 27 decision.
- **Oct. 26** – At a meeting with Mark Holland, Transport Minister LaPierre says that he "will not interfere with current evictions."
- **November** – Mark Holland, in his newsletter, advises that he will be holding a town hall meeting on Dec. 16 in Claremont and will be seeking comments regarding this "current 'due diligence' review of the need for an airport." He is pleased the review will be happening before any decision is made on whether to proceed with an environmental assessment. He continues to seek a moratorium on evictions and demolitions and fairer treatment of tenants.
- **Nov. 7** – Pickering Council unanimously passes a motion "to preserve the Tullis Cottage, Brougham Hall, Tremorest Hall, Altona Inn and Brougham Schoolhouse ... and develop a plan to preserve other areas of key importance to Pickering's heritage...." Council asks Transport Canada to rescind the eviction/demolition order on Tullis Cottage.
- **Nov. 14** – A year after the GTAA makes public its draft plan for a regional/reliever airport at Pickering, Land Over Landings stages the Brougham Uprising to prove "we're not dead yet!" Actors and residents, many in period costume "resurrect the spirit of rebels from long ago to reclaim their community and strike a blow against their modern oppressors, Transport Canada and the GTAA, now housed in the historic Bentley House." On a mock scaffold, Brougham is saved but the GTAA is hanged in effigy.
- **Nov. 25** – Transport Minister Lapierre removes Tullis Cottage from the eviction list, and the Barclays are told the good news. Transport Canada rescinds the demolition order on Tullis Cottage and will pay for its repairs.
- **Dec. 6** – The McKays' eviction is overturned by the Tribunal.
- **Dec. 7** – The federal government has called a snap election, and Mark Holland has no doubt that the airport will be an election issue. It's understood that the decision on whether to proceed will be made in 2009 and, if the airport is found to be needed, it could be operational by 2012.
- **Dec. 13-17** – It is reported that 17 new tenders have been issued for wells to be dug on the Lands; 9 other wells are to be decommissioned.
- **Dec. 19** – The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal has found, with regard to one federal property, that "the Landlord (Public Works and Government Services Canada) is responsible for the poor condition of the rental unit by failing to devote the resources necessary to adequately maintain the rental unit." Also, that "the condition of the rental unit is due to normal wear and tear and usage by the tenants over the past 25 years and the Landlord's failure to perform regular and routine maintenance over that period of time." Therefore, the landlord is found to be "in serious breach of its responsibilities under the Act." In other words, the landlord has a responsibility to ensure that the property doesn't fall into disrepair and cannot then use that fact as grounds for eviction.

2006

- **Jan. 11** – Land Over Landings and V.O.C.A.L. join forces to host an all-candidates meeting prior to the upcoming federal election.
- **Jan. 21** – LOL holds a sold-out fundraiser, “The Cabaret of the Gilded Cage,” at Brougham Hall. In the years (decades!) to come, there will be many more LOL fundraisers and LOL tables, booths, and displays at countless events and venues to inform the public of the airport issue and to increase the supporter base.
- **Jan. 23** – The Conservatives win the election; Stephen Harper becomes Prime Minister.
- **Jan. 24** – Transport Canada lodges an appeal against the Tribunal’s decisions, despite public assurances that they would abide by the decisions. The Pierces’ house is condemned.
- **Jan. 26** – MP Mark Holland calls on the new government to honour Liberal commitments regarding the proposed airport and the tenant issues: namely, to continue the due diligence review, continue the informal moratorium on evictions and demolitions, preserve significant heritage buildings, and remove Public Works from its role on the Lands.
- **Feb. 7** – Tim Dobson, former Pickering-Scarborough Conservative candidate (having lost to Liberal Dan McTeague), advises that “Harper has asked a team of area MPs, candidates and riding association members to form a policy for the Lands.” Evictees are advised that “all cases will be amalgamated to contest appeals after all Tribunal decisions are made.”
- **Feb. 13** – LOL receives a form letter from the Finance Minister’s correspondence unit in response to an invitation to attend an information meeting at Brougham Hall but the Minister (Jim Flaherty) does not respond to the invitation.
- **Feb. 14** – McGrath/Ramsey lose their case at the Tribunal. Demolition begins on the gas station in Brougham, on Hwy #7. Shortly after the front awning is torn down, work stops. The building will sit derelict and defaced for years before its demolition is completed – in November 2011.
- **Feb. 28** – LOL sends congratulatory letters to new federal ministers. Transport Canada issues tenders for the decommissioning of 30 wells.
- **Mar. 2** – On the 34th anniversary of the airport announcement, “Last Stand,” Peter Shatalow’s documentary film (billed as “the heroic true story of ordinary citizens who found the courage to fight ‘Big Government’”), is premiered in the auditorium of J. Clarke Richardson Collegiate in Ajax, to an audience of close to 500. Heroes from the POP days are there: Dr Godfrey, Anne Howes, Isobel Thompson, Lorne Almack.
- **Mar. 14** – The first batch of 50 no-airport lawn signs are produced.
- **April** – Transport Canada intends to demolish 86 houses on the Lands. (This information is obtained by Mark Holland months later through an Access to Information request; the memo is partly censored.)
- **Apr. 11** – The Tribunal studying the tenants’ complaints blasts the federal landlords. Public Works loses the right to continue managing the Lands. TC turns the responsibilities over to SNC-Lavalin Profac, a private land-management agency. Long-overdue property repairs will now be properly carried out at last.
- **Apr. 11** – The Beelbys and MacKays win at the Tribunal and receive rent rebates.

- **May 3** – Mark Holland writes to Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon to express his disappointment that there will be no public consultation around the “due diligence” review, pointing out the possibility of a skewed outcome if the right questions aren’t asked. He also asks the Minister for his assurance that Transport Canada’s appealing of several of the Tribunal’s rulings is not just a way to avoid “responsibility for past failures.”
- **Jun. 10** – At the Durham Conservation Association’s AGM, Land Over Landings is awarded \$2,000 from the Association’s Trillium grant.
- **Jul. 1** – LOL attends a meeting at the Toronto Hunt Club featuring Minister of Transport Lawrence Cannon and other Conservative politicians.
- **Sept. 5** – We receive a letter from federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, suggesting a meeting. (It never happens.) Meetings of the Grow the Greenbelt project take place with Jim Robb, the Sierra Club of Canada, the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition...
- **Sept. 7** – Mark Holland writes to advise that Minister Cannon has finally responded to his letter of May 3 but not very helpfully. The gist of what he has learned: the government is engaging in “long-term planning to ensure the protection of the Pickering Lands for future aviation needs”; the “due diligence” review will be going ahead with no public participation; if an airport need is found, an environmental assessment will be held and the public would be involved then; and Cannon says the current methodology for terminating tenancies for demolition is “fair and transparent.”
- **Sept. 7** – We learn that Transport Canada’s appeal regarding the eviction cases they lost at the Tribunal will be heard by Ontario’s Superior Court of Justice on October 16 and 17. Meanwhile, decisions that had gone in Transport Canada’s favour are being appealed and will also be heard by the provincial Court at Osgoode Hall.
- **Oct. 16** – We are joined by members of the Sierra Club, Grow the Greenbelt, the Pickering Green Festival, and others as we demonstrate in front of Osgoode Hall while the eviction cases are being heard.
- **Nov. 2** – “Last Stand” is shown at the International Environmental Film and Video Festival at the Royal Ontario Museum.
- **Nov. 6** – Vice-chair Gerd Untermann agrees to pursue a suggestion of Lorne Almack’s: form a committee that will work on proposals for the future use of the Lands, concentrating on getting them preserved as foodland within a Land Trust.
- **Dec. 18** – Mirabel: CBC News reports that “[I]n a move he called ‘correcting a historical injustice,’ Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced [today] the return of 4,450 hectares of farmland expropriated a generation ago to build Mirabel airport. About 125 farmers, who rent their land from Ottawa, will be allowed to buy it back more than 37 years after they were forced to sell to the federal government to make room for the ill-fated Mirabel International Airport, north of Montreal.” In his speech, Harper calls this “correcting a mistake of history.”

2007

- **Jan. 9** – Transport Minister Cannon announces that demolitions will be resumed, thereby effectively ending the informal moratorium. The *Pickering News Advertiser* carries a notice that seven houses and five barns on the Lands are to be demolished.

- **Jan. 24** – In an advisory, Mark Holland invites the media to accompany him on a tour of the houses slated for demolition. “He believes that there has been a strategy to depopulate the area in order to reduce public resistance to an airport in Pickering.”
- **Jan. 25** – MP Holland tours houses slated for demolition. CBC/Radio-Canada is there.
- **Jan. 26** – Holland conducts a town hall meeting about the situation on the Lands.
- **Feb. 1** – Jim Flaherty hosts an Open House at Westminster United Church in Whitby. Gord McGregor and Sharon Powell attend for LOL.
- **Feb. 21** – Pickering’s Mayor Ryan addresses the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade: “We all know that an airport in Pickering would have a tremendous financial benefit. ... It is expected that a Pickering airport would have an annual economic worth in the hundreds of millions.” He cites no sources for his figures.
- **Mid-March** – The provincial courts find against all five evictees. Plans are made to apply to the Court of Appeal. Those who’d originally won their case before the Tribunal have the option of going back to the Tribunal.
- **Mar. 20** – 1,000 new buttons and 5,000 brochures are produced for a spring and summer public-information blitz. Local historian John Sabean, meanwhile, races against time to catalogue buildings on the Lands before they disappear.
- **Mar. 26** – There are 46 attendees at a special meeting at Brougham Hall to discuss a trust fund – the Pickering Lands Defence Fund – sponsored by Mark Holland for evictees: over \$10,000 is raised. The Fund will be administered *pro bono* by Aird and Berlis. Brougham Recreation undertakes to donate up to \$3,000 per family to cover appeal costs.
- **Mar. 28** – Michael Robertson and Peter Rodrigues make a presentation at Regional Council: the upshot is that the Planning Committee’s motion requesting that Transport Canada hasten its airport decision doesn’t go to a vote and is sent back to the committee.
- **Apr.** – Mark Holland, in his April newsletter, says he has now seen written evidence that Transport Canada’s policy “– as long expected – is not to re-rent any buildings once they become vacant. Instead they are boarded up and allowed to deteriorate ... they see the people as being in the way of their plans.” He also refers to a Transport Canada memo dated February 21, 2006, obtained via an Access to Information request, in which concern was expressed by TC about “possible media attention” over the screening of “Last Stand” in 2006, causing them to send a staff member to the event to try to obtain a copy of the film. Other related Access to Information requests filed by Holland have gone unfulfilled by TC to the point where officials at the Office of the Information Commissioner agree that the government is in violation of the law.
- **Apr. 27-29** – LOL materials are displayed at the Green Living Show at Exhibition Place. The leader of Ontario’s Conservative Party, John Tory, says of the airport plan: “It was a bad idea 30 years ago and it’s still a bad idea.”
- **Apr. 30** – Bernadette Zubrisky, Sierra Club of Canada, sends an impassioned e-mail to Prime Minister Harper, pointing out how much more important these Lands would be to the GTA if retained as greenspace, offering citizens biodiversity, clean water, “forests as carbon sinks, and fields to grow our own food” – in what she calls “a new integrated national/provincial near to urban park.”

- **May 2** – Melissa Morgan receives a reply from Transport Canada to a letter she wrote on March 28 to Transport Minister Cannon: She is assured that “Transport Canada takes its responsibilities as custodian and landlord very seriously” and she is told that “In October 2006, Ontario Divisional Court found that Transport Canada, as Landlord, met the conditions to terminate the tenancies in question, and that the department had, in fact, acted in good faith.”
- **May 9** – Members of LOL present a letter at the AGM of the Great Toronto Airports Authority, suggesting that the GTAA enter into partnerships with existing area airports to handle present and future air traffic, thereby preserving “grade A farmland and environmentally sensitive green spaces such as the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural preserve.”
- **May 10** – Transport Canada has found from its due diligence efforts that further study is required on the airport matter. From Mark Holland’s May newsletter: “The Conservative government has let the fox into the chicken coop by awarding a contract to the Greater Toronto Airports Authority to assess the need for an airport in Pickering ... the findings will become part of Transport Canada’s so-called ‘due diligence’ review.” Holland points out that “In September 2005, the Liberal Transport Minister promised a thorough and impartial due diligence review that would look at transportation needs throughout southern Ontario, and consider other alternatives such as Hamilton. This completely reverses that commitment [because] the GTAA is not partial. It is an interested stakeholder. Of course they’re going to recommend in favour of an airport, and that’s what this government wants.” According to Minister Cannon, the GTAA’s work will be conducted over a six-month period.
- **May 15** – Transport Canada’s lawyers refuse to negotiate the re-renting of houses. The Knapps and Mike Puterbough seek leave to appeal.
- At the Regional Planning Committee meeting, Isobel and Tom Thompson, Brian Buckles, Stephen Fredericks, and Melissa Morgan speak of their concerns regarding the low-key GTAA announcement by Cannon. A few councillors feel the GTAA appointment inappropriate. As expected, Regional Chair Roger Anderson and Pickering Mayor Dave Ryan disagree.
- **Jun. 5** – Global News producer Neil McArtney and cameraman attend an LOL meeting. Wendy Beelby shares the results of an Access to Information request regarding federal money spent on Fran Day’s house after her death. This work was done even though Transport Canada never leased the house again. It has since been demolished
- **Jun. 19** – More from Mark Holland re documents obtained under the Access to Information Act: The documents are so heavily censored as to make them difficult to follow but it’s clear that Transport Canada has foregone considerable revenue by refusing to re-rent houses, instead leaving them to sit vacant and deteriorate. “This is a department that is so fixated on building an unnecessary airport in Pickering that they have completely bungled the management of the lands.” An independent study into the status of the site in 2004 had found that about 70 houses were vacant and boarded up, and that this lost revenue stream was compounded by the need for more security on the site as it became a magnet for all kinds of illicit activity.
- The guest at tonight’s LOL meeting is Steve Gilchrist, former MPP and now on the board of the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust; Wendy Beelby reports that Profac have visited her house and will remediate any mould found and will also put on a new roof.
- **Aug. 12** – We give Steve Gilchrist and federal Environment Minister John Baird a tour of the Lands.

- **Sept. 6** – In a *Toronto Star* article, Toby Lennox, VP of corporate affairs at the GTAA, says that Pearson could reach capacity within 20 years, even after building its sixth runway, so where do they go? “We’re on record. We got asked a number of years ago by Transport Canada to put together a plan for the development of an airport at Pickering. We did that. The proposal we came up with is not a six-runway ... airport. It’s a reliever airport, it’s three runways maximum, and all planning was done to build significant buffer areas. ...It’s gonna have to get done.” Mark Holland is quoted as saying “it blew my mind” that TC had hired the GTAA to study airport capacity issues in southern Ontario, knowing the agency’s pro-Pickering position on the matter. Lennox counters that the GTAA won the contract “fair and square.” TC’s spokesperson Paula Fairfax says the final decision on an airport won’t happen until at least 2009.
- **Oct. 16** – The Knapps and Mike Puterbough are refused leave to appeal.
- **Nov. 6** – First serious discussion by LOL of moving away from trying to save houses and, instead, moving toward preserving the land.
- **Nov. 20** – The Knapps and Mike Puterbough are given the date for the termination of their leases – January 31, 2008. Member Ed Vikari suggests it’s time for “the Stewardship Group” to be removed from LOL’s logo.
- **December** – Land Over Landings and all concerned citizens in the area nervously await the GTAA’s needs assessment report. It is expected to be strongly pro-airport, even though an airport would destroy prime farmland just when an international food crisis is looming and when airlines keep filing for bankruptcy.
- **Dec. 31** – LOL hosts its first New Year’s Eve Dance, at the Brougham Hall, to help bolster community spirits. (It’s a huge success.)

2008

- **Jan. 28** – LOL organizes a demonstration outside Mike Puterbough’s home to protest his mid-winter eviction from a house that Public Works had refused to maintain. He tells the media: “I’m too tired to fight any more.”
- **Feb. to May** – We participate in the Claremont Winter Carnival and the Whitevale Spring Festival. Artist-in-residence Heather Rigby proposes a Dinner Plate Project to spotlight the cause: she will “draw” and mow a huge, decorative place setting on Michael Robertson’s hang glider flying field on the Lands. TC gives permission for the Project.
- **May 7** – We once again attend the GTAA’s AGM and deliver a letter to the Chairman of the Board, following up on requests in the previous year’s letter and making the case again for dropping any plans to put an airport on this prime farmland.
- **Jun. 2** – Another 50 new No Airport signs are ordered; new rack cards are approved; letters to politicians are prepared for people to sign and send.
- **Jun. 17** – The Beelbys file an appeal at Divisional Court.
- **June – August** – We attend Green Durham Association’s AGM, have booths at EcoFair, Cedarvale Park, the Glass House (part of the Claremont House Tour), the Cornell picnic...
- **Jul. 1** – The Beelby’s are offered a settlement by TC’s lawyers.

- **Sept. 2** – The Beelbys move into a house on Orchard Heights in Brougham, where they still live.
- **Sept. 14** – A Land Trust meeting takes place at Lorne Almack's, called by Heather Rigby and attended by Brian Buckles, Gord Willson, Melissa Morgan, Michael Robertson, Pat Horne, and Gabrielle Untermann. Attendees review an early draft of Lorne's "Management of Public Lands: A Prospectus" (prepared for Green Door Alliance – Durham Conservation).
- **Oct. 8** – We host an all-candidates meeting for the upcoming federal election. John Wager, from Greenwood, moderates.
- **Oct. 14** – The election delivers a Conservative minority government; our Liberal MP, Mark Holland, retains his seat.
- **Oct. 19** – "Last Stand" is screened at the Claremont Community Centre. Mary and Michael R. speak.
- **Nov. 15** – Mary, Gabrielle, and Sharon Powell travel to Ottawa to attend Mark Holland's swearing-in ceremony and dinner, and to deliver an information package to (new Transport Minister) John Baird's office.
- Lived-in properties on the Lands continue to be maintained by the federal landlord now that Public Works is out of the picture. And for the first time in years, tenants are offered other homes on the Lands if their houses are deemed too costly to repair. But the population is declining. Houses of families that are moving away, or houses of elderly tenants who move out, or who die, are usually boarded up. Few new tenants are allowed to move in, and only then, on commercial leases.
- Deadlines for release of the GTAA's needs assessment report have come and gone; there is no news from Ottawa.
- **Dec. 31** – New Year's Eve Dance at the Brougham Hall.

The GTAA's Needs Assessment Report

2009

- **Jan. 28** – LOL's vice-chair, Mary Delaney, is interviewed on "First Local" radio. The following month, she delivers a number of presentations at local schools.
- **Jan. 28** – Gabrielle and Myrna McGregor paint the 4x8 map of the Lands that will be used as an event display piece for years.
- **Mar. 3** – First mention (by Sharon Powell) of the need to make a business case for the Lands; there is news that the Browns are to be rehoused on Orchard Heights in Brougham, after receiving an eviction notice.
- **Apr. 21** – Mary works with new webmaster Karen Phillips to renew and enhance LOL's website.
- Tenants receive a letter from TC advising that the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) will be monitoring the Lands – and includes the remarkable admission that the Lands are a "valuable part of Canada's natural heritage."
- **May – September** – We attend a GTAA public meeting, staff booths at the Whitevale Festival, the Archeology Festival (Claremont Conservation Area), and the Greenwood Festival, attend an RDGC meeting, and more.

- **May 22** – We receive a response from the GTAA’s new Chair to last year’s letter to the previous board chairman. She largely repeats the standard mantra: that any decision will be made by the Government of Canada and not by the GTAA, so we should raise our concerns with Transport Canada. (At least she answered...)
- **July 7** – Posted on YouTube is a short video of Mark Holland promoting a Land Trust for the Lands.
- **October** – (exact date unknown) Although the needs assessment report still hasn’t been made public, the GTAA quietly packs its bags and, under cover of darkness, moves out of the Bentley House. We see this as a pretty clear sign that the study hasn’t been able to make a case for an airport in Pickering.
- **Oct. 4** – Mary presents our case at a Liberal Party Membership Fair.
- **Oct. 20** – Lorne Almack introduces his fully fleshed-out Prospectus on “Management of Federal Lands in Pickering,” in which he argues persuasively for a Conservation Land Trust.
- **Oct. 22** – We attend a meet and greet for Chris Alexander.
- **Nov. 6 – Dec. 31** – A busy schedule: a meeting in Stouffville re Markham Airport (this is a public Open House, broadcast on CBC; Sharon P. and Michael R. attend); a York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA) meeting; a booth at Chef’s Challenge, Dunbarton HS; a presentation to geography teachers of Durham District School Board (DDSB); and... the New Year’s Eve Dance.

2010

- **Jan. 19** – The guest at LOL’s regular meeting is Cllr David Pickles, who explains why he doesn’t want an airport question on the ballot in the upcoming municipal elections. We’re against the idea for the same reason – the risk that a majority of voters, including many newcomers to the area, unfamiliar with the history and what is at stake, would believe the need-for-more-airport-capacity arguments and the job-creation promises, and vote yes.
- We maintain ties with Mark Holland’s staff, meet with Rouge Park farmers, and purchase a laptop for presentations. It will be used a lot!
- **Feb. ?** – Pickering Council votes to approve including the ballot question regarding an airport and opens an appeal period.
- **February – August** – A whirlwind of high school presentations and attendance at, or participation in, meetings and events of Durham Culinary Assoc., Markham Foodbelt, Environmental Stewardship Pickering, Climate Change Forum Ajax, the Whitevale Festival...
- **Feb. 19** – Gerd and Gabrielle are interviewed by Global News regarding the ballot question.
- **Mar. 16** – Meeting at Whitevale to discuss proposals for a national park. Among those in attendance: Patricia Short-Gallé from TC, Jim Robb of Friends of the Rouge Watershed, representatives of Whitevale, Green Durham Association....
- **Apr. 19** – Land Over Landings appeals the decision to have an airport question on the ballot. The reasons: the wording of the question is confusing, there was no sensible business case for an airport, and local opposition has been obvious, so why put such a question to the general public? Our vice-chair’s advice: “This is one can of worms you don’t want to open.” Council approves the repeal and the airport question is removed.

- **May 10** – Ottawa confirms what has been widely suspected: the GTAA’s *Needs Assessment Study Report* has been in Transport Canada’s hands since March. It will be released, the public is told, only after a “due diligence review” by TC. Pro-airport Regional Chair Roger Anderson, believing he knows the report’s conclusions, vows to “market the hell out of it.”
- **May 18** – Concerns are raised with Transport Canada about the dumping of soil (upwards of 100 truckloads, most days) on former Pickering Cllr Rick Johnson’s leased property on the Lands. Johnson claims he has farmed all his life and hopes that the topsoil will make the land workable.
- **Jun. 15** – LOL member Peter Rodrigues attends the GTAA’s AGM and reports hearing confirmation that TC is reviewing the needs assessment report. Meanwhile, some houses on the Lands are being re-tenanted and leased for commercial uses.
- **July** – Federal Opposition Leader Michael Ignatieff visits Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade (APBOT) and publicly states that the Liberal Party of Canada is opposed to an airport on these agricultural lands. Along with MPs Mark Holland and Dan McTeague, he joins APBOT in calling on the federal government to release the findings of the needs assessment study.
- **August** – What Transport Canada releases instead is a list of 42 vacant structures, many of significant heritage value but now slated for demolition. Before a formal attempt can be mounted to save the houses, two of them burn down in suspicious circumstances.
- **Aug. 20** – Mark Holland writes to new Transport Minister Chuck Strahl querying TC’s decision to grant permission to a tenant to truck in unspecified amounts of unmonitored earth to the property he leases on Brock Road. Holland has received hundreds of communications from constituents concerned by the negative impact this unmonitored dumping will have on the environment. He requests documentation on the matter that can be shared with his constituents. In the end, the dumping is stopped by Transport Canada. The topsoil already transferred does not improve fertility.
- **Sept. 19** – Resident artist Heather Rigby’s Dinner Plate Project is completed and photographed from the air. The image will be much used, on placemats, cards, fliers, and in news articles.
- **Sept. 21** – Mary and Gerd attend a luncheon for Michael Ignatieff, who again makes his position clear: there is “no business case for an airport.”
- **Oct. 25** – Peter Rodrigues is elected regional councillor for Ward 3, which includes the Lands.
- **Oct. 27** – Derek Sifton, owner of Buttonville Municipal Airport, a busy general-aviation airport in Markham, announces its closure in five years’ time. The news spurs immediate claims in certain quarters, and not least from Sifton himself, that Ottawa will now have to build Pickering to replace Buttonville. Pickering, says Sifton, would be his “first choice” for the operation’s new home.
- **November** - LOL members attend an Ontario Farmland Trust workshop, give presentations at more high schools, meet with the Durham Food Policy Council...
- **December** – New Transport Minister Chuck Strahl (PC) responds to a July letter from Ignatieff, Holland, and McTeague, telling them that the government’s intent is to eventually clear the Lands of all buildings.
- **Dec. 31** – New Year’s Eve Dance.

2011

- **January** – The City of Pickering asks Transport Canada not to demolish 7 potential heritage structures and asks that Ottawa fund the cost of heritage research and reinstate the heritage steering committee (involving Pickering, Markham, and Ottawa) that had been abandoned.
- **Jan. 12** – We meet with federal Conservative candidate Chris Alexander (PC) at the McGregors' house in Brougham.
- **Jan. 17** – Prior to a Pickering Council meeting, LOL holds a rally protesting the demolitions.
- **Jan. 18** – A petition opposing the demolitions is opened on MP Mark Holland's website.
- **Feb. 10** – Transport Minister Strahl gives the houses a reprieve but refuses to fund research or upkeep, calling this a municipal responsibility – even though Ottawa has been owner and landlord for 39 years. The steering committee is not reconvened. Instead, TC issues a list of 60 more structures to be demolished.
- **February, March** – LOL participates in the Claremont Winter Carnival (and wins a \$50 prize for most humorous float?!) and has a booth on Heritage Day at Pickering Town Centre; we also attend a public meeting at Brougham to review Pickering's Official Plan.
- **May 2** – The federal election brings a change of government. Chris Alexander is our new MP.
- **May 17** – Mark Holland vows to continue fighting on our behalf. Pickering Green Festival is disbanding and reports that the organization's funds will be donated to Land Over Landings.
- The pride and joy of Brougham, the City, and the Region – Durham Sustain Ability, founded by Jack McGinnis, world-renowned father of Blue Box recycling – is forced to vacate Brougham's Commercial House after draconian changes to the rental agreement. Brougham's coffee shop closes. But the City of Pickering leases the showpiece Bentley-Gibson House for use as Parks and Recreation offices – welcome news within the much-diminished community.
- **Jul. 11** - Transport Canada finally releases the GTAA's *Needs Assessment Study: Pickering Lands* report, leading to a flurry of interviews and media coverage. The report states that the Pickering Lands should be retained for a future airport, that would be needed "most likely" between 2027 and 2037, but maybe as late as 2041 – or later. "If and when required" is the final word. No business case has been made.
- Ottawa's new mantra for the Lands is now this: a "balanced" solution that must combine "job creation, economic activity and environmental stewardship." Land Over Landings, Green Durham Association (formerly Green Door Alliance and Durham Conservation), and other groups argue that, unlike an airport, intensive food production under a Land Trust would meet all those criteria. According to Ottawa, Transport Canada will now "work on a land use and management plan for the 7,530 hectares."
- Land Over Landings members Pat Valentine and Jim Miller, with input from Greenwood resident John Wager, begin to write a detailed response to the Needs Assessment Study. Meanwhile, various local politicians (the usual suspects) claim, without evidence, that the report provides a resolution to the situation.
- **Jul. 19** – The news of the report's release brings many new faces to our next meeting. Mary notes that we've been "in limbo for 6 years, now we're ready." Attendees sign up to various work groups.

- **Aug. 17** – We take MP Chris Alexander on a “wall-to-wall” tour of the Lands; he is shocked by the state of the area – “like a war zone, as if there had been a war and nothing had been done since” – and stunned by the size and emptiness of the site.
- **Sept. 12** – Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, addressing Ajax-Pickering’s Board of Trade, says: “This is about economic development in Durham Region ... It’s our turn to grow ... To do that we need highways ... we need to improve our airport facilities.”
- **Sept. 16** – Transport Minister Denis Lebel responds to a Pickering Council request that the City be allowed to investigate and perhaps implement “a limited program to assist with the private acquisition of heritage structures for relation to private lands.” TC is willing to consider this, as long as the lessee is the City and the City negotiates with private parties independently of Transport Canada. Lebel also makes clear that demolitions will still occur with regard to any structures in Brougham that are “vacant, dilapidated,” and points out (as if Transport Canada had played no role in this) that “vacant structures ... pose a very real threat to the health and safety of the public, including first responders.” Pickering is given until September 30 to decide on any leases.
- **Sept. 26** – Peter Rodrigues and Gabrielle meet with the CEO of Hamilton International Airport, to sound him out on the Pickering airport issue. He has no interest in getting involved but does concede that building Pickering would not help Hamilton.
- **Oct. 20** – Michael and Gord meet with Dan Glass of the UK’s environmentalist protest group, Plane Stupid.
- **Nov. 15** – The City of Pickering says it’s “trying to work with TC to save one or two important heritage homes.”
- **Nov. 20** – MP Chris Alexander hosts a town hall meeting in Claremont. The topic: “Forty Years Later: How Should the Pickering Lands Be Used?” He says he is 100% against an airport. For the first time, we hear a member of the federal government refer to the situation on the Lands as “a breach of trust.” The large and passionate audience is virtually unanimous in demanding that the site be preserved for agricultural use and as a natural heritage area.
- **Dec. 12** – *Dying for an Airport* is published by Pat Valentine. This condensed history of the expropriation also documents, in words and photos, the deterioration of the Lands and everything on them. The book will be used as an advocacy tool and a fundraiser for Land Over Landings.
- **Dec. 23** – From the *Toronto Star*: “Plans for the land remain vague, but a footprint for the airport is expected to be completed by next spring, according to Paula Fairfax, a Transport Canada spokesperson.” And the demolitions continue...
- **Dec. 31** – New Year’s Eve Dance.

2012

- **Jan. 17** – 30 copies of *Dying for an Airport* have been sold. The City of Pickering reports that it will be renting 10 or 11 houses from TC “for 6 months.”
- **Jan. 31** – We formalize LOL’s overall goal: “To secure the preservation, in perpetuity, of the federally owned lands in Pickering, Markham, and Uxbridge, as food-producing farmland and unspoiled natural heritage for the health and long-term economic benefit of the Greater Toronto region.”

- **Feb. 13** – A number of LOL members contribute to a video by Peter Shatalow, each of us, in our own short clip, giving reasons why we think the Pickering Lands should be saved. The result will be posted on YouTube.
- **Mar. 2, 3** – We mark the 40th anniversary of the airport announcement on Mar. 2, then celebrate the 40th anniversary of POP on Mar. 3. Both “Open House” events are held at the Brougham Hall. On the second day, speakers Charles Godfrey, Bill Lishman, Bob Almack, Anne Howes (of Last Stand fame), Mike “the Kite” Robertson, Charles Neville, Tommy Thompson, Brett Davies, and others address the crowd from the head table after a raucous demonstration outside the old GTAA site office (the Bentley-Gibson House). Over 170 attendees sign the “I was here” poster.
- **Mar. 20** – Our response to the Needs Assessment Study Report is presented at today’s LOL executive meeting. We have uncovered many serious flaws and failings. Correspondence is ongoing with City staff regarding the status of heritage houses on the Lands. The limited-edition run of *Dying for an Airport* has sold out.
- **April** – We post on our website our detailed “Response to the *Needs Assessment Study: Pickering Lands, Final Report.*” Its message in a nutshell: “According to the media and airport proponents, the study had concluded that an airport would be needed in Pickering by 2027. Not so. Our Response quotes from the Report’s conclusion (see entry for July 11, 2011, above). “In fact, there is no clarity in the Final Report as to when (or even if) the need for a Pickering airport will arise. The findings were questionable, ambiguous, and contradictory....”
- **Apr. 17** – We learn that five buildings on the Lands are to be used by the City of Pickering and four will be removed by private individuals. Lorne Almack updates his Prospectus to include a reference to “building a community.”
- **Jul. 20** – Mary is interviewed by Channel 12 News.
- **Oct. 24** – We learn that historic Ever Green Villa/Melody Farm is slated for demolition. The house had been leased for many years but, in 2000 or so, TC chose to board it up. Three demolition orders had been successfully fought but the depredations of weather, time, and TC’s policies of deliberate neglect have finally prevailed.
- **Oct. 25** – Ten of us cross the “No Trespassing” barriers to have a closer look at the house and photograph/document its condition before it’s pulled down. Ransacked by squatters, weed-infested and rotting, the handsome home that, when first built, people travelled miles to see, is now unsalvageable.
- **Nov. 9** – Ever Green Villa/Melody Manor is demolished. We demonstrate on Brock Road for the better part of the day to raise public awareness as bulldozers tear the house down.
- **Nov. 13** – MP Chris Alexander hosts an informal afternoon public “Conversation” at the Claremont Community Centre. He agrees with our reading of the Needs Assessment Study Report. Says that Jim Flaherty recently told him he would like to see “an announcement” re the Lands sooner rather than later but Chris doesn't foresee one before early next year. He understands that the announcement would say that a framework has been set up to invite and consider solid proposals from all interested groups or individuals who have a vision for the Lands, and he advises us to be ready with a vision (and implies that we should have a solid business case and powerful backing). He adds that the arguments of those who want to see a small airport on the Lands would not go down well with Transport Canada.

- **Nov. 20** – Pam Veinotte, Superintendent, Rouge National Urban Park, tells us: “There are no plans to extend the Park onto federal Lands.”
- **Dec. 18** – Chris Alexander advises: “Expect an announcement from Jim Flaherty very soon.”
- **Dec. 31** – New Year’s Eve Dance.

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