

The Federal Lands

GDA members have been involved in the *Federal Land holding* dating back to the 18,300-acre expropriation in 1972. We urge readers to look at our *review* of the case for and against the airport. On an economic basis alone it cannot be justified; there are cheaper alternatives that can serve the traveling public well. Environmental and prime farmland preservation considerations make the case against the airport even more compelling.

In 2001 GDA members met with Transport Minister David Collenette to propose the Moraine and other portions of the Federal Lands be permanently preserved. The Minister in early 2002 announced the government would protect the 7,200-acre Federal Green Space lands. A stakeholder advisory group, which included a GDA representative, was formed to advise on the creation of a Master Plan. A draft Plan was completed that has since gathered dust.

Given an airport is not justified for the foreseeable future, we recognize some of these lands will remain in public hands, just in case. The GTAA assumes an airport would be built within the southeast 4,000 to 5,000-acre quadrant. The Province of Ontario included most of the Federal Lands within the Provincial Greenbelt but left a Whitebelt portion the size of Pearson International Airport in this quadrant. We feel, as a minimum, the Federal Green Space lands should be expanded by 5,000 to 6,000-acres to include all lands in the Provincial Greenbelt.

Members have prepared two recent proposals with respect to Federal Lands Management. Both consider privatizing a significant portion of these lands and doing so by applying easements to ensure permanent future protection. *The one proposal* proposes a land trust model where the vast bulk of the land is privatized; *the second proposal* stresses the appointment of a strong advisory group with the mandate to publicly compare alternatives and develop a Management Plan and associated governance structure.

Transport Canada has the GTAA Needs Analysis study for a year and has completed the due diligence review. We expect in 2011 it will either decide to proceed with an Environmental Assessment (EA) as a prelude to an airport or shelve it for the next decade or so. Our EA concerns are that the proponent has deep pockets, the terms of reference can be narrow, and developable land could offset an airport lost leader. Meanwhile unnecessary demolition of houses/barns on the site continues unabated.

In March the Federal Government announced the creation of a Federal Rouge Park within what appears to be the existing 10,000-acre and not the 5,000-acre Markham portion of the Federal lands proposed by the Rouge Park Alliance. We support a Federal Park but prefer to see alternatives considered if parts of the Federal Lands are to be included.

Current priorities include:

- If the Government proceeds with an Environmental Assessment we will be very involved to influence its terms of reference, apply for intervener funding etc.
- We will continue to promote far better management/stewardship of the all the Federal lands, particularly the majority never needed for an airport.