

## Pickering - Federal Land Motion – Jan 27 2014

On Jan 27<sup>th</sup> Pickering Council unanimously passed a motion on the Federal Lands that included among other things the following resolutions:

- “that the Federal Government establish an open and transparent process with opportunities to share, analyze and comment on relevant documents and decision-making on the use of the federal lands including the announced airport in the City of Pickering”

- “That the Federal Government clarify whether the entire airport site is needed for airport purposes, or whether other uses might also be introduced, and if so what they would be.”

(The airport site is the 8700 acres identified by Transport Canada in June 2013),

- “That on lands falling outside the 8700 acre airport site, the Federal Government respect the Federal Green Space lands Master Plan, and the provincial Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine policies.”

- “That the Federal Government prepare/update and make public for review and comment a business case for use of the federal lands, including the announcement of an airport.”

- “That the Federal Government require a comprehensive Federal Environmental Assessment, with appropriate opportunities for review and input by the City of Pickering and the public, for the announced airport.”

In addition the resolution called for establishment of a Pickering Advisory Committee to act as a liaison with the Federal Government and including City and community representatives.

Land over Landings, Green Durham, and Friends of the Rouge Watershed worked with Councilor David Pickles who moved the motion in finalizing the resolution. All organizations urged Council to unanimously support the motion.

It was critical to Green Durham that the motion stated that on lands falling outside the airport site, the Federal government be urged to respect previous Federal Green Space undertakings with regard to Moraine protection as well as Provincial Greenbelt policies.

The 13600 acres of Federal Lands in Durham, even after the 5000 acres slated

for the Federal Rouge Park are removed, are much more than will ever be needed for an airport. The airport video Green Durham commissioned last year emphasizes this among other points.

The Federal announcement in June 2013 acknowledged this and has reduced the airport site from 18600 acres to 8700 acres. This acreage is still far more than enough for an airport – double the size of a Pearson or even than an Atlanta, which in 2011 handled 92 million passengers, more than any other airport in the world. There are some 4900 acres in Durham not included in the airport site, 4300 of them falling on the Moraine or within the Provincial Greenbelt between the airport site and the Rouge Park.

These lands are composed of prime agricultural lands that if protected and enhanced would support Durham's largest industry and agricultural/food processing opportunities proximate to Canada's largest urban area.

This acreage contains environmentally significant valleys, streams, wetlands and woodlands in the West Duffin Creek, which provide the only possible natural area corridor linking the Moraine and adjacent watersheds, to Seaton, the Rouge Park and Lake Ontario. The Rouge Park does not provide such a corridor since it's northern boundary abuts the Stouffville urban area.

As expressed in the airport video Green Durham, we have long believed the best way forward was to have Pickering, the municipality within which the majority of the Federal lands fall, unanimously pass a motion that could be supported by a broad spectrum of interests, including both airport supporters and airport opponents.

While we believed the motion needed to support Greenbelt and other objectives on lands not needed for an airport, we believed that any motion, which opposed the Airport itself - even if it could be passed - would not impact the Federal Government's interest in building an airport.

The benefit of unanimously passing the motion is that we now have something that will assist in getting other similar municipal motions, and also assist in helping convince the Federal Government they should listen to lower tiers of government when they are urged to not develop on prime agricultural lands within the Moraine and Provincial Greenbelt that are outside the airport site and would in no way compromise their proposed airport plans. By protecting these non-airport foodlands and a nature corridor adjacent to their own Federal Rouge Park, they will be significantly supporting their own agricultural and environmental objectives on the lands within the Park itself.

The fact that all members of Pickering council, including airport proponents supported this motion, affirms the feedback Green Durham has received from airport supporters that many of them too, also strongly support Durham's

agricultural sector and feel strongly that these lands not needed for airport should be protected to support agricultural and environmental priorities.

Passage of the motion provides an indication that airport proponents also recognize that even though they feel a business case can be made for an airport they realize a business case needs to be completed and made public. They also accept the requirement for a comprehensive Environmental Assessment before finalizing any decision to proceed.

Airport opponents are also much better realizing they should avoid rhetoric that comes off as overly NIMBY and can end up being counterproductive, and realizing the best way forward may be in stages – first let's try to reach broad agreement on protecting lands never needed for an airport; and then secondly develop a more and more professional evaluation of any possible future airport need, along with more analysis of non airport alternatives and opportunities.

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