Expand the Rouge.org

Dear Prime Minister,

Half a century ago, the men of Team Canada were vying for hockey supremacy while Atari released "Pong", the first commercially successful video game, and Apollo 17, the last manned lunar flight, was launched.

The Canadian government also announced the construction of a new airport for the Toronto area in 1972. And in the process, it expropriated 7,527 hectares of prime, Class 1 agricultural land in North Pickering, Markham and Uxbridge, and habitat for almost 200 rare plant and animal species.

The announcement had immediate, devastating and indelible impacts. And yet—the airport was never built.

Although half the expropriated lands were transferred from Transport Canada to Parks Canada with the creation of Rouge National Urban Park, the threat of an airport on the remaining half of those lands continues to stifle investment in the area and shackles the productive power of some of the finest arable land in North America. Investments in nature are also frozen by the prospect of a future airport, regardless of the long odds of it ever being developed.

Simply put, the landscape is held in limbo by a farfetched and outdated idea.

The Pickering airport remains a government policy that's wrong in principle and it continues to paralyze progress for people and nature. Today, with climate chaos and a biodiversity crisis threatening our very existence, clinging to a 1970s airport plan is senseless and reckless.

Meanwhile, this area hosts some of the best farmland in the country. It also provides natural climate mitigation solutions and serves as important connecting habitat between wild landscapes that are critical to avert more species extinction in the region where biodiversity loss has hit Canada the hardest. What's more, the proposed airport site is sacred Indigenous land.

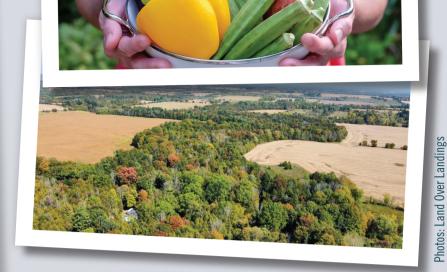
Fifty years ago, the Prime Minister at the time of expropriation was Pierre Elliott Trudeau. His decision in 1972 is glaringly out of step with the needs of today.

In the intervening five decades the world has changed. Today, the possibility of vacations to Mars are in the news, video games like Minecraft allow us to build virtual worlds, and the Canada-US women's hockey rivalry captures headlines.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, we ask that you release the Pickering Federal Lands and add them to Rouge National Urban Park. It is a decision in step with the times and in line with your government's incredible commitment to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

It is time - time to release the Federal Lands held in limbo and seize the opportunity to advance reconciliation, protect essential farmland and bring greater ecological security to the GTA.

Prime Minister Trudeau, we call on you to act now. Release the Pickering Federal Lands and add them to Rouge National Urban Park.



Signatories

Ed Beach, President Durham Region Federation of Agriculture

Dr. Yannick C. Beaudoin, Director of Innovation and for Ontario David Suzuki Foundation

Pauline Browes, Founder and Chair, Friends of Rouge National Urban Park

Don Ciparis, President National Farmers Union – Ontario

David Crombie, Chair Friends of the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Mary Delaney, Chair, Land Over Landings

Mary E. Drummond, Chair, Durham Food Policy Council

Ali English, Executive Director, Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario

Tim Gray, Executive Director, Environmental Defence Franz Hartmann, Executive Director, Earthroots

Dave Harvey, Executive Director, Park People

Janet Horner, Executive Director, Greater Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance

Katie Krelove, Ontario Campaigner, Wilderness Committee

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Andrew McCammon, Executive Director, Ontario Headwaters Institute

lan McLaurin, Chair, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition Dr. Faisal Moola, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, University of Guelph

Bernard Pope, Executive Director, Ontario Farmland Preservation

Graham Saul, Executive Director, Nature Canada

Dianne Saxe, Last Independent Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Deputy Leader of the Ontario Green Party

Caroline Schultz, Executive Director, Ontario Nature

Sandy Smith, Institute of Forestry and Conservation, University of Toronto

Janet Sumner, Executive Director, Wildlands League

Karren Wallace, Chair, Food & Water First

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Lyn Adamson, Co-Chair, ClimateFast

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Donna-Marie Batty, StopPlastics

Professor Stephen Bocking, Trent University, Founding Director School of the Environment, Creator of Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Program

Maurice Brenner, Councillor, City of Pickering

Mike Borie, Environmental Action Now, Ajax-Pickering

Sandra Campbell, Abundance GTA

Dr. Mark A. Cachia, Dr. Milli Roy & Harry Wang, Co-Chairs, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment - Ontario Regional Committee

Ginny Colling, Scugog Climate Action Now

Carl Cosack, North Dufferin Agricultural Community Taskforce

Glenn De Baeremaeker, Former Scarborough City Councillor and Deputy Mayor (East), Toronto Paul De Campo, Local Food Activist and Educator

David Donnelly, Partner, Donnelly Law

Ivan Emke, Honorary Research Professor, Memorial University

Kathleen ffolliott, Blue Dot Whitby

Barbara Falby, For Our Grandchildren

Charles "Doc" Godfrey, Chair of People or Planes, 1972 -

Joyce Hall, Convenor, JustEarth

Jane Hayes, Director, Urban Gardens & Permaculture

Jack Heath, Regional Councillor, City of Markham

Daniel Hoffman, The Cutting Veg: Owner, Organic Farmer, Social Worker, Community Developer

Lisa Kates & Darcy Higgins, Building Roots

Matthew Kellway, Former MP and Urban Affairs Critic, Infrastructure and Deputy Transport Critic

Cathy Lacroix, Citizens Climate Lobby

Gail Lawlor, Climate Justice Durham

Stephen Leahy, Environmental Author and 2 x SEAL Award-Winning International Environmental Journalist

lain Lovatt, Mayor, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

Claire Malcolmson, Executive Director, Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition

Mary Anne Martin, Durham Integrated Growers for a Sustainable Community

John Marsh, Professor Emeritus, Trent University: IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas

Burkhard Mausberg, President, Small Change Fund, Founding CEO of the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation and the Greenbelt Fund

Theresa A. McClenaghan, Executive Director and Counsel, Canadian Environmental Law Association

Jacinta McDonnell, Toronto 350

Peter Miasek, President, Transport Action Ontario

Nika Moeini, Executive Director, Youth Climate Save Canada



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Gerri Lynn O'Connor, Former Mayor, Uxbridge

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Karen Rea, Councillor, City of Markham

Richard Sandbrook, President, Science for Peace

Sue Sherban, Councillor, Whitchurch-Stouffville Andrea Stephens, Core Team Co-Lead, Drawdown Toronto

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Katie Ward, President, National Farmers Union

Kevin Matthew Wong & Emma Westray, Broadleaf Theatre