

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Simply put, the landscape is held in limbo by a farfetched and outdated idea.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



Photos: Land Over Landings

Signatories

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