

# Pickering airport opposition group breaks for summer

*Wait continues for needs assessment*

Jun 24, 2011 - 11:48 AM  
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PICKERING -- Still waiting for news after more than three years, members of Land over Landings gathered at Brougham Community Hall to bid goodbye for the summer months.

Made up of residents advocating for the federal lands in Pickering to be delegated as a land trust, the group has been awaiting the results of a needs assessment commissioned by Transport Canada three years ago. Conducted by the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, the study has been completed but no results have been released as yet.

"We would like to see this land in perpetuity as a land trust," said Gord McGregor, chairman of the group, during the meeting on June 21.

"We certainly hope that down the road this is going to happen but the battle is far from over that's for sure."

Demolitions of the homes remaining on the land has been ongoing, with about 50 homes on the current list for demolition, which could begin in September. The City of Pickering is currently examining the homes on the list to determine if any are worth saving for heritage value, although many have fallen into a state of extensive disrepair.

"We're currently doing some research on the properties to see if these are just old, broken-down sheds or buildings that are in disrepair because they've been ignored," said Councillor Peter Rodrigues, who attended the meeting.

"There a number of things the City could do, such as take over the properties, but we're still looking at all the options."

Member Lorne Almack was a resident of the lands at the time of expropriation in 1972, and has been fighting to have the land returned to the community ever since.

"I remember when we received our expropriation form letter and that sent everyone into a rage, and I've been in a rage ever since," he said.

"The issue is that first of all an airport is not needed, and secondly, if one is needed it shouldn't be built on Class A farmland, that's ludicrous. It isn't

buildings they're trying to destroy here, it's the community, and it's the community we're fighting for now. On our side now we have rising world food prices, people all over the world are struggling to have enough food to eat."

Despite the lack of news, members say they are nervous about what will happen in the future due to the high value of the lands.

"I think all of us feel there's something in the wind and don't know what it is," said Mary Delaney. "There's a whole lot of rumours out there and with the change of government we don't know what to expect."

Member Joe Bezubiak agreed, noting that the land could be sold to pay for other needs.

"It's scary this time. We've got a government with an agenda to pay for and this is a valuable piece of land."

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