

Future of Pickering airport land debated

BY MIKE ADLER
STAFF WRITER

Talks may start soon on what to do with 18,600 acres of land expropriated for the Pickering airport along the York-Durham boundary, and Markham and Stouffville have been promised invitations.

The federal government, which a quarter-century ago expropriated the land for a major airport, is allowing stakeholder talks to find an alternative to an airport designation.

Pickering Mayor Wayne Arthurs, whose council helped convince its York and Durham neighbours to back the plan for talks, said he wants to start in mid-February.

But Claremont resident Stephen Frederick, who heads the grassroots group VOCAL, said he's worried Arthurs may take too long.

"We've got until the end of February to show progress" to the government, he warned last week.

VOCAL — Voters Organized to Cancel the Airport Lands — and the Pickering-based Green Door Alliance, both expected at the talks, argue most of the land will never be needed for an airport and say it should be sold and preserved for agricultural use.

Arthurs said he believes the government, after studying six months of public comment on its plan to protect the land for an airport, isn't anxious now about getting a designation.

"They're not going to make any snap decisions," he said.

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