



Mark Holland
Member of Parliament – Ajax-Pickering

News Release

February 16, 2007
For Immediate Release:

Documents show Transport Canada paranoia over airport media coverage -- Holland

Internal Transport Canada documents obtained by MP Mark Holland show a department fixated on moving forward with an airport in Pickering and worried about unfavourable media coverage. The documents were obtained this week under the federal Access to Information Act.

Meanwhile Holland's office has filed a formal complaint with the Office of the Information Commissioner over Transport Canada's failure to release numerous other documents within the legal timeframe. The documents were requested in July 2006 and must be released within 30 days. In several cases 90-day extensions were granted, but Holland points out that his office has now been waiting more than seven months and hasn't received these documents.

"Transport Canada is flouting the law that says they must disclose these documents according to legal timelines," says Holland. "It would appear they have a great deal to hide."

Among the documents obtained was one dated February 21, 2006 discussing how Transport Canada should respond to the anticipated release of a documentary by award-winning filmmaker Peter Shatalow titled *Last Stand*.

"Although unsuccessful in obtaining a copy of the documentary, a Communications Branch staff member will attend the preview showing on March 2, 2006 and will attempt to obtain a copy of the video at that time," says the memo attributed to Regional Director General Debra Taylor and Regional Director, Pickering Lands, Linda Hoffman.

The memo also notes that the filmmaker requested an interview with Transport Canada, but they declined, issuing a prepared statement instead.

It also outlines the background of local resistance to an airport since the lands were expropriated for an airport in 1972.

“A number of planning studies and forecasts completed since 1972 have confirmed the need for an airport at Pickering due to aviation capacity projections at LBPIA [Lester B. Pearson International Airport],” say the government talking points, which also add that no final decision on an airport will be made until at least 2009.

Some of documents are highly censored, and some express concerns about “possible media attention.”

“Transport Canada talks about transparency, but it’s obvious that they fear the people in the community,” says Holland. “They are determined to push ahead with an airport, and to these bureaucrats the people of north Pickering are nothing more than an obstacle to be managed or eliminated.”

Holland will be posting a selection of the more interesting documents on his website at: www.markholland.ca/issues/airport.htm

For further information:

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