The federal government is moving ahead with plans for the future of its lands in Pickering—earmarked for a potential airport—with the help of an independent advisor. Stakeholder consultations are anticipated over most of 2016.

Dr. Gary Polonsky was appointed July 31 as the independent advisor to Transport Canada on the future of the Pickering lands. About 9,000 acres have been retained for a future airport from the original 18,600 acres set aside in 1972.

Polonsky has been mandated to consult with stakeholders—private sector developers, aviation sector operators, community organizations and three levels of government—and gauge the interest in developing a Pickering airport and whether an interim economic development use should be considered. According to a release from Transport Canada, the following discussion guide will help to shape the consultations about the business case for a Pickering Airport:

1. Do you believe that any airport should be developed on the Pickering Lands?
2. When and what type of airport do you believe should be developed? For example, a large, international airport or a smaller regional airport?
3. What information and action do you believe would be required from the federal government to facilitate the development of an airport on the Pickering Lands?
4. What would you identify as the key elements that must be addressed in any business case for a future airport?
5. What are your expectations regarding consultations with stakeholders during the planning and development processes?
6. What, in your view, are the environmental considerations related to the development of an airport on the Pickering lands?
7. What role do you think the private sector should play in developing and operating the Pickering Airport?
8. Do you think a public/private partnership (P3)—where the private sector partner assumes appropriate risk for a reasonable return (i.e., financing or operations)—is a reasonable model for the development of an airport on the Pickering lands? Why? Why not?

A final report summarizing the input received during the consultation, as well outstanding issues is expected to be completed by mid-2016.