



Expanding Toronto Island Airport Reality Check: Unanswered Questions

My name is David Powell and I have prepared this brief. I am a Toronto resident with no affiliation to any organization or special interest group. It reflects my personal views on this vital place in Toronto and its future. I use both the Island Airport and Pearson Airports fairly frequently. I do not object to the present Island Airport nor do I argue that it should be closed or downsized.

As a former President of La Chambre de commerce de Montréal metropolitan (The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal), I have questions to ask as I lived the decade of the multi-billion taxpayer dollar fiasco of Mirabel Airport. Once bitten, twice shy. It was plagued by repeated government planning mistakes and costing errors. Initial foundational assumptions were not adequately tested nor were they re-assessed over time when circumstances obvious to everyone else changed.

As of writing this document, there is no plan. Proponents of the jet expansion of the Island Airport often apply a narrow lens. A broader perspective is needed: within the Inner Harbour, any development should be judged against its impact on the whole area and its diverse public uses.

Before an irreversible decision is made to expand the Island Airport to serve jets and permanently degrade the Inner Harbour, there are many questions that need to be answered if Torontonians are to properly assess the choices before them. For public confidence in the ultimate decisions, no action should be taken, no changes made, until an evidence-based plan is reviewed in open, fully-informed and transparent public hearings, including the consequences for the Inner Harbour and its users, the size of expected infrastructure, land requirements, costing and timelines.

David Powell, Toronto, May 2026

Expanding Toronto Island Airport

Reality Check: Unanswered Questions

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A “crown jewel”: Toronto’s Inner Harbour



Aerial view of the Inner Harbour from the south

In the nineteenth century, it was called the Bay of Toronto¹; today, it’s called the Inner Harbour. The Inner Harbour is essential to the city’s identity along with the CN Tower, an ensemble, a single integrated urban space, stretching from Ontario Place and the RBC Amphitheatre (formerly the Budweiser Stage) in the west to the Port Lands and the mouth of the Don River in the east, connecting to the regional 56-kilometre recreational Martin Goodman Trail. The Inner Harbour encompasses the intensively-developed residential and entertainment mainland lakefront, the Toronto Islands (an 800-acre archipelago of 15 connected islands of recreational facilities, beaches, residential communities and parklands, 200 acres of environmentally significant coastal wetlands), and the Billy Bishop Toronto Island Airport.

These individual pieces, seemingly separate, in reality, form an integrated and highly popular communal space, the Inner Harbour is a “crown jewel” of downtown Toronto that works so well today.

Over the last fifty years, many North American cities have rediscovered their waterfronts and, like Toronto, have invested heavily in revitalizing derelict harbour sites, creating major new public environments, converting them into popular destinations for residents and visitors.

Long-term planning and investment have succeeded in transforming the Inner Harbour into a true popular public destination, a “people place”. Torontonians have discovered that they live by a lake the size of a small ocean. Tens of thousands stroll along the shoreline where they see boaters sailing and paddling in the Inner and Outer harbours. Many take the ferries or water taxis to the islands for a picnic or to swim off the islands’ beaches. Large tourist cruise boats tour the islands. There are onshore restaurant attractions and open-air concert venues. The current airport does not spoil the scene. It provides a backdrop of animation and interest to the people’s enjoyment of the Inner Harbour.

Under the hugely successful leadership of the tripartite Waterfront Toronto, upwards of \$5+ billion of taxpayer funds² and private sector investments have been invested over the last 25 years in remodelling the Inner Harbour into one of the city’s most valued public spaces.

According to the Toronto Region Board of Trade, “the waterfront is an important, albeit under-realised asset for the city. **The Central Waterfront attracts 18 million visitors each year**, the 4th most visited neighbourhood in Toronto (after Downtown, Yonge and Dundas and the Toronto Financial District). It supports more than 100,000 jobs - “a higher share of visitor economy workers are located there (4% higher than the rest of City of Toronto in arts and entertainment; 5% higher in accommodation & food).” It contributes \$13 billion to GDP, and is on the verge of an unprecedented wave of growth. The Waterfront neighborhood currently has over 85,000 residents (more than the City of Peterborough, Ontario). The eastern waterfront and Port Lands is projected to deliver 75,000 new homes, 130,000 new residents, and 50,000 new jobs by 2040.³

The Inner Harbour has achieved a successful balance of many compatible uses: recreational, entertainment, commercial, residential and airport. How can they best develop together? Will an expanded airport overwhelm that balance, dominating the Inner Harbour? Can the rest of the Inner Harbour thrive with a jets-expanded airport, or is it a zero-sum game where one can succeed only by causing the other to lose out? How will the jet expansion of the airport be accommodated without cancelling out other long-standing Inner Harbour activities? What is to be sacrificed?

How big will an expanded airport be?

The Government of Ontario reportedly seeks to increase the Island Airport’s annual passenger volumes from the current 1.75 million per year to 10 million⁴. To reach 10 million passengers (about 30,000 travellers daily), the Island Airport would need to grow substantially. The question is: how big - and where? Most of the Island Airport infrastructure will have to be demolished and rebuilt on a much larger scale. Does that mean a tripling or quadrupling in the size/capacity of airport infrastructure – terminals, hangars, runways, taxiways, helipads, runway safety areas, and navigation aids crucial for aircraft operation, along with ground-side support (substantial parking, ground transportation, etc.)? A fixed link from the mainland will likely be required (blocking boat access through the western channel). All will inevitably displace or diminish other Inner Harbour uses? No plans, budgets, costs or timelines have been disclosed.

The Port Authority has reported 1.75 million airport passengers in 2025, down from 2 million in 2024. The airport has yet to return to its higher pre-Covid numbers

It is assumed that the purpose of Porter alone is to consolidate all its incoming and outgoing Toronto flights, jets and turboprops, at the Island. It was reported that in summer 2024, Porter Airlines scheduled 176 daily flights Toronto flights: 74 daily flights from Pearson operating its 132-136 seat Embraer jet aircraft E195-E2, and up to 102 daily flights from the Island Airport operating its 78-90 seat De Havilland Dash 8-400 aircraft.⁵

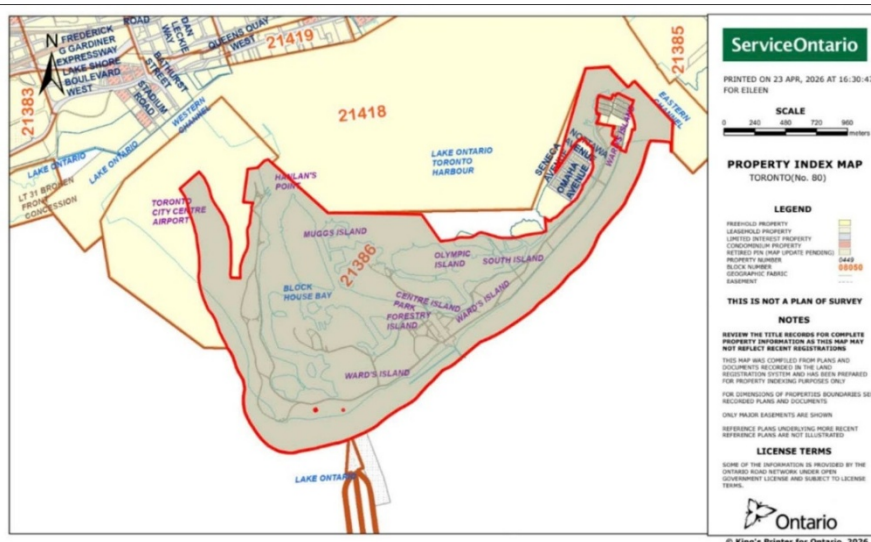
The Island Airport (YTZ) is generally open for 18 hours, 7 days a week (from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. daily). With 176 flights daily, Porter alone will have 352 take-offs and landings each day, or one every three minutes. This flight frequency calculation does not include Air Canada operations or those of any future carriers.

By summer 2025, Porter had grown its jet fleet to 44 Embraer E195-E2 aircraft (part of an order up to 100) alongside 29 De Havilland Dash 8-400s.⁶ The Toronto Port Authority (TPA) expects the Airbus A220-300 (up to 160 passengers) to fly from an expanded airport.⁷

Island Expropriation

This map illustrates the land and structures owned by the City of Toronto (highlighted in brown) to be expropriated by Ontario and ownership vested in the provincial Minister of Transportation under Ontario Bill 110, *Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026*⁸.

The Government has yet to specify how much of the expropriated land will be actually used for airport expansion.



Based on existing information - extended runway and approach lights as anticipated by *Spacing* magazine online⁹

The TPA plans to extend the Island Airport runway to accommodate jets from the current 1,218-metre in length to more than 1,800 metres westwards into Lake Ontario. This is much more than the last proposal rejected a decade ago. But, the TPA contends that “it can be done with minimal impacts on the city’s inner harbour and its plans for high-rise housing nearby.”¹⁰

“The 2015 Oliver Wyman study commissioned for Air Canada concluded that there is not enough space between the current air terminal and the runway at Billy Bishop to dock jets. Consequently, the new runway would have to be located further south and new hangars and infrastructure would have to be located at the southern end of the airport lands to accommodate the hoped-for user increase from two million to 10 million passengers per year. This particular move could eliminate Hanlan’s Point ferry dock and much of Hanlan’s Point Beach.”¹¹

The planned runway is significantly longer than the 1,508-metre runway at London UK City Centre airport which serves the same size jets as the TPA hopes to welcome. If the current promise is no larger jets at an expanded Island Airport, why the extra long runway?

It would be naïve to assume pressure for further expansion – including larger aircraft and additional runways – would not follow.

Runway Approach Lights



Approach lights are required to enable pilots to switch from instrument to visual flying on their final approach. This picture is an illustration of what the 750 metres of approach lights at both the western and eastern ends of the proposed runway would look like. These barriers would not allow for recreational or tourist boat passage.

The proposed extended runway of 1,800 metres plus 720 meters at both the eastern and western ends of the runway for approach lights would create an installation of 3,240 metres (3.24 kilometres) in length.

3.24 km = roughly the distance along University Avenue downtown from Bloor Street to Front Street.

Image: Based on existing information, approach lights as anticipated by Waterfront for All

Airport Land Areas

The Island Airport's reported current passenger volumes of 1.75 million passengers annually, ranks it as Canada's 10th largest airport¹². Increasing passenger traffic by over 600% to reach 10 million would place it 5th.

Yet, the airport today only occupies about 210-215 acres.¹³ Comparing land area requirements for an expansion are challenging given the different geographies of Canada's main airports. Major airports typically cover large areas. The top 4 Canadian airports serve well beyond 10 million passengers a year (Pearson, Vancouver, Trudeau, Calgary) and they occupy significant land areas.

Ottawa-Gatineau Macdonald-Cartier and Winnipeg Richardson airports ranking respectively 6th and 7th, serving 4-5 million passengers annually, half the number targeted for the Island Airport. The Ottawa-Gatineau airport has 4,166 acres of total airport property.¹⁴ Winnipeg Richardson airport is co-located with in terms of passenger traffic, covering a total land area of 3,400 acres.¹⁵

By way of comparison, The Toronto Island Airport occupies 210-215 acres. All the Toronto Islands, including the airport, cover 800-acres. To put this in perspective, Downtown Toronto (defined roughly by Bloor Street to the north, Lake Ontario to the south, the Don Valley to the east, and Bathurst Street to the west) covers approximately 16.6 square kilometres or 4,102 acres, about the size of the Ottawa-Gatineau airport land area.

The Island Airport's two runways currently host about 111,500 aircraft movements annually.¹⁶ Quadrupling this could mean roughly 450,000 a year. Today, Pearson Airport hosts 392,500 air craft movements on five active runways.¹⁷

Comparisons to other urban airports can be misleading. Some cite Chicago Midway International Airport with just over 650 acres, four active runways, hosting 211,000 aircraft movements.¹⁸ That airport is 14 km inland from Lake Michigan. "The more apt comparison is Meigs Field, Chicago's former airport on Lake Michigan, which then Mayor Richard Daley had demolished in 2003, converting the land to a waterfront park.¹⁹ London City Centre Airport occupies about 150 acres in The Docklands. It hosts 44,731 aircraft movements (about 40% of Billy Bishop's current aircraft movements) on one runway under strict noise and operations restrictions.²⁰

The Island Airport would need to grow substantially. The question is: how big - and where? The Island Airport occupies 210 acres, triple it in size would be comparable to about 225 hockey arenas²¹ or 1½ times Toronto's High Park (399 acres).

Why reindustrialize the Inner Harbour? For decades, Toronto has worked to reclaim its Inner Harbour from obsolete industrial uses in order to connect the city to the lake. The current transformation represents the culmination of that effort: a shift away from an industrial waterfront to a public Inner Harbour. Will a substantially enlarged airport reverse decades of policy goals?

- How much additional land will be required?
- How large would the terminal become?
- What parking and transportation infrastructure would be necessary?
- What mainland facilities would be required?
- What public costs would be incurred?

QUESTIONS

Before an irreversible decision is made to expand the Toronto Island Airport to accommodate jets, here are some of the many current questions that should be answered if Torontonians are to have confidence in properly assessing the choices before them.

1. TRANSPORTATION, PARKING & CONGESTION

What are the transportation, congestion and parking implications for downtown Toronto?

Transportation. The Island Airport is poorly served by public transport. Road access to the landside tunnel terminal is already severely constricted as it is. Traffic congestion will be heavy, particularly in the area of Lakeshore Boulevard and the Gardiner Expressway, especially during rush hours and sporting events. In such a built-up area, how physically can efficient public transit access be assured?

No new urban airport today is being built without efficient, integrated mass transit

Congestion. Today, according to a December 2025 Toronto Board of Trade report²²:

“Congestion along the waterfront is some of the worst in the city, likely owing to its proximity to the Gardiner Expressway. A study by Parsons for The Toronto Region Board of Trade’s congestion action plan indicates that the Gardiner and Lake Shore are two of the three most extensively congested roadways in the city, and another study by transportation analytics firm Inrix indicates that three of the top 10 most congested intersections in the city are all on the waterfront”

Let’s assume that Porter’s 74 daily jet flights are transferred from Pearson to the island, that could add roughly 15,000+ more passengers each day embarking and disembarking at the Island Airport.²³ If 20% of these passengers arrive or leave by taxi, limo or private vehicle, that’s conservatively upwards of 3,000 additional vehicles per day.

With Ontario Place planning an above-ground lakeside parking garage for 3,500 vehicles. An expanded Island Airport needing parking for 2,000-3,000 vehicles, traffic congestion can only get worse.

Parking. Where will vehicles park? Assuming that most travellers are away for at least two days, **the airport would need parking for more than 2,000 vehicles.** For 2,000 vehicles, by way of example, 4 five-storey garages, each with a floorplate of roughly 3,000 sq metre, could be needed²⁴ – but the mainland is already densely built, and the land near the lake is unstable landfill. Underground parking has proven unworkable at Ontario Place. The Government of Ontario has reportedly committed to spend \$400 million on an above-ground 5-storey parking garage at Ontario Place for 3,500 vehicles: “a 300-metre waterfront structure about the size of a shopping mall.”²⁵

The Inner Harbour is already under significant transportation pressure. An expanded airport would intensify those pressures substantially.

- Where will passengers park?
- Where would new parking garages be located?
- How will traffic be managed?
- Who pays for the required infrastructure?

2. TRAVELLER CONVENIENCE

A common assumption is that the Toronto Island Airport is inherently more convenient for the traveller than Pearson Airport.

As noted above, no new urban airport today is being built without efficient, integrated mass transit. Over the past decades, significant effort and investment have gone into making Pearson easily accessible from downtown, particularly through improvements to the road network and building the UP Express. According to Metrolinx, in its first decade (2015-2025), the UP Express served more than 26 million passengers.²⁶ Once on the Gardiner Expressway or the 401, there are no traffic lights on the roads to Pearson's two terminals.

The UP Express has dramatically enhanced Pearson Airport's connectivity from Union Station and TTC Line 2, with comparable travel times to the Island Airport. Upcoming transit investments, like the extension of the Eglinton Crosstown, are further enhancing regional access to Pearson Airport.

What's the probable comparable time-costs in travelling from the central city to both Pearson and the Island Airport?

An executive in one of the downtown towers linked to the PATH underground system can walk to Union Station (say 10-15 minutes), take the UP Express to Pearson (25 minutes) and then arrive at airline check-in (another 10-15 minutes). The total time 50-55 minutes to Pearson.

By contrast, reaching the Island Airport mainland tunnel entrance by limo, taxi or shuttle in rush-hour traffic faced with the usual downtown congestion caused by construction, a baseball or hockey game (perhaps anywhere between 20 and 30 minutes), followed by a 10-12 minute walk through the tunnel and another 5-10 minutes to reach check-in. Potentially, 45-50 minutes or more depending on traffic.

As mentioned, public transit access to Toronto Island Airport is limited. Streetcars run down Bathurst and along Queen's Quay but the new Ontario Line will only get as close as King and Bathurst – still a significant walk to the airport.

- The question is not just whether the Island Airport may be convenient today. It is whether a dramatically expanded airport handling several times current passenger volumes can remain convenient within an already congested downtown?

3. AIR AND WATER POLLUTION

How could an expanded airport impact pollution levels in the Inner Harbour?

Air Pollution. As pointed out by The Atmospheric Fund (TAF)²⁷, "Toronto has committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. This target, part of the city's TransformTO strategy²⁸, includes a 65% reduction in emissions by 2030. Meeting these goals will require significant reductions across all sectors, including transportation." "Increased airport activity would also affect surface transportation. The airport's single access point at the foot of Bathurst Street already experiences congestion. The projected rise in passenger volumes could lead to substantially more vehicle trips, increasing local air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions." (conservatively upwards of 3,000+ additional vehicles per day, See section 1 above)

A 130-page Health Impact Assessment Report received by the City of Toronto Public Health Department in November 2013 on the then-proposed expansion to the Island Airport found that airport operations contributed 10% to 15% of local air pollution in surrounding neighbourhoods.²⁹

Based on evidence from the 2019–2024 Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood (BQN) Air Quality Study³⁰, an expanded airport could significantly increase air pollution exposure for nearby communities.

The BQN is located on Toronto’s waterfront, between Lake Shore Boulevard and Lake Ontario, from the west side of Stadium Road to Lower Spadina Avenue. This diverse mixed-use community is home to tens of thousands of people and in the second most dense electoral riding in the city. It includes various types of housing including market, cooperative and social housing units.

The University of Toronto scientific research team found that **airport-related emissions are already elevating pollution levels across BQN**, noting that “emissions produced by airport-related activities are increasing air pollution exposure in the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood.”

When winds blow from the airport toward the neighbourhood, ultrafine particle (UFP) concentrations double or triple, compared with northward winds or background levels at Hanlan’s Point. The study also recorded frequent UFP spikes above 100,000 particles/cm³, far exceeding the World Health Organization’s “high” threshold guideline of 20,000 particles/cm³ for a one-hour average.

While it may be possible that more modern jets will mitigate some pollution risks, how probable is it that any emissions reductions from cleaner aircraft or fuels will offset the increase in emissions from higher passenger volumes and jet operations in the foreseeable future?

With no other major emission sources south of BQN, the researchers concluded that the airport is the dominant contributor to these pollution levels. Airport-related emissions account for 60% of UFP concentrations at the Ferry Terminal and 27% at the Arcadia Co-op, demonstrating neighbourhood-wide impact. The study warns that other waterfront communities downwind of the airport are likely experiencing similar exposure. While UFPs are not yet regulated, the emerging science points to meaningful health risks — and the observed concentrations suggest that jet expansion would intensify those risks.

An expanded airport raises important questions about compatibility with TransformTO objectives and concerns that would be exacerbated over

- Increased aircraft emissions
- Increased vehicle emissions
- Greater congestion-related pollution
- Ultrafine particle exposure in nearby communities

Water Pollution. An expanded jet airport will likely renew pressure to build a fixed paved link for direct passenger, emergency and supply vehicle access. This would effectively interfere with the natural circulation of water from the lake which flushes the Inner Harbour and keeps it clean.

The 2017 AECOM *Environmental Assessment of Proposed Runway Extension and Introduction of Jets at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport Environmental Study Report* looked at the impact on Inner Harbour water quality of the 2013 proposed Porter proposed westward runway extension - 400 metres to a total length of 1,658 metres. The latest Toronto Port Authority proposal appears to call for an extended runway totalling 1,830 metres.

In studying the earlier, shorter runway extension proposal, the Environmental Assessment reported that the “residence time” (the length of time on average it takes to be flushed out into the open lake) will increase from 6.7 days to 12.3 days (i.e. will double). “The anticipated increases in residence time will have a high potential for negative impacts to water quality in the Inner Harbour, through reduced dilution and flushing of pollutant laden water from Don River discharges, storm sewer outfalls and combined sewer overflows.”³¹

“Based on the results of the net effects analysis, the [200 metre] landmass extension [proposed in 2013 by Porter Airlines] may have a significant impact on Inner Harbour circulation and water quality.

Questions remain regarding water quality and pollution dilution

- Long-term ecological impacts
- Combined sewer overflow impacts
- Harbour water circulation
- Recreational water quality

4. NOISE IMPACT

How will the noise effect be managed?

It is argued that smaller jets generate no more noise than the current De Havilland Dash 8-400 aircraft serving the Island Airport. While that may or may not be correct, the fact remains that noise levels will inevitably escalate. Today, aircraft leave or arrive every 20-25 minutes or so. With the jet expansion of the Island Airport, arrivals and departures would probably be scheduled every 2-3 minutes, creating an almost continuous pattern of aircraft noise throughout the day.

If the expected noise and environmental pollution arising from Airport expansion is inconsequential, why, on May 6, 2026, did the President & CEO of the Toronto Port Authority write the following to the Planning and Housing Committee of the City of Toronto³²:

“we respectfully recommend that the City ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are incorporated into the planning and implementation framework for new development as this moves forward through the development process. Such measures should include, but are not limited to:

- Designing and constructing new residential buildings with appropriate acoustic performance standards (e.g., enhanced Sound Transmission Class (STC) ratings for building envelopes);
- Providing for mechanical ventilation and air conditioning to allow windows to remain closed where necessary to achieve indoor environmental performance targets; and
- Including clear warning clauses in agreements of purchase and sale and/or lease, and securing such notices through registration on title, to inform prospective residents of the presence of nearby marine and aviation operations and the potential for associated noise impacts.

Ports Toronto has advised the city that residential buildings constructed on or near the lake should plan to keep windows closed. Will balconies or patios be feasible? Ports Toronto also advises that purchase and sale and/or lease contracts for any properties contain explicit clauses effectively excluding Ports Toronto and the airport from any liability “for associated noise impacts”.

What does the Toronto Port Authority know that we don't?

According to Cockpit King, ³³

“Jet engines scream during takeoff because they're accelerating air to near-supersonic speeds. Huge volumes of air are slammed rearward in milliseconds, creating violent turbulence and shockwaves that turn raw thrust into noise.

At full power, that noise can reach up to 140 decibels close to the engine — louder than a rock concert and right on the edge of physical pain. In real-life terms, it's similar to standing a few metres from a jackhammer... multiplied by physics and scale. That sound can still be heard 10 miles away, even after spreading out and weakening through the atmosphere.

The key point: it's not “engines being loud,” its energy being dumped into the air all at once to overcome inertia, gravity, and drag. Once the aircraft is airborne and power is reduced, the noise drops sharply — same engines, same speed, far less chaos in the airflow.

So that roar on the runway isn't aggression or inefficiency. It's the sound of millions of pounds of mass being forced into the sky in under a minute.”

The opinions of Colin Novak, a mechanical engineering professor at the University of Windsor who's researched airplane noise, and of McGill University aviation expert John Gradek have been reported:

According to Novak, '[t]he noise will actually hit the water and reflect, and then propagate further away in all directions, including towards the land. So, there can be an increase of at least three decibels from that reflection of the noise off of the water,' a noticeable increase."

According to Gradek, "besides using quieter planes and the only way to fully dampen the noise would be with a 10- to 12-foot-high wall along the length of the runway. "Unless you put them in an enclosed pen with high walls, people will hear these jets".³⁴

The RBC Amphitheatre (formerly Budweiser Stage) at Ontario Place currently has a capacity of approximately 16,000 people, featuring 5,500 covered seats, 3,500 open-sky seats, 7,000 grass-bowl spots, and a 1,000-capacity floor area. Following renovations slated for 2027-2029, the new venue will seat 20,000 outdoors and 9,000 indoors.³⁵ What will be the impact on open-air activities at Harbourfront, the Islands' parks and beaches, Biidaasigeh park, Ontario Place Park?

The noise questions raised have consequences for

- Residential quality of life
- Inner Harbour enjoyment
- Parks and beaches
- Open-air concerts and other activities
- Recreational uses

5. WEATHER RISKS

What are the weather risks at a lakefront island airport?

The Island Airport is on the lake. What are the weather challenges of expanding the airport to accommodate jets and a substantial increase in flights arriving and departing?

Fog, for example, does disrupt air traffic at airports. "Advection fog" results "from warm, moist air moving over a colder surface (such as land, water, or a surface covered by snow or ice) and cools to 100% humidity." As an island airport located on Lake Ontario, it is susceptible to "advection fog," which can rapidly reduce visibility, leading to flight delays, ground holds, and diversions. Due to the broad nature of advection fog, it can persist for days on end, until there is a wind shift.³⁶

Even when both the Island Airport and Pearson get fog, is the latter not more operationally affected (short runway, stricter visibility minimums, stricter curfew hours). Can't Pearson usually keep operating in conditions that would shut the Island Airport Billy Bishop down?

- How would expanded operations function during periods of poor visibility?
- Would operational interruptions increase?
- Would larger passenger volumes amplify delays and disruptions?

"Well blow me down", Popeye the Sailor

6. FERRIES AND BOATING

How will city ferries, sailboats, kayaks in the inner harbour be affected?

Around 1.5 million people use the ferries to visit the Toronto Islands each year.³⁷ The City is introducing two new electric ferries in 2026 and 2027 to handle high demand, with new vessels boasting capacities of up to 1,300 passengers per trip.³⁸ The mainland Jack Layton Ferry Terminal is 2 kilometres from the Island Airport.

The much-enlarged security perimeter will threaten the viability for water sports. The EA report reportedly suggested that "the safety zone would need to be pushed out on the outer harbour side, and small boats warned away on the inner harbour side." In addition, "there would also be a 'considerable' impact on manoeuvrability for both small and large boats in the already tricky to navigate western channel."

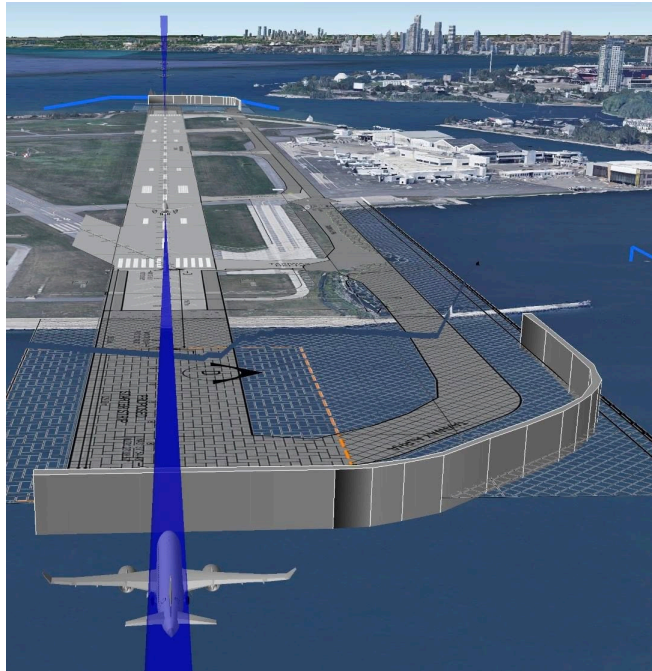


Illustration of 5.8 metre (18.85 feet) high jet blast deflectors installed at the ends of each runway. Based on existing information, as anticipated by Waterfront for All

There are six sailing clubs and three marinas and regular sailing races in the Inner Harbour, all would be affected. The 2017 AECOM Environmental Assessment (cited in Section 10 below) reportedly found that the jet blast would have a “considerable effect” on small boats. “The force of the jet blasts – the wind generated by a jet especially before takeoff – could capsize small recreational boats, even with jet blast deflectors of up to 5.8 metres installed at the ends of each runway.”³⁹

An expanded jet airport will likely renew pressure to build a fixed paved link for direct passenger, emergency and supply vehicle access. This would effectively shut off the western passage to recreational and tourist industry boats and interfere with the natural flow of water from the lake which flushes the Inner Harbour and keeps it clean.

- How will recreational and tourist boat operations be impacted?
- What will be the impact on water quality and circulation
- What will be the impact on general public access to the Inner Harbour?

7. INNER HARBOUR REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

The Inner Harbour has become central to Toronto’s long-term growth strategy. The current plans are not simply real estate developments. They represent a broader attempt to rethink urban living in Toronto around:

- Walkability
- Transit
- Public space
- Mixed-use communities
- Environmental resilience
- And access to the lakefront

The question is not merely whether airport expansion is technically possible. Rather whether a dramatically enlarged airport is compatible with the long-term vision, now guiding Toronto’s Inner Harbour transformation.

According to The Toronto Region Board of Trade,

“the waterfront is home to more than 40 sizeable development projects under construction, with a cumulative investment of at least \$15bn. More than half of these projects are more than \$100m in size.

Developments are happening across the full length of the waterfront including those led by Waterfront Toronto, CreateTO, The Bentway, Ports Toronto, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, Harbourfront Centre and projects at Exhibition Place and Ontario Place. The result will be a dramatic increase in the carrying capacity of the waterfront over the next 10-15 years including:

- At least 17 million sq. ft. of residential space under construction and
- At least 6 million sq. ft. of office space under construction.

During their construction, developments that are currently underway on the waterfront will contribute \$12.6bn to Ontario's GDP and more than 100,000 jobs. These impacts do not take into account the impacts of developments happening just outside the defined waterfront area, which may have been stimulated or accelerated by activity happening within (e.g. through developments creating more certainty for the marketplace)⁴⁰

The innovative plan envisages a sustainable, mixed-use community with 15+ towers, reportedly some of 40 storeys. This area is part of a larger, 100 acre, seven-year revitalization initiative to transform underutilized industrial lands into residential and green spaces. Will the eastern flight path approach to the airport dictate reduced building heights in construction that is underway? Will current plans to accommodate up to 40,000 new residents be compromised? Affordable housing is a priority. Looking at the new Regent Park development of affordable housing, tall buildings (up to 39 storeys) would seem to be expected.

"In June 2024, Toronto City Council approved an update to the Ookwemin Minising Precinct Plan (formerly known as Villiers Island) to permit more than 9,000 homes and 15,000 residents, supported by local retail, new parks, childcare, a library, a community centre, and a street network with space for generous sidewalks, plantings, cycle tracks, and transit. Ookwemin Minising is part of the larger Port Lands area, which is projected to be home to nearly 40,000 people and 30,000 jobs in the future. It will also be a waterfront destination – its infrastructure and amenities will serve a local population and be a regional attraction."⁴¹ In May 2026, city planners raised projections up to 21,000 people across 12,000 units, with the possibility of up to 3,000 of them being affordable housing.⁴²



This artist's rendering above published by Waterfront Toronto shows how buildings on the new Villiers Island (*Ookwemin Minising*) site could. With the densities approved by Toronto City Council, Waterfront Toronto is working with the City and CreateTO to deliver as many as 2,700 affordable rental homes.⁴³ Are the construction plans for this masterplan non-compliant with federal Airport Zoning Regulations for an expanded Island Airport? In other words, are building heights in this area zoned too high and must they be downsized to accommodate an expanded airport, sacrificing optimal affordable housing capacity

The current multi-billion-dollar *Ookwemin Minising* district plan (formerly the Inner Harbour Villiers Island) has been designed by the city planners to fit within present federal Airport Zoning Regulations

for current operations at the Island Airport. According to the AECOM EA report (cited in Section 10 below), the current construction plans (as existed in 2017) for the Port Lands, the Villiers Island Masterplan, the East Bayfront, the Lower Yonge Precinct Plan, the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan, the East York Quay Neighbourhood Plan and, very possibly the Ontario Place Revitalization Plan, were **non-compliant with federal Airport Zoning Regulations for an expanded Island Airport.** Building heights in all these areas would have to be reduced, potentially sacrificing significant development.⁴⁴



Biidaasigeh, the new lower Don Lands park part of the Ookwemin Minising project

The present Ookwemin Minising and adjacent Biidaasigeh park plan is a ground-breaking effort to reimagine urban living in Canada. It represents an innovative rethinking of city life designed for people over vehicles. It is not just an exciting model for Toronto but for all of urban Canada. The project envisions:

- A dense mixed-use Inner Harbour neighbourhood
- Significant affordable housing
- Substantial private and public investment
- Transit integration
- Cycling infrastructure
- Parks and community facilities, and
- A largely people-focused environment

Today, the Inner Harbour represents one of Toronto’s greatest long-term urban opportunities. Airport expansion is not simply an aviation issue. If building heights or densities must be reduced to accommodate expansion, it is a major housing and city-building issue. Does dramatically intensifying airport operations support the city’s long-term public urban vision or fundamentally constrain it?

8. REGIONAL AIRPORT STRATEGY

Is a major expansion of the Island Airport actually necessary within the broader Southern Ontario airport system? Transport Canada’s studies have repeatedly concluded that the Southern Ontario airport system currently possesses sufficient long-term capacity to accommodate demand for the foreseeable future.

Pearson Airport's Multi-Billion Dollar Lift Expansion Project

In April 2024, Pearson Airport launched the first phase of a procurement process for its multi-billion-dollar LIFT (Long-term Investments in Facilities and Terminals) expansion project, focused on increasing capacity by 50%-80% to handle 65–80 million annual passengers by the early 2030s.⁴⁵ “The project aims to keep Pearson competitive with other major international hubs while improving the overall passenger experience.”⁴⁶

In 2025, 47 million passengers travelled through Pearson – the first phase of the LIFT project expects to raise capacity by 50%-80% to handle 65 million annual passengers by the early 2030s. *Pearson's projected increase far exceeds the total passenger volumes currently contemplated for an expanded Island Airport.* A subsequent phase will raise passenger traffic up to 80 million annually.

On May 11, 2026, the \$3 billion phase of the first major program of Pearson LIFT was launched.⁴⁷

While expanding the Island Airport may be perceived to benefit downtown travellers, the reality is that Pearson remains efficiently accessible. As noted above, much effort and investment have been made in rapid transit and the road networks over the years to make it so. The UP Express service (every 15 minutes from Union Station to Pearson Airport with two inter connections with the subway system) cost half a billion dollars. The 401 and the Gardiner/QEW can be congested but, from the city centre, the road trip to/from Pearson generally takes 45-50 minutes.

Pickering Lands De-Expropriated

In 1972, the federal government acquired 75 km² (18,600 acres) of land in the Pickering area, east of Toronto. The stated purpose was to relieve anticipated growing pressure on Pearson Airport.

In January 2025, then-Transport Minister Anita Anand, flanked by three other federal ministers, officially abandoned the decades-old airport proposal, confirming that the Government of Canada will not build an airport on the Pickering Lands, officially ending over 50 years of uncertainty. Instead, the vast majority of the site is being transferred to Parks Canada to significantly expand the Rouge National Urban Park, along with committing a \$21 million investment to build a new visitor and learning centre at the Rouge National Urban Park. The remaining lands, are undergoing ongoing public and Indigenous consultations to determine alternative, community-focused development opportunities.

Transport Canada has concluded that “the airports serving the Southern Ontario region will continue to meet the needs” of the region for the foreseeable future. Any needed airport expansion at the Island Airport could grow within its “existing boundaries”.⁴⁸

In 2016, Transport Canada commissioned KPMG and WSP

“to undertake a Pickering Lands Aviation Sector Analysis. The study updated supply and demand forecasts for aviation traffic, developed options for the type and role of an airport in the regional airport system, and provided an assessment of the economic impact of these options. The final phase of the Aviation Sector Analysis was completed in spring 2019.”

The Supply and Demand report

“projected that passenger demand within southern Ontario will grow to approximately 73.9 Million Passengers Per Annum (MPPA) by 2036. The Supply and Demand Report concluded that the southern Ontario airports system (Toronto Pearson, Billy Bishop, Hamilton and Waterloo airports) has sufficient capacity to meet the forecast passenger demand and that a new airport on the Pickering Lands would not be needed before 2036 from a capacity standpoint.

A follow-up Contextual Bridge Report:

“illustrated and concluded that existing and future passenger demand could see secondary airports (such as Hamilton, Waterloo, and Billy Bishop) continue to grow within their existing boundaries (or with modest land assembly) to provide additional capacity.”⁴⁹

The value of an efficient “hub” airport

How should we assess the value of one vs two main airports? London, New York, Tokyo etc. are largely “origination/destination” cities. They serve very large population areas, much bigger than the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area, that receive and originate passenger traffic. Pearson is Canada’s primary international aviation

“hub” where a significant number of passengers fly in from and out to elsewhere. In serving transfer passengers, hubs increase the number of flights in and out of a city’s airport, thereby increasing available choices for residents as well as non-residents. Pearson’s role as a hub depends heavily on concentrating passenger flows and transfer traffic in one major integrated airport system. Fragmenting major operations across multiple urban airports can create inefficiencies, duplication and transportation complications.

Montreal’s experience with Mirabel Airport remains a cautionary tale. Billions of dollars were invested in a two-airport strategy that ultimately failed because promised transportation integration never happened, passenger transfers were unworkable and planning assumptions proved unrealistic over time. The result was decades of public cost, political and community frustration and eventual retreat.

How much NEW passenger traffic will an expanded Island Airport generate to and from Toronto, or will it simply take passengers from Pearson?

Airport systems today emphasize:

- Integrated hub operations
- Strong transit connections, and
- Coordinated regional planning.

CAVEAT - Population Growth Projections. The Government of Ontario’s objective is apparently driven in part by the expectations that the “Ontario’s population will grow to more than 20.5 million by 2051, including significant growth across the Greater Toronto Area.”⁵⁰ Population growth is declining throughout the developed world. Canada’s ranks #207 out of 237 sovereign states and dependent territories in domestic population growth.⁵¹ Can/will Canada/Ontario’s population continue to grow substantially by immigration alone? Can past experience be reliably projected into the future? How reliable is this multi-billion dollar bet on the future?

NB. Population growth assumptions should be projected cautiously. The creation of Mirabel Airport was partially motivated by a late 1960s forecast that the Montreal regional population would rise to 8 million by 2000. Today, it is about half that number.

9. THE BUSINESS CASE

What’s the business case for the expansion of the airport? Project costs? Who pays? Who benefits?

Supporters of airport expansion have advanced broad claims regarding economic growth, tourism, job creation, increased connectivity and improved competitiveness.

The Government of Ontario has supported a hypothesis that:

“Once fully expanded, the Toronto Port Authority estimates the airport’s activities will contribute up to \$8.5 billion to Canada’s economy every year by 2050 and support up to 23,000 jobs in Ontario’s construction sector alone.”⁵²

In addition, the Toronto Port Authority CEO R.J. Steenstra has argued that

For us this means expanding connectivity, responding to population growth and rising aviation demand, protecting access to northern and remote communities, strengthening tourism and trade, and embracing modern aircraft types that are cleaner, quieter and more efficient.”⁵³

Island Airport Passenger Traffic Questioned

The Island Airport has reportedly not yet returned to its pre-pandemic passenger levels. According to a recent article written by Ian Darragh, a former editor-in-chief of *Canadian Geographic* magazine, published in Spacing online:

“Neither the province nor the Toronto Port Authority have provided ... provided a business case that there is pent-up passenger demand. In fact, Billy Bishop has not yet returned to its pre-Covid passenger levels of 2.8 million in 2018 and 2.77 million in 2019. In 2025, Billy Bishop served 1.75 million passengers.”

“In fact, Billy Bishop has been losing money for years, which is why Porter sold its terminal at Billy Bishop in 2015 for about \$750 million to Nieuport Aviation Infrastructure Partners. Nieuport is a private company owned by unlisted institutional investors and advised by J.P. Morgan, an American investment firm.”

If current passenger volumes remain below previous peaks, what evidence demonstrates sustained demand for a fivefold increase in traffic? This question becomes especially important because large infrastructure projects are often justified through optimistic long-term growth projections.

Business’s Business Case

To put matters in today’s context, in its present form and confirmed development plans (without any change in the airport), last December the Toronto Region Board of Trade reported:

Toronto’s waterfront is one of the most economically powerful and fastest growing districts in Canada, contributing \$13 billion in GDP and welcoming 18 million visitors annually. The eastern waterfront and Port Lands are projected to house at least 130,000 new residents, and 50,000 more jobs by 2024. Few places in Canada offer this scale of economic potential in such a concentrated geography.”⁵⁴

According to Ports Toronto, the Island Airport

“currently connects passengers to more than 20 cities in Canada and the U.S. and supports about 9,000 jobs, including 4,900 people employed at the airport or supporting operations and airlines.”⁵⁵

The position most recently expressed by the Toronto Region Board of Trade (BOT) is a bit perplexing. From the Government of Ontario policy announcement on March 23, 2026, the BOT has been an outspoken supporter of the Ontario government’s proposal to expand the Island Airport for long-haul jets.⁵⁶

In recent years, the BOT has devoted serious efforts to promote positive future development of the central Inner Harbour. In October 2023, the BOT hosted a day-long “Summit” titled: “*How to Build a World-Class Waterfront*”.⁵⁷ In May 2024, the BOT published a 47-page report titled *Ripple Effect: Unlocking Toronto’s Waterfront Potential*⁵⁸, supplemented that same month by an interview with one of the Summit’s keynote speakers, *Kate Meyrick: Ripple Effect report a ‘Call to Arms’ for Toronto’s Waterfront*.⁵⁹ In September 2025, the BOT held a day-long *Waterfront Symposium: Elevating Experience, Empowering Toronto*.⁶⁰ Then, in December 2025, just four months ago, the BOT published a new 23-page report titled: *The Power of Connection: Unlocking Canada’s Most Valuable Waterfront, Six Actions to Connect Canada’s Most Valuable Waterfront*.⁶¹

None of these recent BOT reports mention or advocate for the expansion of the Island Airport. In its most recent December 2025 report, none of the “Six Actions proposed to Connect Canada’s Most Valuable Waterfront” include expansion of the airport.

Detailed public projections, cost analyses and supporting assumptions have yet to be provided. At present, no comprehensive business case has been released that satisfactorily explains:

- Projected capital costs
- Financing structures
- Infrastructure requirements
- Implementation timelines
- Operational assumptions
- Transportation impacts
- Broader economic trade-offs

That absence is striking given the scale of change being proposed.

The issue of costs is important for many reasons. Unlike in the USA, Canada follows a user-pay model for aviation infrastructure. Airports (and the Toronto Port Authority) are self-financed typically through passenger fees, airline charges, airport improvement fees, other revenue and borrowing. They levy fees to cover the costs of building, improving and running airports and air navigation services. These **fees make up thirty cents of every dollar that passengers pay airlines (30%)** for traditional full-service airlines.”⁶² A substantial Island Airport long-haul jet expansion means increased airfares.

The Ports Toronto CEO has been reported as “welcoming federal cash” for airport expansion⁶³. A precedent that Canada’s many other airports might “welcome”.

At the same time, public infrastructure investments will likely be required: transportation upgrades, road improvements, policing, servicing and mainland infrastructure.

As Matt Elliott, a contributing columnist for the Toronto Star, wrote recently in that newspaper:

“Whatever you think of the idea of expanding the airport, it seems reasonable to demand that proponents provide evidence that they have a plan to address these business and infrastructure issues. Show us projections. Show us a business case. Show us any indication that the rationale for this change goes beyond “jets are cool.” There’s a hell of a lot on the preflight checklist before this flight of fancy gets cleared for takeoff.”⁶⁴

It appears that a serious detailed and reliable evidence-based business case for the Island Airport expansion has yet to be made.

Any Island Airport growth plan has to be part of a long-term regional economic development plan. It would be reckless to blindly back a jet expansion at Toronto Island Airport without a full understanding of the true implications, the real costs, realistic timelines and who pays. **What are the real cost-benefits** relative to the scale of Inner Harbour investment and the broader regional economy?

10. WHAT’S NEW

The proposal to expand the Island Airport for jets is not new. Versions of this idea have surfaced repeatedly, been studied and rejected. That history raises a straightforward question: what has materially changed today that justifies revisiting earlier decisions?

In 2013, Porter Airlines last formally proposed a jet expansion at the Island Airport. The federal government rejected that proposal in 2015.⁶⁵ In 2017, an independent study commissioned by Ports Toronto (Environmental Assessment of Proposed Runway Extension and Introduction of Jets at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport Environmental Study Report, AECOM, September 2017) compared two scenarios:

- first, a Future Baseline Scenario where jets are not permitted but a Runway End Safety Area (RESA) is constructed approximately 43 m into the lake at both ends of the existing main runway to address Transport Canada’s requirements at the Island Airport BBTCA (essentially the *status quo* with the short obligatory runway extension), and
- second, a Proposed Future Scenario to permit commercial jet operations and extend the main runway, as per Porter Airlines proposal (the “Porter Proposal”)

The 2017 study concluded that while some technological improvements might modestly reduce certain impacts per aircraft movement, the Porter Proposal would nevertheless generate substantially greater impacts on marine navigation, water circulation, air pollution, Inner Harbour ecology, and Inner Harbour planning.⁶⁶

What are new factors not considered in the AECOM review? Today, the 2017 issues seem to be the same. In fact, some aspects of what little has been disclosed so far appear even more ambitious than those previously rejected: a possible quadrupling of passenger volumes, major infrastructure reconstruction, substantial runway expansion and permanent changes of the character of the Inner Harbour itself. Most of the underlying concerns, though, remain essentially unchanged.

Supporters of expansion point to several developments since the earlier debates: newer aircraft technologies, quieter engines, improved fuel efficiencies and the completion of the pedestrian tunnel connecting the mainland to the airport. These developments are real and important. **The broader issue is not whether technology has improved. It has. The question is whether those improvements fundamentally change the larger planning equation.**

Technology improvements do not eliminate the larger structural questions surrounding:

- Airport scale
- Transportation impacts
- Inner Harbour compatibility,
- Inner Harbour circulation
- Land-use conflicts, and
- Long-term city building priorities.

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

There is no development plan. All key details are absent. Many questions remain. Full answers are needed if Torontonians will have confidence that the right decisions are being made.

What do we know?

No new urban airport today is being built without efficient, integrated mass transit. Pearson has its UP Train, Montreal, its REM, Vancouver, the Canada Line.

The Island Airport remains constrained in terms of public access. Area traffic congestion is among the worst in the city, and can only be expected to get worse. It is difficult to see how access limitations can be substantially overcome within the already congested conditions of the western waterfront.

Where would thousands of additional vehicles park? How will surrounding roads absorb substantially increased passenger volumes? How will airport traffic coexist with sporting and concert events (Rogers Centre, Scotiabank Arena, BMO Field, Coca-Cola Coliseum), Inner Harbour festivals, ferry and boating traffic, new residential communities and growing tourist activity?

The apparent widespread assumption that access to the Island Airport will always be more convenient than to Pearson under a dramatically expanded scenario deserves much closer scrutiny.

There are enhanced risks of air and water pollution. An expansion proposal looks to have a significant impact on Inner Harbour water circulation and quality that is not yet well understood.

As I commuted weekly from Montreal to the Island Airport for several years, I know from personal experience, on return flights back to Montreal, if the top of the CN Tower was invisible due to fog, flights would be almost certainly be cancelled or delayed. The only solution was to drive on to Pearson instead. That experience reinforces the question whether a lake island airport functions differently from a large inland airport.

We are told that newer aircraft technologies will reduce noise levels. Perhaps they will to some degree. But noise is not only about decibel levels. It is also about frequency, continuity and cumulative impact. The Port Authority is obviously concerned. The TPA recommends that the city only allow the building of residences on the Port Lands with unopenable windows.

There are unresolved questions about boating and Inner Harbour activity: sailing, kayaking, ferry travel, tourist boats and public enjoyment of the lake. These are not secondary uses. They are central to the life and identity of the Inner Harbour.

Transport Canada has concluded that the Southern Ontario airport system can continue to meet projected regional demand for the foreseeable future. That conclusion should matter. A substantial expansion of the Island Airport is therefore not occurring in the context of an aviation emergency or severe regional capacity crisis

So far, the business case for expansion has largely been framed through broad assertions rather than detailed public evidence. Basic facts are missing. The idea of significantly expanding the Island Airport for jets has resurfaced every few years. It gets studied and rejected. Why is today any different?

Once major physical transformations occur on the Inner Harbour, they are extremely difficult—if not impossible—to reverse. That reality demands caution. It also demands transparency. At present, many of the most important questions remain unanswered. These are not peripheral questions.

- What exactly is being proposed?
- What infrastructure will be required?
- What are the full environmental implications?
- What are the transportation impacts?
- What waterfront uses may be displaced or constrained?
- What are the public costs?
- What are the opportunity costs?
- What alternatives exist?
- What is the long-term regional planning rationale?

TORONTO-ON-THE-LAKE

PERSONAL CONCLUSIONS

The city's relationship to Lake Ontario is central to its identity, even if Torontonians do not always fully recognize it. Some flee the city at every opportunity to their homes in cottage country, installing themselves on lakes far smaller. They seem to take Lake Ontario for granted, rarely visiting the Inner Harbour. For them, it's part of the city's backdrop, of little other apparent interest. For many other Torontonians, however, especially newcomers and those without cottages or second homes, the waterfront and Islands are their escape to nature.

Toronto's Inner Harbour is one of the city's greatest civic achievements. Over the last half century, enormous public effort and investment have transformed what was once a heavily industrialized Inner Harbour into one of North America's most successful urban lakefronts. Today, the Inner Harbour functions simultaneously as:

- public realm,
- a neighbourhood,
- a tourism destination,
- an employment district,
- a cultural corridor,
- a recreational haven,
- a transportation corridor, and
- an environmental asset.

That layered balanced complexity is precisely what makes it valuable.

The concern raised throughout this document is not opposition to aviation itself. Nor is it an argument for closing the Island Airport. Conceived in the 1930s as an aerodrome for the small aircraft of the time, the airport exists today as an inter-city airport, one component within a broader and generally successful balance of Inner Harbour uses.

The concern is whether a dramatic escalation in airport scale fundamentally alters that balance. That issue cannot be understood narrowly through the lens of aviation infrastructure alone. It must also be examined through the lenses of:

- city-building,
- Inner Harbour planning,
- transportation,
- housing,
- environmental sustainability,
- economic development, and
- quality of urban life.

Large infrastructure decisions shape cities for generations. Once major physical transformations occur on the Inner Harbour, they are extremely difficult—if not impossible—to reverse.

These are not peripheral questions. They are fundamental. Toronto's Inner Harbour is too important to be reshaped through incremental assumptions, incomplete information or narrowly framed analysis.

This is particularly true because the Inner Harbour today is no longer marginal land or a blank space awaiting development. It has become one of the city's most valuable public and economic assets.

Cities increasingly compete on quality of place. Toronto's relationship to Lake Ontario is one of its greatest competitive and cultural advantages. That relationship should not be taken for granted.

For decades, Toronto gradually moved away from treating the Inner Harbour primarily as industrial land, transportation infrastructure, and utility space. The city instead embraced a different vision: an Inner Harbour centred increasingly around people, public life and urban experience.

The current revitalization of the Inner Harbour reflects that long-term evolution. A dramatically expanded airport raises the probability of reversing this trajectory. This does not mean airport operations and Inner Harbour life are inherently incompatible. Clearly, they coexist today. The issue is scale. At what point does airport

expansion begin to overwhelm surrounding uses rather than coexist with them? That threshold matters. The burden of proof must be very high.

Toronto's Inner Harbour belongs not only to today's residents but to future generations. The decisions made now will shape the city's relationship to the lake for decades to come. That is why this debate matters.

And that is why it deserves the fullest possible public scrutiny before irreversible choices are made. And because the implications are likely permanent, decisions should proceed only after rigorous analysis, transparent public review, comprehensive planning, and full public understanding of the trade-offs involved.

Before an irreversible decision is made to expand the Island Airport to serve jets and permanently degrade the Inner Harbour, there are many questions that need to be answered if Torontonians are to properly assess the choices before them. For public confidence in the ultimate decisions, no action should be taken, no changes made, until an evidence-based plan is reviewed in open, fully-informed and transparent public hearings, including the consequences for the Inner Harbour and its users, the size of expected infrastructure, land requirements, costing and timelines.

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