

City of Toronto Public Consultation on Runway End
Safety Options at the Island Airport

Report on Results of Online Survey September 13-26, 2024

This Report was written by Third Party Public and shared with the City of Toronto
Waterfront Secretariat on Tuesday, October 8, 2024





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Executive Summary

From Friday, September 13 – Thursday, September 26, 2024 (14 days), the City of Toronto sought public feedback through an online survey to inform the City's consideration of Runway End Safety Area (RESA) options at the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. The online survey sought feedback to the same two questions that were asked of participants at the in-person public meeting held on Tuesday, September 24, 2024.

There were 2,921 responses to the survey. Third Party Public wrote this summary based on the responses received to the two questions asked in the survey.

The first question on the survey was:

What do you see as the top 1-2 factors for the City of Toronto to consider when reviewing Runway End Safety Area options? Why?

Survey respondents said that the top factors to consider include:

1. Environment and health
2. Impact on culturally significant queer space at Hanlan's Point
3. Waterfront revitalization
4. Safety and regulatory compliance
5. Costs
6. Accessibility of the island airport
7. Economic impact
8. Impact on water uses and public access to the inner harbour
9. Process, timing, and consultation
10. The need for more park space in Toronto
11. Construction impacts

The second question on the survey was:

In the coming months, the City of Toronto will be engaging with PortsToronto as it updates its plans for how the island airport will operate and function in the future. What kind of issues do you think should be considered during this discussion? What is your overall vision of Toronto's waterfront?

Survey respondents said that the issues that should be considered included:

1. Importance of Hanlan's Point Beach
2. Waterfront revitalization, identity, and possible futures
3. Environment, pollution, and biodiversity.
4. Access to Toronto Island Park
5. Resident and infrastructure impacts
6. Convenience, connectivity, relationship to Pearson, need for the airport
7. Noise
8. Marine access and use
9. Economic impacts and value
10. Safety
11. Cost
12. Health

Many respondents used the survey to share their thoughts on the island airport, with three distinct positions emerging:

- Those who like the airport and want it to thrive and grow;
- Those who dislike the airport and want it closed and replaced; and
- Those who are willing to live with the airport as long as it stays its current size.

Survey Purpose, Structure, and Who Responded

From Friday, September 13 – Thursday, September 26, 2024 (14 days), the City of Toronto sought public feedback through an online survey to inform the City’s consideration of Runway End Safety Area (RESA) options at the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. The online survey sought feedback to the same two questions that were asked of participants at the in-person public meeting held on Tuesday, September 24, 2024.

1. What do you see as the top 1-2 factors for the City of Toronto to consider when reviewing Runway End Safety Area options? Why?
2. In the coming months, the City of Toronto will be engaging with PortsToronto as it updates its plans for how the island airport will operate and function in the future. What kind of issues do you think should be considered during this discussion? What is your overall vision of Toronto’s waterfront?

Where responses came from

There were 2,921 responses to the survey with responses received from the locations identified in the table below.

Location*	# of responses	Percent of responses**
Toronto	2,207	76%
Greater Golden Horseshoe	320	11%
Other Ontario	82	3%
Other Canada	203	7%
Outside Canada	109	4%
Total	2,921	100%

* Via IP address

** Rounding means individual % do not add exactly to 100%

A combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis

Many respondents identified two or more factors for the City to consider when reviewing RESA options and two or more issues that are important to consider when contemplating the future operation and function of the island airport. The following methodology was implemented to analyze the responses:

- Similar comments were organized by theme and summarized by theme.
- Where applicable, the range of perspectives on each theme were identified (to the extent possible, since in many cases people provided one-word responses such as “environment” or “cost” or “noise” while in many other cases, people provided long explanations).
- Common words or phrases used most frequently in the entire dataset were counted to have a quantitative assessment to complement the qualitative analysis of the raw data.

QUESTION 1: What do you see as the top 1-2 factors for the City of Toronto to consider when reviewing Runway End Safety Area options? Why?

The table below identifies the 12 most important factors identified by people responding to the online survey.

Factor for the City of Toronto to consider when reviewing RESA options	Number of times key words mentioned
1. Environment and health <i>(including key words “environment”, “pollution”, and “health”)</i>	1,613
2. Impact on culturally significant queer space at Hanlan’s Point <i>(including key words “Hanlan”, “queer”, and “no road”)</i>	1,433
3. Waterfront revitalization <i>(including key words “waterfront” and “revitalization”)</i>	910
4. Safety and regulatory compliance <i>(including key word “safety”)</i>	476
5. Costs <i>(including key word “cost”)</i>	365
6. Accessibility of the island airport <i>(including key words “access”, “convenience”)</i>	341
7. Economic impact <i>(including key words “economy”, “jobs”, and “economic”)</i>	279
8. Impact on water uses and public access to the inner harbour <i>(including key words “boat” and “harbour”)</i>	184
9. Process, Timing, and Consultation <i>(including key words “process”, “timing”, and “consult”)</i>	165
10. The need for more park space in Toronto <i>(including key words “park” and “parkland”)</i>	100
11. Construction impacts <i>(including key words “construction”)</i>	82

In addition to the factors to consider, many responses identified their preferred RESA option. These are summarized following the list of factors to consider.

1. Environment and health

“Environment” was by far the most frequently identified factor for the City of Toronto to consider when reviewing RESA options. The vast majority of comments expressed concern about negative environmental impacts. There were some who said they were confident that there would be minimal environmental impacts from implementing RESA.

Concern about negative environmental impacts:

- Negative impacts on humans, plants, animals, and other wildlife from increased air pollution, carbon emissions, sewage and wastewater, erosion. This includes negative impacts on fish and other marine life, plants, birds, loss of greenspace, etc. There is concern that these negative impacts may be irreversible in the future and that any expansion would go against the City’s goals and work towards restoring Toronto’s waterfront.
- Noise and air pollution. There were significant concerns about noise and air pollution related to the existing and potential future airport operations. Most of the responses emphasized the importance of understanding and examining noise impact, some noted the importance of both noise and air quality as part of the broader environmental impacts, and a few comments were specifically about the air quality. Many responses highlighted that existing levels of noise and air pollution are already negatively impacting public health, wildlife, and the environment, as well as the overall quality of life for residents and users of the waterfront and islands. Constant noise disrupts daily life for those living on the waterfront and islands, leading to worries about long-term health effects and well-being. The disturbance extends to wildlife and the tranquillity of parks and recreational spaces, diminishing public enjoyment of these areas.
- Decrease in quality of life for residents, including health and safety risks. Respondents said that congestion, noise, and air pollution would negatively impact the livability of the downtown core, waterfront, and the islands. Respondents referenced studies pointing to serious health risks associated with air particles emitted by planes, particularly affecting vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly. Mental and physical health impacts due to increased pollution and decreased access to green spaces were mentioned. Safety concerns were raised about the risk of accidents in a densely populated area, especially given the proximity of residential buildings along the waterfront.
- Negative environmental impacts to Hanlan’s Point Beach, noting that the beach and dunes are a fragile ecosystem that needs to be carefully protected. There were also concerns about the negative impacts of any RESA option that adds a road because it could increase pollution from additional vehicles and destroy more of the natural environment.

Support for decreased environmental impacts because of the island airport:

- The island airport location helps reduce the need to drive to/from Pearson. This significantly reduces the number of cars on the road.
- PortsToronto is always trying to find more ways to make the airport more environmentally friendly and “green”.

2. Impact on culturally significant queer space at Hanlan's Point

Concerns about the impact of the island airport on Hanlan's Point was the next most frequently identified factor for the City of Toronto to consider when reviewing RESA options (after "Environment"). The feedback was 100% consistent, with responses focused on the importance of protecting the area, raising the following points:

- Many emphasized the importance of Hanlan's Point as Toronto's historic and culturally significant queer space that must be preserved. It is the site of Canada's first Pride Parade celebration and has deep roots in LGBTQ+ activism and heritage. Many respondents shared deep concerns that any RESA development, especially the construction of a road contemplated in RESA 3, would disrupt the privacy, safety, and unique character of this important cultural landmark. Hanlan's Beach is a safe space where individuals can freely express their identities, providing vital community support, reducing feelings of isolation, and affirming queer identities. Respondents fear that increased access, reduced privacy, and overcrowding may lead to a diminished sense of security, negatively affecting the mental health and overall well-being of members of the queer community.
- Concern that construction and increased traffic could negatively impact the natural environment of Hanlan's Point, including accelerated beach erosion, destruction of natural habitats, harm to local flora and fauna, and overall ecological imbalance.
- Significant concern about the potential for RESA Option 3 to include a road that would facilitate access to the Hanlan's Point beach. Many responses simply replied, "No road". There is concern that increased access will make the area less safe for the queer community, negatively impact the environment, contribute to erosion, and destroy the unique oasis in the middle of the city.

3. Waterfront Revitalization

The vast majority of responses related to waterfront revitalization expressed concern about what they see as a conflict between the island airport and revitalization. Some said they think the island airport is compatible with waterfront revitalization.

Those with concerns said:

- The island airport, especially an expanded island airport, conflicts with waterfront revitalization and would destroy all the time, effort, and resources that have been spent to date revitalizing the waterfront. There were concerns shared about conflicts with parkland and recreational uses, restoring the natural ecosystem, limiting access to the island and waterways, and increased pollution. Many respondents said the downtown doesn't have enough parkland, greenspace, or recreation facilities for the current population and even more will be needed as the population continues to grow. They said parkland and greenspace are a key component of revitalizing the waterfront.

Those who think the island airport is compatible with waterfront revitalization said:

- The island airport is a landmark and an asset to Toronto's waterfront that supports tourism and employment and provides people with an easy connection to and from Toronto and therefore should be incorporated into future plans for revitalizing the waterfront.

4. Safety and regulatory compliance

The vast majority of comments related to safety focused on the importance of keeping people and aircraft safe by implementing RESA. There were some who focused on different safety issues, including safety concerns with having a larger island airport so close to downtown, the need to think about the safety of boats on the water, and safety concerns about the ability for emergency response to access the island airport quickly if needed.

Those who focused on the safety of airport operations said:

- Most said that the main consideration is the safety of aircraft, passengers, crew, airline operators, and the public. RESA will reduce the risk of a potential runway overrun during takeoff or landing. Some noted that as a signatory to the Tripartite Agreement, the City of Toronto has an obligation to adhere to federal regulations imposed on the operation of the airport, and that passenger safety is most important.

Those who focused on other aspects of safety said:

- Others raised safety concerns about having a larger island airport so close to downtown, referencing the safety of those on the island, along with those living and working downtown, and people staying in hotels and condos on the waterfront.
- The need to ensure water safety was also identified, with a focus on the safety of boats around the island airport.
- There are also safety concerns about rapid access to the island airport for emergency services. If there is a crash at the island airport, there is concern that emergency responders – fire, ambulance, police, etc. – will not be able to access the airport via ferry fast enough; also, ORNGE helicopters are limited in the number of patients they can evacuate.

5. Costs

A number of people simply identified “Costs” as a factor to consider when contemplating RESA. Those who provided explanations with their responses had different perspectives on costs:

- Private interests should not be prioritized over public benefits, especially given the city's pressing issues like housing shortages and homelessness.
- There needs to be thorough scrutiny of the financial implications, strongly opposing any use of taxpayer money to fund projects they perceive as benefiting private airline companies and a limited group of travellers.
- Questions need to be answered about the airport's economic viability, with some noting that airlines like Porter are shifting operations elsewhere. There were demands for greater cost transparency and detailed budget information from PortsToronto to ensure informed decision-making.
- The Tripartite Agreement expiry in 2033 led to doubts about investing heavily in an airport with an uncertain future.

- Safety should not be compromised, but necessary enhancements should be balanced against the financial burden on the public.
- There was concern that resources / City tax revenue spent on any expansion to the island airport would take needed resources from preparing for future extreme weather events.
- There were people who said that any investment in RESA must consider the long-term benefits as part of its cost-benefit analysis since RESA directly impacts the current operations and future of the airport. Additionally, it is important to consider the cost and environmental impacts of shutting down the airport and repurposing the land versus keeping it and complying with RESA.
- Some said the cost is too high considering the operating life of the airport, and the cost/benefit analysis does not justify RESA. They asked whether investments in RESA are worth it based on the long-term future of the airport.

6. Accessibility of the island airport

The convenience of the island airport was identified frequently as a factor to consider when the City contemplates RESA options. People said:

- The island airport is conveniently accessible for many commuters across Toronto, being downtown. The island airport is accessible by walking, biking, and by transit. Respondents said they love landing at Billy Bishop and being able to commute home in minutes. Travelling into the downtown core is more convenient than flying into Pearson Airport and relieves the strain on an already overcrowded Pearson. Respondents said they find it difficult to commute 20km to Pearson, facing traffic gridlock and limited transit options.
- It is a vital transit hub, especially important for those who travel for business. Some fly right in and out on the same day to attend business meetings. Additionally, while national and international airlines are streamlining their services, carriers operating out of Billy Bishop Airport are increasing access to and from Ontario.
- The airport being downtown can provide Toronto with a tourism boost. It is a unique asset to the City and is more than a gateway into Toronto but a way to celebrate Toronto. Tourists may choose to fly into the downtown core because of easier access to attractions, hotels, and events. Those who fly into Toronto are enticed by their first views of the city being the downtown core and harbourfront. Some specifically fly into BBTCA for the scenery, waterfront views, and access.
- The BBTCA is unique to Toronto and puts Toronto on the global map. Having an airport with a downtown link to major cities (like New York or Chicago) is an asset to Toronto. Many major cities have multiple airports in their City. Keeping the BBTCA ensures Toronto continues as a global hub. With continuous growth, it may even become what Haneda Airport is to Tokyo.
- Medical access on the island airport is an important factor to consider, as many people depend on it. The island airport provides connections for patients from remote communities to life-saving facilities located in the downtown core. It allows for ORNGE to provide medevac services to patients in need.

Other comments related to access included:

- Interest in facilitating access to the Toronto islands through the airport pedestrian tunnel and/or construction of pedestrian and bicycle bridge or tunnel to the Toronto Island as part of the RESA project to expand recreational and commuter access, fostering greater connectivity and supporting long-term sustainability goals for the city.
- Concern about additional congestion around the island airport leading to more challenges for people trying to access the Toronto island and the central waterfront area.

7. Economic impact

The vast majority of survey responses mentioning economic impact expressed support for the positive economic impact of the island airport. They said:

- BBTCA is a significant economic driver for Toronto, indirectly impacting the local economy. It helps attract tourism, leisure spending, travel, and business to Toronto. This includes generating economic activity in aviation, hospitality, retail, services and even generating activity at Union Station. If the airport were to include more international flights, it could even encourage companies to set up their offices near the downtown core.
- The airport supports thousands of jobs both directly and indirectly. Building any of the RESA options would create more employment opportunities for Torontonians.
- Allowing jets to come into the airport would lead to more passengers coming to Toronto resulting in more tax dollars coming into Toronto.
- The future of the airport could allow for more greener technology, boosting the green economy in Toronto.
- The airport sponsors and financially supports many waterfront events and charities.
- Use the economic impact analysis of the expansion of the London City airport as an example of what BBTCA could bring in (Link [Here](#)).

There were responses that expressed concern about economic impact, including:

- Responses expressing concern that the economic value of the airport is only valuable to the wealthy investors, or wealthy commuters that use the airport for convenience.
- The future of the airport should consider all socio-economic backgrounds, instead of catering to those who enjoy the convenience of the airport.
- It is important to consider that commercial flights have declined 46% since 2020, with responses that suggested that airlines don't make a profit at BBTCA.
- Cost and overall economic viability needed more analysis before being able to support BBTCA. These responses suggested that all options for the future of the land be explored to understand the value of the land the airport sits in.
- The economic impact needs to be reviewed through a broader lens, and include the economic value of social and health impacts, as well as the impact of waterfront property values and alternative land uses.

8. Impact on water uses and public access to the inner harbour

Responses focusing on the impact of RESA on water uses and waterfront access were focused on concerns, including:

- Several respondents emphasized the importance of preserving public access to the inner harbour and the islands, particularly for recreational water activities. Concerns were raised that the implementation of a Runway End Safety Area (RESA) option—especially if it leads to runway expansion—could encroach into the harbour. This encroachment may lead to increased restrictions on boating activities, particularly for non-motorized crafts, making navigation more difficult and potentially unsafe due to limited space, increased air and marine traffic, and increased boating safety risks. This would negatively impact the enjoyment of the waterfront for both residents and visitors.
- There were concerns that increased congestion would make it harder for residents and visitors to access the waterfront, inner harbour, and the islands. Concerns also extended to impacts on marine traffic, with fears that busier airways and waterways would disrupt boating and watercraft activities, ultimately altering the unique atmosphere and culture that Torontonians currently enjoy.

9. Construction Impacts

People raised concerns about construction impacts, including:

- Some respondents are concerned that construction activities required for RESA implementation will exacerbate noise and air pollution issues. Due to these concerns, some are opposed to all RESA options as they might increase noise and air pollution. Others prefer RESA 1 because it involves a shorter construction time and less potential for runway extension. A few are open to any RESA option as long as it does not increase noise levels.
- The respondents noted that the downtown core and areas surrounding the airport are already congested, with existing infrastructure inadequate for current traffic levels. There are worries that construction will worsen traffic circulation at the foot of Bathurst Street, which could lead to more difficulties for public transit and compromise the safety of cyclists and pedestrians.
- Some comments highlighted potential negative impacts during the construction period, including construction noise, air pollution, and congestion due to blocked streets. There were also concerns about the lack of accurate information regarding construction timing and whether construction activities would occur at night, potentially exacerbating disturbances to residents.

10. Process, Timing, and Public Consultation

Several responses simply listed “timing” as a factor to be considered. When additional information was shared, those comments focused on:

- Interest in seeing the work completed as soon as possible for safety reasons and to allow for continued commercial operations at the airport.
- Suspicion about why there is such a time pressure now to deal with this issue, and concern that the City is being rushed to make a decision and PortsToronto doing an end run around stakeholders to force a lease extension.

Public consultation was identified as a factor for the City to consider when contemplating RESA options, with a focus on the importance of giving the public, including voices from people in communities that are often marginalized and Indigenous voices. People said:

- City residents should get a say on any potential lease extension. There were questions about whether the Tripartite Agreement would keep being extended without the public weighing in.
- Concern that there has been little (if any) consultation with the yacht clubs about harbour access.
- Concern that all important decisions about the future of the island airport have already been made before the public was consulted and that the desires of a private corporation are being given priority over the needs of a growing city.
- It's important to engage with and prioritize marginalized communities in urban planning decisions, including making the voices of 2SLGBTQ+ central in discussions about any developments with the potential to affect Hanlon's Point.
- Support for engaging with the Mississaugas of the Credit and how they are considering seven generations from now, of both humans and biodiversity.
- Concern that the complexity of the RESA decision has not been adequately considered. This includes interest in seeing the City have a thorough study and consultation on the implications to public health, the environment, tourism, recreation. The UP Express allows access to Pearson very quickly. The impacts of RESA on housing, parks, recreational uses, airlines, and passengers have not been adequately considered. Also consider the fact that the land has only been an airport since the 1930s, less than a century, while for thousands of years the area was natural.
- Concern that RESA opens the door for future island airport expansion. This includes concern about the potential for more and bigger planes and greater environmental impact. There was some concern that changes to the island airport through this process would make it easier to expand the airport in the future, allowing more air traffic and jets and increased air pollution, noise, etc. This would ultimately result in reduced access to public waterfront spaces, a decline in recreational activities, and the loss of natural landscapes.

11. The need for more Park Space in Toronto

- There were many references to the need for more park space and park land in Toronto, and this should be a factor that the City of Toronto considers when reviewing RESA options.

Preferred RESA options

In response to the question about factors for the City to consider when reviewing Runway End Safety Area (RESA) options, some participants identified their preferred RESA option. Others expressed concern that RESA opens the door for a future expansion of the island airport.

Here are the main themes from responses to question 1 that focused on a preferred RESA option:

- Most comments expressed support for RESA 1. Reasons included its minimal environmental impact, minimizing impact on the eagles which have nested on the islands, meeting safety requirements, being the least expensive, and being the most financially viable option. Supporters believe it avoids unnecessary expansion and minimizes impact on the cultural and recreational use of Hanlan's Point, the Toronto Islands, and the Toronto Waterfront.
- Many comments expressed opposition to RESA 3. Reasons included its incompatibility with waterfront revitalization efforts, having the largest environmental impact, and having the greatest potential for cultural and historic disruption of Hanlan's Point. Some respondents indicated concern that RESA 3 could facilitate airport expansion and possibly accommodate larger jets. Some respondents also worried that the higher costs associated with RESA 3 could force the extension of the Tripartite Agreement.
- A few comments indicated support for RESA 3. Reasons included benefits to local communities in terms of noise and emissions mitigation; and the opportunity to build a road that would support year-round access for businesses located on the island.
- A small number of comments advocated for the City to conduct a thorough independent investigation into EMAS (Engineered Materials Arresting System) as an effective alternative to the three RESA options. It was noted that EMAS is used successfully in New York, indicating the system's viability in winter northern climates.

QUESTION 2: In the coming months, the City of Toronto will be engaging with PortsToronto as it updates its plans for how the island airport will operate and function in the future. What kind of issues do you think should be considered during this discussion? What is your overall vision of Toronto's waterfront?

There were a number of different types of responses to this question. As a result, the responses to this question are summarized into three sections, including:

- Issues the City should consider;
- Perspectives on the island airport / Visions; and
- Consultation / Process advice.

Issues the City should consider

Many of these issues shared that people said should be considered when discussing the future operations and functions of the island airport were similar to the factors they suggested the City consider when reviewing the RESA options prepared by PortsToronto. The table below identifies the 12 most important issues identified by people responding to question 2 from the online survey.

Issues the City should consider	Number of times key words and phrases mentioned
1. Importance of Hanlan's Point Beach (<i>key words "Hanlan", "queer", and "no road"</i>)	1,334
2. Waterfront revitalization, identity, and possible futures (<i>key words "waterfront" and "revitalization"</i>)	1276
3. Environment, pollution, and biodiversity (<i>key words "environment," "sustainability," "pollution," and "biodiversity"</i>)	699
4. Access to Toronto Island Park (<i>key words "access", "bridge," "link," "tunnel."</i>)	675
5. Resident and infrastructure impacts (<i>key words "quality of life", "infrastructure," "congestion," "traffic," "parkland"</i>)	540
6. Convenience, connectivity, relationship to Pearson, need for the airport (<i>key words "convenience," "Pearson," "UP Express"</i>)	309
7. Noise (<i>key words "noise"</i>)	300
8. Marine access and use (<i>key words "boat" and "harbour"</i>)	157
9. Economic impacts and value (<i>key words "economy", "jobs", and "economic"</i>)	148
10. Safety (<i>key word "safety"</i>)	144
11. Cost (<i>key word "cost"</i>)	102
12. Health (<i>key word "health"</i>)	101

1. The historic and ongoing cultural importance and vulnerability of Hanlan's Point Beach and its users.

Many respondents said that protection and restoration of Hanlan's Point Beach and its 2SLGBTQ+ space was a key issue they would like to see the City consider when thinking about the future of the island airport. Many of these responses consisted of two words — “no road” — a reaction to a road proposed in PortsToronto's RESA Option #3 that respondents feared would lead to Hanlan's becoming the busiest access point to Toronto Island Park. Their concerns were that, if Hanlan's were to become the busiest access point, the increased visitor traffic could:

- “destroy a sanctuary” and imperil the safety of 2SLGBTQ+ beach users with harassment and violence (since the space's historic and ongoing sense of safety for these communities comes from the privacy afforded by its isolation)
- undermine and/or erase the special identity of Hanlan's Point Beach as a recognized, nationally significant 2SLGBTQ+ place (since people who do not identify as belonging to these communities might start visiting the space more)
- lead to further erosion and degradation of Hanlan's Point's delicate environment and natural landscape, including its beaches, shrubbery, dunes, wildlife, and more.

Among these respondents, some said the airport was an important barrier between the queer space and the rest of the city. A few were concerned that expansions to the runway and jets could lead to further environmental impacts and degradation of the space.

Another point raised frequently by these respondents was concern that the historic creation of the island airport and Leslie Street Spit contributed to the erosion of Hanlan's Point beach. Many of these respondents said they would like to see PortsToronto and the City address and correct this, with many suggesting the City demand PortsToronto pay to fix the beach.

Respondents strongly encouraged the City to push Ports Toronto to consider, be accountable to, and respect these important communities and issues in discussions about the future of the airport.

2. Waterfront revitalization, identity, and potential futures

Respondents said that the City should consider recent decades of investments, plans, and policies aimed at revitalizing Toronto's waterfront (along with concurrent investments in the Portlands). Many of these respondents said they did not think an airport was compatible with revitalization and that it did not support the people-friendly, vibrant, and green waterfront Toronto has been working so hard to create. Specific incompatible uses shared were noise impacts, traffic impacts, environmental impacts, and “chaos” on the waterfront. Others said they saw the island airport as an important part of Toronto's waterfront, saying it was a unique asset and gateway that welcomed visitors right into the waterfront.

Several respondents said that, when considering the island airport's future, the City should carefully consider what the “best use” of the land is. Is it an airport? Housing? A park? A nature preserve? A combination? They said a thorough assessment of different possible futures — including the pros, cons, and trade-offs of each — would be an important factor in the City's future conversations.

3. Environment, pollution, and biodiversity

Environmental protection, pollution, and biodiversity were common suggested issues for the City to consider.

Many respondents did not articulate a position on the future of the island airport when mentioning the environment – instead, their responses consisted of short answers that suggested the City consider “environment,” “sustainability,” “biodiversity,” “wildlife,” “minimizing environmental impacts,” “air quality,” and “pollution.”

Many others took a critical position about the environmental impacts of the island airport, saying that the City should consider the island airport harmful to the environment and advocate for its removal and replacement with parkland and restored habitat. These respondents said that an island airport of any size threatens wildlife, contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, and contributes to shoreline and beach erosion. They said they wanted to see the City put wildlife and environmental considerations ahead of profit.

Several said the City should consider the extent to which the island airport provides environmental benefits, especially if it remains its current size. They said its smaller scale produces fewer carbon emissions compared to bigger airports, that the emissions from airplanes should be compared against the emissions of the additional cars on the road if the airport closes, and that PortsToronto has invested a lot to develop a “green airport.” A few urged the City to look into emerging trends and technology in aviation, saying that newer aircraft are greener than the Q400s currently required to operate out of the airport.

4. Access to Toronto Island Park

Several respondents said access to Toronto Island Park is an important issue the City should consider. The vast majority of those commenting about access to the park were sharing strong concerns about the proposed road in PortsToronto’s RESA Option 3 and its potentially damaging impacts to Hanlan’s Point and the communities that use it (summarized separately above). Among others, perspectives shared include suggestions that the City improve access to the park, with different opinions on how to best do this, including:

- using the underground tunnel to connect residents to the park (whether the airport continues into the future or not)
- creating a fixed pedestrian and cyclist link between the mainland and the park
- improving ferry service (instead of creating a fixed link)

Several said the City should consider that, for many Toronto residents (especially those without a cottage or an easy means to leave the City), Toronto Island Park is how they getaway from the City.

5. Resident and infrastructure impacts

Several said they wanted the City to consider the impacts of the existing airport on residents, how it affects their quality of life, and its impacts on infrastructure. Common issues that emerged were:

- Road capacity, congestion, and traffic. Perspectives ranged from those who saw the island airport as having a negative impact (saying it generates a lot of car trips in an already congested Downtown) to those who saw it as having a positive impact (saying it encourages non-automobile trips and removes cars that would otherwise be going to Pearson). They said the City should consider data from congestion or traffic studies that consider things like capacity of roads and transit.
- Parkland needs. Many said that Downtown Toronto has too little parkland for a growing population, and that the City should consider this deficiency and whether the land used by the Airport could help address this deficiency. They said replacing the airport with new parkland could create a signature park that would be a benefit to residents, a tourism draw, and a positive step towards addressing climate change and biodiversity loss.

6. Convenience, connectivity, relationship to Pearson, and need for the airport

Most of the respondents who suggested the City consider convenience had a positive attitude towards the island airport. Many cited the direct access to Toronto's Downtown as a positive contribution to the city, saying it compares very favourably to trips taken via Pearson. These respondents described the airport using words like "hassle free," "accessible," "easy," and "essential". They said its convenience was beneficial to different types of travellers, including tourists (both Torontonians travelling elsewhere and tourists to Toronto), medical patients seeking quick access to Downtown's hospitals, business owners and/or employees, and more. They also said the City should consider its important role in conveniently connecting Toronto to regional and international destinations, saying it is a "hub," "gateway," or "connector."

Finally, respondents with a positive attitude towards the airport suggested the City consider the benefit the airport provides by offering an alternative to (and offloading some of the strain on) Pearson Airport. Among these respondents, a common perspective shared was that it is good for Toronto to have two airports to "share the load" and that many big cities have a second, smaller airport.

Among those who did not want to see the island airport continue, a common issue raised was that, with the Union-Pearson Express now in service, Pearson Airport is no longer inconvenient to get to from Downtown and no longer requires a car to access. They said the City should consider whether a second airport is needed in a City with a dedicated airport rail link, especially when that second airport is on prime real estate that could be leveraged for other public uses and benefits.

Finally, respondents who did not like the island airport said the City should consider whether it is viable. They referenced previous statements by Ports Toronto and airline operators that it is difficult to operate a profitable business out of the island airport. These respondents said that, if the City concludes the airport is not viable, it should not continue to support or subsidize it, especially given its impacts.

7. Noise

Several respondents listed noise as a key issue the City should consider when discussing the future of the island airport. Many of these did not take a position on the airport's future, saying only that noise was a key issue. Several respondents did take a position, with some saying that a noisy airport does not belong on Toronto's waterfront, and others saying that every effort should be made to minimize noise while keeping the airport operational (including exploring other aircraft that may be quieter than Q400s).

8. Marine access and use

The City should consider the extent to which the island airport affects the use of the inner harbour for recreational boating and whether increased airport operations would further hinder boaters' use of the harbour.

9. Economic impacts and value

Respondents who cited economic impacts and value as an important issue generally did so with the perspective that the airport provides important economic benefits to the City. They said the City should consider the amount of dollars contributed to the local economy because of the airport as well as the number of jobs (both direct and indirect) it supports. Some suggested the City consider what other city-building priorities the City could be supported if the airport were closed and the resources supporting it were spent elsewhere.

10. Safety

Several said the City should place a high priority on safety when thinking about the future of the airport, including an assessment of any risks with continuing to have an airport at the foot of a big and growing City (in addition to the over-run risks RESA is intended to address).

11. Cost

A few said the City should consider what the financial costs are of continuing to support the island airport and whether those costs are worth it.

12. Health

The City should consider the health and well-being of Toronto's citizens, including their physical health (from air pollution, considering especially air quality study findings from a U of T study on the impacts of the island airport) and mental health (from noise and vibration impacts as well as access to quiet, green spaces).

Other issues

Other issues respondents suggested the City consider included:

- **What other cities are doing.** Some have invested in their secondary airports; others have closed them down and/or turned them into public use. The City should examine the lessons and approaches taken in these situations to understand what (if anything) can help guide decision-making in Toronto.
- **The cultural significance of the Toronto Islands,** including to Indigenous communities, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and more

Positions on the island airport and visions for the future

Many respondents used the survey to share their thoughts on the island airport, with three distinct positions emerging:

- those who like the airport and want it to thrive and grow;
- those who dislike the airport and want it closed and replaced; and
- those who are willing to live with the airport as long as it stays its current size.

Those who like the airport and want it to thrive and grow

Many respondents said they like the airport, and view it as an important asset that they would like to see continue in a way that finds balance with other waterfront activities. The reasons they shared — and suggested issues they would like the City to consider when discussing its future were convenience, economic impacts and value, the benefits of regional and international connectivity, and the potential to reduce the load on Pearson (along with knock-on effects, like removing car trips from the road). Other issues these respondents suggested the City consider included:

- The airport's uniqueness. Several said that they thought having a Downtown airport so close to important city destinations and amenities is a unique and rare benefit that the City should consider carefully. They also said that they see the island airport as a key component of the waterfront, not something that detracts from it.
- The experience of watching planes come and go. Several said that they enjoy watching planes takeoff and land
- The cultural and historical significance of Billy Bishop. A few said they appreciated that the airport pays tribute to Marshall William Avery Bishop.

Those who liked and wanted to see the island airport thrive shared visions for the future with a strong airport in balance with other waterfront needs and uses. These included:

- Many suggestions to expand the airport, increase its operations, and future proof for more growth. Specific suggestions included allowing for new and enabling quieter jets, adding more destinations that are further away,
- Providing better connections between the City and the island airport, especially with improved public transit connections, better traffic management, more parking, and extended pick-up and drop-off areas

Those who don't like the airport and want it closed and replaced

Many respondents said they do not like the island airport and would like the City to take a position that it should be closed. They said that, at a minimum, the City should be using the upcoming expiry of the Tripartite Agreement as an opportunity to ask if it still wants an airport on its waterfront.

They suggested the City consider the airport's incompatibility with a growing, revitalizing waterfront and Downtown; the potential benefits of alternative uses); whether an island airport is needed at all (especially given the Union-Pearson Express); and the environmental impacts, health and safety

risks, infrastructure constraints (especially road capacity), and noise impacts of the airport. The vast majority of these respondents said they wanted to see the City consider replacing the island airport with a signature park. A few others said they would like to see the City consider replacing it in whole or in part with housing.

Among these respondents, their vision was for a waterfront without an airport, one that is safe, peaceful, ecologically healthy, and that provides an “oasis” for Torontonians.

Those who like or can live with the current island airport

There were several respondents whose position on the airport ranged from enthusiastic support to reluctant tolerance (provided it stays its current size). These respondents said that the island airport works well because it is more accessible than Pearson and serves regional destinations, saying that many of its benefits would disappear if it were to grow. They also said that, at its current size, it is in balance with other waterfront activities, but if it were to expand its negative impacts would outweigh the benefits. A few of these respondents said that they felt it was important for the island airport to continue if only to enable emergency services like air ambulances to continue.

Other visions

Other words that people used to describe their vision for Toronto’s waterfront included “liveable,” “beautiful,” “people-friendly,” and “green.”

Consultation and process advice

Respondents shared feedback about public consultation about the island airport’s future, including:

- Frustration at the short notice given about the public meeting and this online survey.
- Encouragement to engage the public in a much more rigorous, transparent, inclusive process about this important discussion.
- Strong advice to have future discussions informed by reliable, accurate, transparent data so people can come to an informed opinion about different options (including clarity on benefits, risks, and trade-offs)
- Advice to include 2SLGBTQ+ specialists in any future engagement.
- Advice to include the Mississauga of the Credit First Nation and other Indigenous communities in any future engagement

Several respondents said the City should carefully consider who benefits from the island airport’s continued operation and/or closure. Among these respondents, several said the City should make sure the waterfront is available for all.” Some said that the City should not accommodate the minority of businesses and travellers who use the Airport to the detriment of waterfront and the City as a whole; others said the City should not accommodate the minority of waterfront residents to the detriment of the millions of passengers that use the airport every year.



Next steps

City of Toronto staff have submitted a report on Runway End Safety Areas to the City's Executive Committee who met and considered the report on October 1, 2024. City Council will consider the report, along with the recommendations from Executive Committee on October 9-11, 2024.