

July 22, 2024

Toronto City Council
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: IE15.2 - Toronto Island Park Master Plan – Section 4.6 Airport Lands

Dear Member of Council,

I write to you today not just as the President & CEO of PortsToronto, but on behalf of the more than 2,000 workers of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, and the millions of Torontonians and Canadians who choose this airport for their air travel needs. Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport has operated on Toronto's waterfront for 85 years and is a valuable asset providing a transportation gateway for residents and visitors alike, enabling trade and tourism, driving economic activity, and facilitating healthcare.

On July 3, 2024, I spoke to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee on the topic of the Toronto Island Master Plan. To be clear, PortsToronto fully supports the goals outlined in the plan and are committed partners, ready and willing to contribute to its implementation. However, contained deep within report, another topic of critical importance to our city's infrastructure and economy was raised – specifically, the long-term future of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport and the Tripartite Agreement.

In Section 4.6 (Page 133), found in Attachment 1, Part 2, entitled “Airport Lands,” the Toronto Island Master Plan puts forward the disconcerting speculation “if the airport were to cease operating.”

Upon reading this section, I felt compelled to address the Committee, and make known to City Council, that the text in this section, and the concept of the airport ceasing operations, should not have been part of, nor remain, in the Toronto Island Master Plan. More importantly, the negative consequences associated with this section and the statements that the airport could cease operations should be fully understood and challenged given the serious transportation and economic development risks that such a cessation would have on the City of Toronto. The purpose of my deputation, was to make clear that the future of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport should be a priority for all city builders, particularly members of Toronto City Council.

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This section of the Toronto Island Master Plan is indicative of a more significant concern related to the City of Toronto's position on the long-term future of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. Both PortsToronto and Transport Canada have been definitive with the City about the shared commitment to the future of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. Most recently this assertion has been communicated relative to the need for an updated Tripartite Agreement; the required timelines for such initiatives as RESA (Runway End Safety Areas), which Transport Canada has stated must be operational by July 12, 2027; and, the necessity for a transparent public consultation process for both.

The purpose of this letter is to encourage Toronto City Council to remove the aforementioned section of the Toronto Island Master Plan that speculates about the airport's existence once the Tripartite Agreement expires in 2033, and to direct staff to actively and collaboratively engage in initiatives that will inform the future of the airport and ensure its ongoing contribution to the City of Toronto and surrounding region.

In closing, it is important to note that as part of Toronto's vibrant mixed-use waterfront, PortsToronto and our airport partners take very seriously the responsibility to innovate, improve, and invest to mitigate the impacts associated with airport operations.

In the past 10 years, much has been done to make the airport more efficient and better integrated into the community. This includes investments in a sustainable multi-modal ground transportation network and the pedestrian tunnel. Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport has made significant strides in becoming cleaner, greener, and quieter. For example, the airport introduced a Ground Run-Up Enclosure, which has all but eliminated noise impacts from engine run-ups, and converted its ferry to 100% electric power which has eliminated noise and air quality impacts.

Economically, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport is a powerhouse, generating significant economic activity and employment opportunities, contributing hundreds of millions of dollars annually to the local economy, and supporting thousands of jobs. This is further reinforced by the federal government's recent investment of \$30 million in U.S. Customs Preclearance at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, highlighting the airport's strategic importance and enhancing its service capabilities. Preclearance will be operational before the FIFA World Cup and will drive even greater economic and tourism impacts and convenience.

Given the transportation importance and the community use of this beloved airport, it is no surprise that public sentiment for the airport and its future is incredibly strong. In a recent Viewpoints survey, only 8% of Torontonians expressed an unfavorable opinion of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. 78% believe it makes sense to have a downtown airport. Furthermore, 83% strongly agree or agree that the airport should continue beyond the current Tripartite Agreement.

Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport is a key transportation hub, critical for Toronto's residents, businesses, tourists, healthcare, and the economy. The overwhelming public support, significant recent federal investments, and critical safety mandates underscore the importance of this airport and the need to enable the work, processes, and investments required for its future.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you wish to discuss this item in greater detail, I would welcome the opportunity.

Sincerely,



RJ Steenstra
President & CEO

CC:
Paul Johnston, City Manager
Serge Bijimine, Assistant Deputy Minister, Transport Canada