

October 7, 2024



Via E-mail

Office of the Mayor
City Hall, 2nd Floor
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport

Dear Toronto City Council,

On behalf of the team, volunteers and clients of Hope Air, I am writing to express my support of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport and confirm its role as a critical link in the healthcare journey of many Ontarians facing chronic illness. Hope Air is a national charity founded in 1986 and headquartered in Toronto, with a mission to provide free, non-emergent medical flights and other travel support, for patients in financial need who must travel long distance to reach important medical care. These individuals live in rural, remote and underserved communities across our province and country. Since our founding, Hope Air has supported over 200,000 travel arrangements and in 2024 we are projected to break an all-time record of 40,000 travel arrangements, supporting individuals, children and families over 550 communities.

In 2024 Hope Air will support 3,500 travel arrangements in Ontario, helping patients and their escorts, most of whom are flying to Toronto into Billy Bishop Airport, to reach our world-class hospitals downtown. Well over 50% of our patients are vulnerable people, either children or seniors who are travelling for a wide variety of health conditions, including surgeries, cancer, diabetes, cardiac issues, and other serious health matters. Approximately 10% of our Ontario patients identify as Indigenous and living off-reserve in communities such as Sault Ste Marie.

Hope Air provides its free air flight program using both volunteer pilots and commercial aircraft and in partnership with commercial airlines such as Porter Airlines in Ontario, providing service to dozens of communities across this province, such as Timmins, Sudbury, Bay, Windsor, Hearst, Kapuskasing, Thunder Bay, among many others, all of which land at Billy Bishop Airport to deliver patients to medical care. Our volunteer planes and pilots who fly to more rural and remote communities in Ontario, or support patients who are immune compromised. Our volunteer pilots require access to Billy Bishop Airport to fulfil their missions and deliver thousands of patients to care. Further, Porter Airlines provides free flights out of Billy Bishop Airport to get our patients to and from Toronto to receive medical care.

To assist our Toronto hospitals with capacity issues, we also provide flights back home to patients who are discharged from our hospitals, after coming to Toronto using another method, for example, having travelled with Ornge emergency helicopter or similar method, but once discharged do not have the means to get home, far from Toronto.

Our charity, and more importantly, the thousands of patients who rely upon Hope Air to connect them to critical healthcare, unavailable where they live, rely upon Billy Bishop Airport. In many cases, only Billy Bishop Airport is available to support our flight routes. In almost all cases, the

proximity of Billy Bishop Airport to downtown Toronto hospitals provides a significant advantage to patients, reducing the duration and stress for very ill people. A short 15 min Uber ride to hospital.

Billy Bishop Airport is an essential part of our healthcare system, working with Hope Air and others to deliver equitable access to healthcare for all. We would urge Toronto City Council to ensure that Billy Bishop Airport is fully supported to ensure that its long-term viability and future is not in doubt. People lives depend upon it.

Regards,

Mark Rubinstein

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