

Clean Indoor Air Toronto

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Planning and Housing Committee
Toronto City Hall
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To the Planning and Housing Committee:

RE: PH32.7 - Billy Bishop Airport Proposed Expansion: Response to Council Request for Information on Housing and Transportation Impacts

We are [Clean Indoor Air Toronto \(CIATO\)](#), a group of concerned residents who are dedicated to improving indoor air quality in our built environments. Many members of our group are parents/caregivers of children attending TDSB schools; other members have or care for other people with chronic health conditions that make them highly vulnerable to air pollution and infectious diseases.

We have reviewed the report from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, *Billy Bishop Airport Proposed Expansion: Response to Council Request for Information on Housing and Transportation Impacts* (May 28, 2026, Item 2026.PH31.5), and offer the following comments.

Regarding impacts of the airport expansion on housing, on pages 21-22 the report states:

"To provide for additional compatibility for proposed airport expansion, a range of mitigation and disclosure measures, including enhanced building envelope performance, reliance on mechanical ventilation, non-operable windows, restrictions on balconies and outdoor space, and notification requirements for prospective residents may be required for future development in south Etobicoke, downtown Toronto, the eastern waterfront, and the Port Lands. Measures such as these illustrate that aviation-related effects on housing extend beyond heights and influence overall building design which can impact market perception, livability and ultimately the feasibility and viability of residential development."

With non-operable windows, residents would be entirely dependent on mechanical ventilation for fresh air supply. However, the current ventilation standard, [ASHRAE Standard 62.1](#), is not designed to adequately protect residents from airborne hazards, including PM2.5 fine particulates, ultrafine particles (UFPs), or airborne pathogens. Unless additional steps are taken, including installing an IAQ monitoring system and establishing an IAQ policy that ensures that the indoor air is clean and safe to breathe, residents will suffer the known adverse effects of air pollutants from the Billy Bishop Airport, in addition to increased risk of airborne disease spread and extreme weather events.

With a dependence on mechanical ventilation to maintain air quality in buildings and non-operable windows, Toronto residents will be left particularly vulnerable during power outages, which occur disproportionately during extreme weather events and on poor air quality days, when mechanical ventilation is needed the most. More importantly, non-operable windows and restrictions on balcony and outdoor space caused by pollution from the airport would greatly decrease liveability, especially of the waterfront and adjacent areas (e.g., South Etobicoke, Parkdale-High Park, Beaches, Scarborough SW), as well as negatively impact quality of life for anyone who lives or works in these areas.

Regarding the expected impacts of airport expansion on surrounding waterways and storm runoff into the harbour, on page 29 the report states:

“Changes to the lake bathymetry (i.e., underwater depth in the lake) from lakefill at the west end extension are likely to result in greater than 50 percent reduction in average inflow into the harbour, doubling the average Inner Harbour residence time (i.e., age of water in a lake before moving along the hydrologic cycle). Residence time is important as it helps determine the vulnerability of water sources to pollution/contamination. The expected increase in residence time has a high potential of causing water quality problems through reduced dilution and flushing of pollutant laden water from the Don River, storm sewer (including combined storm sewer) outfalls. This could reduce the system’s ability to flush completely between storm runoff events, although detailed modelling would be needed to fully quantify changes as they could impact water quality.”

The City Planning report states that narrowing of the western gap between the Toronto Islands and the lake shore would significantly negatively affect water quality in the Inner Harbour because it would decrease the rate at which water circulates through the harbour from the lake; according to the analysis, it would cut water circulation by more than 50%. There are several sewer lines that empty directly into the Inner Harbour. Loss of water circulation would not only affect water quality and the health of the ecosystem in the Inner Harbour, but this would then in turn negatively affect air quality, especially during hot weather and heavy rains, which are intensifying and occurring much more frequently. The predicted impact on water circulation around the airport would result in odours of sewage and decay and pose needless health risks to humans and animals.

Pollution build-up in the Inner Harbour would also make the water unsafe for human contact. Toronto and surrounding communities will be forced to deploy resources to manage the increased risks of pathogen and zoonotic disease exposure, including from organic material originating from wildlife, sewer drainage, and river water. A 2024 study of Toronto’s emergency department data found a [significant seasonal association between extreme precipitation and visits for acute gastrointestinal illness](#). City staff note that the airport expansion changes “could reduce the system’s ability to flush completely between storm runoff events,” and contamination events of the kind already associated with illness in this city would persist even longer. Decreasing water flow in the harbour may also increase the number of pockets in and around the Islands and other margins of the harbour that have very little water circulation, and may increase the prevalence of mosquitoes and other disease vectors.

This is also an air quality concern. Research by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego has confirmed that [sewage-polluted coastal water transfers into the atmosphere](#) through sea spray aerosol, carrying bacteria and chemical compounds from the water into the air, where they can travel inland and expose people who never enter the water. These aerosols can contain bacteria, viruses, and chemical

compounds. Blasts from jet engines may similarly generate additional aerosols over the lake and harbour. Toronto's Inner Harbour receives discharge from nine combined sewer overflows, is subject to constant ferry and vessel traffic, and borders one of the most densely populated shorelines in the country.

Considerable investment has been made in the revitalization of Toronto's waterfront to create a vibrant community that balances residents' needs, a strong local economy (including a [robust tourism industry](#)), and a healthy environment. The proposed expansion of the Billy Bishop Airport, along with potential development of the Toronto Islands and Little Norway Park, would not only negate these efforts, but given the scope of available plans, could very well set the waterfront back decades.

Much emphasis has been placed by proponents on the economic benefits that would supposedly flow from the airport expansion and development of surrounding parklands. Regardless, even the most optimistic financial projections do not account for the negative impacts on the liveability, well-being, and quality of life in housing communities along the Central Waterfront, the Toronto Islands, South Etobicoke, the Port Lands, and the city as a whole. Such impacts will diminish the appeal of the waterfront to visitors and tourists, resulting in far less economic gain than has been projected. More importantly, the overall degradation of the environment [may cause residents to leave the area](#), which would in turn affect the local economy, and may precipitate a hollowing out of the waterfront communities.

Extensive assessments already conducted when this airport expansion question was raised in the past, including a [2013 health impact assessment](#) by Toronto Public Health and a [2017 Environmental Assessment](#) by Toronto Port Authority, have shown that any expansion of the Billy Bishop Airport would cause significant increases in air, noise, light, and water pollution. These negative impacts will more than outweigh even the hugely optimistic economic gains put forth by proponents. With the health and well-being of all Toronto residents in mind — and voicing skepticism regarding financial viability of any airport expansion — we urge the Planning and Housing Committee to do everything in its power to resist efforts to expand the Billy Bishop Airport.

Yours sincerely,

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