

Advocating for sustainable public
and freight transportation



TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

Box 6418, Station A
Toronto, Ontario
M5W 1X3

PHONE
416 504 3934

TOLL-FREE
866 542 1067

EMAIL
ontario@transport-action.ca

WEB
transport-action.ca/ontario

Position Statement - Toronto Island Airport and Jets

Porter Airlines has recently decided to purchase Bombardier CS100 jets to fly out of Billy Bishop City Centre Airport (Toronto Island Airport). To allow these aircraft to fly from the airport, changes will have to be made to the Tripartite Agreement, between the Transport Canada, the City of Toronto and the Toronto Port Authority. Presently this agreement does not permit the use of jet aircraft at the airport with a few exceptions.

Transport Action Ontario opposes changing the Tripartite Agreement for the following reasons:

- 1) These CS100 aircraft are larger and heavier than the current Bombardier Q400's, and will have the following local impacts on the airport and surrounding neighbourhoods:
 - Increased pollution. At present, emission figures of the jets are not publicly available, but it is a given that these jet engines will rain increased pollution on the surrounding neighbourhood and increase the over-all CO₂ level that has already reached a crisis point worldwide.
 - These jets, being both larger and heavier, must have different flight paths in and out of the airport. These routes must be longer and shallower than the existing routes taken by the prop aircraft. Even if the aircraft produce the same amount of noise as the existing aircraft (Q400) the noise profile will be different due to their new flight paths and will reduce the quality of life of local residents, tourists and visitors to the waterfront.

- 2) The impact of noise will reduce property values near the flight paths. Presently, there is a condo boom along the downtown waterfront. This has many benefits to the city. Much of the development is green and the people who live in the new towers have great access to public transit, work, shopping, entertainment and other amenities. Many are not car owners, or do a minimal amount of driving. Because of this lifestyle choice, these people have a far lower environmental footprint than a typical person living in Toronto's inner suburbs. It would be unfortunate to create uncertainty about property values and future development in this vibrant part of the city.

- 3) The runways for these new aircraft will require extension that would be a great hindrance to many. The expanded runway will:
 - Be a hazard to ship navigation. At both ends of the expanded runway there will have to be an exclusion zone for both pleasure and commercial boats. These exclusion zones, if poorly designed, would make the Western Gap unsuitable for lake shipping.
 - When and if Ontario Place is renovated, the expanded airport will seriously degrade the value of the park.

- 4) Porter will not be the only airline flying from the airport. Other airlines will request the right to fly their jets into the facility. When will we see Embraer, Kawasaki, Mitsubishi and Sukhoi etc. aircraft using the island airport?
- 5) With the expansion of the airport, and the increasing utilization of jets, the airside and land side of the airport will need expanding. With expansion comes a whole new set of problems and risks.
- The fuel demands for the airport will climb. Along with increased demand there will be a higher risk of fuel spills and the aroma of jet fuel will be an issue for local residents and visitors.
 - Pressure may again be applied to build a bridge or provide better access to the airport. A bridge would prevent ships and larger sailboats from using the Western Gap. Emergency access will be a major issue.
- 6) Billy Bishop is Porter's hub airport. Most of Porter's regular aircraft maintenance would be done at this site. Much of this maintenance will be on engines, which means engine testing. Engine tests, by their nature, are conducted outdoors, and are usually done when the aircraft is out of service, which means that much engine maintenance and testing will be done on the weekends, and much of the powered up testing will be done on Sunday mornings. This will disturb the local residents enormously.

There are two viable alternatives to meet the transportation needs that allegedly require an Island Airport expansion.

Use of the Union Pearson Express to access long-distance routes

Porter would like to serve a group of new long-distance destinations: from Vancouver to Los Angeles in the west, to St. John's Newfoundland in the east and to Miami and the Caribbean in the south. Most of these locations are currently served out of Pearson by two or more airlines. With the introduction of rail service to Pearson the need for additional service from the Island Airport is redundant, and if Porter wants to service these locations it should move to Toronto's main airline hub at Pearson.

Use of Higher Speed Rail to serve cities within about 800 km

The expansion of the Island Airport overlooks one of jewels in Canada's transportation crown - Toronto's Union Station. Simple, relatively inexpensive investments in VIA Rail Canada, a sustainable alternative to subsidies to private airlines, trucking firms and private automobile owners, could bring VIA's services up to a much higher standard and reduce demand for both highway and airport expansion. Expanding our public rail infrastructure would go a long way in reducing our ecological footprint, our greenhouse gas production, health care costs and traffic congestion. Raising VIA corridor service to one higher speed train every two hours each way would increase the ridership on this environmentally sustainable mode. Experience in Europe and the USA has shown that moving to frequent higher speed rail between major corridor centers less than 800 km apart captures about 75% of all aircraft traffic, and has a positive impact on business.

Transport Action Ontario argues that taking expansion of Billy Bishop Airport off the table and expanding our transportation infrastructure to reflect twenty-first century realities, as many other countries have done, is the way to proceed. Higher speed rail is the most reasonable solution to servicing a significant portion of passenger travel needs.