

Comments on the Potential Adverse Effects of Allowing the Use of Jets at Billy Bishop Toronto Airport on the Paddlers of the GTA

Wai Nui Outrigger Canoe Club



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To: Chris Dunn, Project Manager, City of Toronto

wps@toronto.ca cdunn@toronto.ca

I am writing in my capacity as Commodore of Wai Nui Outrigger Canoe Club, to voice our opposition to the expansion to jet traffic at the Billy Bishop Airport. We ask that Toronto move to protect and support a local culture that encourages physical activity, protects recreation and sport capacity, and maintains access and a physical connection to our waterways.

Paddling builds healthy communities and strengthens volunteerism: it promotes a healthy life-long active lifestyle; enhances physical and mental health; promotes care of and appreciation for an environment blessed by nature; it celebrates Canadian canoe and paddle heritage.

We operate as a non-profit with approximately 80 adult programs members, plus over 200 children annually exposed to our sport with day-camps, seniors programming, and our PaddleAll program for people with disabilities, plus host hundreds of people for race days and activities.

What do we think is at risk?

ACTIVE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES Paddle sports promote an active, healthy lifestyle, a love of sport and an appreciation for our waterways, all of which would be adversely impacted with an expansion to accommodate jet traffic. Our club members work hard to provide safe and affordable recreational and sport access to Lake Ontario, and in doing so encourage a healthy population within both the local population and for the tourists attracted to our waters. Our club does not have a facility in the vicinity of the runway or exclusion zone expansion (with our prime bases in Oakville and Mississauga), however we do make good and frequent use of those waterways for regattas and in recreational events for canoes, kayaks and stand-up-paddling. Our sport attracts both a high-performance athlete base as well as a more diverse population, with no requirement for prior experience or fitness level necessary, and so is suitable to all ages and stages of life, inclusive of seniors, the disabled and those whose culture may not have traditionally embraced paddle sport. Indeed, canoeing is the only sport named after a country in the Olympics, with the boats being classed as C boats - Canada boats.

The proposed expansion would be discouraging to paddlers who access the waters around the Western Gap. It will hamper enjoyment of a safe recreational sport and thereby limit access to the wonders of living on Lake Ontario.

CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS Our sport brings people into close contact with the urban waterways, and gives an appreciation for how good urban design shapes the lives of the people along the waterfront. We paddle in urban centres across the eastern seaboard, and around the world. In the past decade we have witnessed major urban waterfronts that have been revitalized through the development of this kind of water sport access (most especially New York City and Boston), and it would be a shame for Toronto to take a step backwards in this regard. Toronto has an extraordinary and beautiful waterfront, one that brings glowing comments from our paddling community around the world who visit to compete and holiday here.

Toronto and the GTA have been working for years to bring back access to the water its citizens once enjoyed. One of Waterfront Toronto's primary objectives, set out in its Corporate and Social Sustainability Report, 2012, p. 2.10, is "To create a waterfront that is inviting and accessible for living, working and playing for all age groups, families and economic levels of the public."

I believe the accessibility now enjoyed will be threatened by jet expansion - and will decrease the opportunities to bring more people into closer contact with our fine urban wilderness; incidentally, thereby decreasing their awareness of the habitat and the native wildlife.

PROMOTION OF A SAFE URBAN ENVIRONMENT In addition to promoting an active, healthy lifestyle, paddling contributes to building a safe urban environment. This activity brings active residents down to the waterfront area, both in daytime and extended hours – with paddling typically running from 6 am to late evening. The nature of the sport is such that the paddling season (nominally May through October) can be extended to any include any fine days' in-between – probably the longest season for any outdoor sport in Canada. The impact of the expansion in noise, jet blow-back, intimidating presence, and physical limitations to the area would discourage the activities of healthy active people in the waterfront area.

IN SHORT Paddling builds healthy communities and strengthens volunteerism: it promotes a healthy life-long active lifestyle; enhances physical and mental health; promotes care of and appreciation for an environment blessed by nature; promotes a safe urban environment; and celebrates our Canadian and canoeing heritage.

As all of this is at risk with the proposal for expansion to jet traffic, on behalf of our 77 club members, opportunities for the future for our 200 children annually in day camps, the paddling public, I urge opposition.

Wendy Perkins

Wai Nui Outrigger Canoe Club

905 825-3182

WHAT'S AT RISK? IN PICTURES

Our heritage: Waterfront canoeing, 1909



Waterfront Access Today

Paddling currently: myself and partner, racing around the airport buoy, participating with more than 300 others in a regatta



*The future: my 4 year old granddaughter paddling now,
The opportunity to access a healthy paddling future for all our children.*

