

A Guide to Completing the Public Consultation Survey on the Proposed Toronto Island Airport Expansion

On June 8, the federal government released a [public consultation survey](#) seeking input on the proposed expansion of the Toronto Island Airport to accommodate commercial jets.

However, a closer look at the survey reveals a significant problem: many of the questions are far from neutral.

Rather than asking whether people want commercial jets — or any expansion at all — at the Island Airport, much of the survey treats both as a foregone conclusion. The focus shifts instead to mitigation: noise management, traffic impacts and other measures designed to make an expansion more palatable — rather than to question whether it should happen in the first place.

This guide was created to help you navigate that framing. We've suggested responses for each question to give you a solid starting point, but we encourage you to make them your own — paraphrase freely and add any personal experiences or views that feel relevant.

Your voice matters. This guide is here to make sure it's heard.

How to access the Transport Canada Public Consultation Survey:

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/corporate-services/consultations/public-consultation-future-billy-bishop-toronto-city-airport>

Note: The first four questions in the survey are meant to determine where you live and the frequency of use of the Toronto Island Airport.

Below are each of the remaining survey questions with information to aid in responding provided by EDC staff. More background information can be found at NoJetsTO.com.

Question 5:

Would you support changes to Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport?

This could include optimizing airport infrastructure (including changes to runways), allowing for different aircraft types, generating economic development and job creation, improving connectivity, increasing passenger flow, etc. Please refer to the [Public](#)

[Consultation on the Future of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport profile page](#) for more information.

Yes:

No: Select No

Unsure:

Suggested response from EDC:

First of all, this question uses the phrase “optimizing airport infrastructure” to lead the person taking the survey to think that the Island Airport is not optimal now and needs to be changed or improved in some way. Jet airport expansion would not “optimize” impacts on city residents, businesses or the environment.

The question also uses the phrase “changes to runways” instead of the more accurate “major expansion of runways, terminals and other infrastructure.”

Finally, this question assumes that a jet airport would generate more benefits than costs, and would improve connectivity, etc., when there is no information provided to suggest this is true. In fact, there is ample evidence that the opposite is more likely.

The Toronto Island Airport is fine as it is. Making it a lot bigger and allowing jets will have massive impacts on Toronto’s waterfront. These include increased noise, air and water pollution, and vehicle traffic. In addition, affordable housing planned and approved for the Port Lands area will need to be reduced because of conflict with the approach angle for jets (which is different from the existing turbo-prop planes). Other negative impacts would include diminished quality of life for residents and visitors, compromised recreational boating, reduced property values, less public park land, and increased wildlife mortality.

Question 6:

What are your top three considerations for the future of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport?

- a) Airport passenger experience (such as increased destination options, airport accessibility, etc.)
- b) Economic or social considerations (such as job creation, economic development, tourism, etc.)
- c) Environment (such as protection of existing ecosystems, species at risk, climate change, air quality, etc.)
- d) Ground transportation (such as vehicular traffic, public transit, ferry, active transportation, travel time, etc.)
- e) Land use planning (such as housing and commercial development, public spaces, etc.)
- f) Noise (such as increased noise, need for noise mitigation, etc.)

- g) Other (please specify)
- h) No specific considerations or priorities

EDC suggests selecting: c, d and e. When this is done, the survey will automatically prompt questions 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 below. We have also provided some thoughts if you decide to choose to comment on items a, b or f above.

Question 7:

What environmental factors should be considered in future airport planning?

Suggested responses from EDC:

Air Pollution:

The Toronto Island Airport is already to blame for [10 to 15 per cent of air pollution](#) in nearby neighbourhoods. These pollutants include nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide and [ultrafine particles](#), which are linked to respiratory and cardiovascular illness, and in some cases, pregnancy-related complications and cancer. Expanding the airport to accommodate jets would mean more flights, more ground traffic and more overall air pollution resulting in more health harm.

About 450,000 people live within five kilometres of the Island Airport, with the closest homes just 200 metres away. A [recent European study](#) found that people living within five kilometres of airports faced diabetes and dementia risks roughly 20 per cent higher, and high blood pressure risks roughly seven per cent higher than those living farther away. In Toronto, that means people from Roncesvalles to the Annex to South Riverdale would all be impacted. A recent [City of Toronto Planning report](#) indicates that people living in condos and apartments along the waterfront may have to keep their windows closed and avoid using their balconies if the airport expansion goes ahead.

Water Pollution:

Water quality in Lake Ontario is also at risk. Toronto Public Health has raised concerns that airport operations and expansion could lead to [de-icing chemicals entering the lake and potential fuel spills](#). Additionally, extending the runway to accommodate jets [would reduce the flow of water into and out of the inner harbour](#), degrading water quality and potentially turning the harbour into a stagnant mess.

Wildlife Impacts:

Jet engines can suck in birds and cause the engines to fail. For this reason, birds must be kept away by culling or other methods.

The City of Toronto has just completed the multi-billion dollar creation of a large new wetland park at the point where the Don River enters Toronto Harbour. [Biidaasige Park](#) features ponds, multiple river bends and freshly created wetlands. It is now attracting large numbers of waterfowl. It is directly in the approach flight path for jets to an expanded Island Airport.

In addition, [Tommy Thompson Nature Reserve Park](#) is just to the east and in the approach corridor, and is well known as a nesting colony for many large bird species.

Construction of the large expanded runways would destroy habitat for fish and other aquatic species. It would also reduce water-flushing rates in Toronto Harbour and therefore increase summer water temperatures, lower oxygen levels and result in more algal growth.

As well, any large-scale tree-cutting required on Toronto Island would negatively impact migratory bird habitat.

Park Impacts:

In addition to the wildlife-linked impacts at the parks listed above, the Ontario government has recently [passed legislation](#) to allow it to seize any or all of the parkland on the Toronto Islands to allow the airport to expand.

This means the Ontario government would likely seize the parkland closest to the airport to make way for the expansion.. These lands include the Hanlan's Point ferry terminal, the Hanlan's Point beach, tennis courts, and large areas used for major recreational activities and events for the people of Toronto. [Hanlan's Point beach](#) is large, popular and clean to swim in, and is backed by fragile dune ecosystems.

[Little Norway Park](#) is located at the base of Bathurst Street and would likely be developed to expand access to the larger Island airport.

Noise Pollution:

Noise is another major concern. The World Health Organization identifies [airport noise as a significant health hazard](#). Airport noise [already exceeds some health guidelines](#) in parts of the community near the Toronto Island Airport, and residents in nearby condominium towers are especially affected.

There are also links between [aircraft noise and cardiovascular disease](#), and [research on children](#) has documented hyperactivity and inattention disorders, as well as reading comprehension and memory deficits related to aircraft noise.

Suggested responses if you choose to select a reply to questions 6(a) or 6(b) above:

Airport Passenger Experience:

(e.g., increased destination options, airport accessibility, etc.)

Increased accessibility for Toronto residents to an expanded Island Airport is not a given. Gridlock and lack of rapid transit service to the Island may make it less accessible than Pearson, which is well served by transit and highways. The Island Airport is also more prone to weather-related issues than Pearson, which then leads to flight delays and cancellations.

Economic or Social Considerations

(e.g., job creation, economic development, tourism, etc.)

The City of Toronto, and the Ontario and federal governments have spent billions restoring the Toronto waterfront. As a result, businesses, housing, tourism and recreation have returned. Now, that's all threatened by the creation of a large jet airport in the same space.

There is no evidence presented to date to suggest that the number or quality of jobs or positive economic activity that would be created by a Toronto Island Airport expansion would offset those that would be lost in tourism, homebuilding, restaurant use, etc. Nor is there any indication that the jobs or economic benefits associated with airport expansion would not be greater if they took place at Pearson Airport or other regional airports, such as Hamilton or Waterloo.

Finally there is no evidence presented that this proposal is viable economically or that it will not require massive financial support from the public that could be better spent elsewhere. It is also interesting to note that the [ALTO high-speed rail project](#) (in which Air Canada is a principal partner) will offset significant Toronto to Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec air travel. The impact of such a change in traveller mode choice may have a significant impact on the viability of an expanded airport.

Question 8:

What mitigations would help address environmental impacts related to airport growth?

Suggested response from EDC:

Many or most of the impacts of an expanded airport could not be mitigated. In addition, the negative impacts would be borne by the public and the environment, while any future increase in profits would benefit the private owners of the airport terminal.

The accepted and robust approach to addressing environmental impacts is to follow what is known in scientific literature as the "[conservation hierarchy](#)." This approach starts with avoiding the environmental impacts of a project, then moves to minimizing or mitigating, then restoring, and finally offsetting, in order of preference. Skipping the avoidance stage and moving directly to

minimization/mitigation suggests the federal government has already decided to proceed with its proposal.

Question 9:

In future airport planning, what factors should be considered in relation to ground transportation and congestion?

Suggested response from EDC:

Unlike Toronto's Pearson Airport, which sprawls across nearly 2,000 hectares with multiple transit and highway connections, the Island Airport occupies just 85 hectares on the Toronto Islands. There is no ring road or multi-level interchange. Instead, there is only Bathurst Street funneling into the foot of the waterfront.

Even at current passenger levels congestion is a problem. Add the millions more travellers that the expansion is intended to serve, and gridlock becomes a foregone conclusion. It is highly likely that traffic would spill over into surrounding neighbourhoods, clog the Bathurst and Queens Quay intersection, and strain an already busy stretch of the downtown waterfront.

Every additional passenger means more vehicle trips: the taxi that drops them off, the rideshare that picks them up, the employee shuttle that brings airport workers to their shifts, the delivery trucks that bring food and supplies to the terminal.

When passenger volume is projected to jump from 2 million to 10 million per year, those trips will not just increase — they will multiply five-fold. Peak travel times, like Friday evenings or Monday mornings, would see especially intense surges. And unlike Pearson Airport, where passengers can choose to avoid the traffic altogether by taking the UP Express, passengers headed to and from the Island Airport all funnel through a single choke point.

Pearson Airport has room to expand and has announced plans to do so. It is also well positioned for connection with regional GO trains, and sits at a site well serviced by highways 401 and 427. It can also now be accessed from downtown Toronto by the UP Express — which was recently enhanced to run every 15 minutes, with a new connection to the newly opened Eglinton Crosstown LRT line.

Question 10:

What improvements to infrastructure, transportation, transit, or active-transportation access would you consider important to allow for better access to and from the airport?

Suggested response from EDC:

This element is where financial and logistics impacts would be extreme and complicated. Allowing jets to operate at Billy Bishop isn't just about lengthening the runway. It would require a [cascade of infrastructure upgrades](#): extended taxiways, expanded terminal facilities, new ground transportation areas, upgraded fuel and servicing infrastructure, and potentially even relocated hangars and service roads.

All of that construction means years — potentially decades — of additional truck traffic, lane closures, highway construction and disruption. And once it's built, all those new facilities would generate their own ongoing vehicle demands — more fuel deliveries, more maintenance vehicles, more employee parking lots.

For residents of Liberty Village, the Waterfront Communities, or the Entertainment District, this isn't an abstract policy debate. It's about whether you'll be able to get to work on time, whether your neighbourhood streets will become clogged with airport-bound traffic, and whether the peaceful waterfront you fell in love with will start to feel more like a highway off-ramp.

Question 11:

What land-use planning factors (such as housing or commercial development, public spaces, etc.) should be considered?

Suggested response from EDC:

For cyclists and pedestrians using the Martin Goodman Trail or enjoying the revitalized waterfront parks, it means sharing space with significantly more vehicles. For transit riders on the 509 and 511 streetcar lines, it could mean longer delays as taxis, cars and shuttles compete for road space.

Toronto, with the provincial and federal governments, has spent decades and billions of dollars transforming its waterfront into a world-class public space. Expanding the Toronto Island Airport to handle five times as many passengers threatens to turn one of the city's most successful urban renewal projects into a traffic-choked nightmare.

Question 12:

Do you have any other comments to add?

Suggested response from EDC:

The expansion of Toronto Island Airport to accommodate jets and to increase use from 2 million to 10 million passengers per year would be destructive to multiple values and compromise the balance of uses that have been restored to the Toronto waterfront at great public expense. The federal government should instruct its agent, the Toronto Port Authority, to not proceed with the development of an expansion proposal.