

Assessment of rationale for GA airport on Pickering lands

1 What does Transport Canada's own commissioned Report say?

In 2007 Transport Canada selected the GTAA to undertake a Needs Assessment Study of an airport on the Pickering lands. Completed in 2010 the study concluded that within the 2032 Planning horizon, even if Oshawa, City Center, and Buttonville were to close "*other CJ/GA airports have the demand capacity to absorb Buttonville's traffic without building a CJ/GC airport at Pickering,*" And if as turned out to be the case, only one of those airports – Buttonville - was closed, the Study stated the displaced activity would be absorbed "*fairly readily*".

Assuming Buttonville closure, the GTAA study forecast 2032 capacity at other airfields at some 1,848,000 movements - more than double their estimates of demand, (818,302). So even if in some instances it turns out that practical capacity has been overestimated, since GTAA capacity estimates, are much higher than any 2032 demand, it's hard to see that invalidating the GTAA Report's central conclusions.

2 Does another Report come to a different conclusion? If so why?

In 2011 the Canadian Owners and Pilot's Association, (COPA), commissioned a study by Malone Given Parsons Ltd. which disagreed with this conclusion. Their estimate of GA demand in 2032, (829, 460 movements) assumes 42% growth over the period 2010-2032, and is very similar to the GTAA 2032 projection, (818,302).

However the COPA Report's had a sharply differing view of available capacity in 2032, which they projected at 723,000 movements - less than half the GTAA estimate. As a result they estimated a shortfall of about 100,000 movements.

In projecting capacity, the COPA report projections in many instances bear little relationship to what a particular airport could handle, relying more on what they believe 'used' capacity might be, given airport location, convenience, community preference and circumstance etc. For example, airports like Peterborough on 760 acres, and Lake Simcoe on 594 acres - airports that the COPA Report acknowledges face no community restraints - are projected to only handle 60,000 and 70,000 movements respectively in 2032, even though much smaller Buttonville on 165 acres handled 160,000 movements in 2010 and could handle more! And Burlington Airpark, which has more acreage than Buttonville; is ideally located; and has expansion plans, is projected to handle less aircraft in 2032 than Buttonville did in 2010.

The COPA Report's projected 100,000 movement shortfall then results from using so called 'capacity' projections at airports like Lake Simcoe, Peterborough, Burlington Airpark, Hamilton and others, that are clearly well below the practical capacity of those airports. Seneca College Aviation School's 2014 relocation to Peterborough, unbeknownst when COPA's report was completed is an excellent demonstration of this underestimation of 'capacity'. This move of 25,000 - 30,000 movements, will result

in almost a doubling of flights at Peterborough and the airport is now forecast to meet COPA's 2032 60,000 movement capacity target in 2015! Obviously Peterborough will end up with significant further growth and even if one were to adjust this capacity target upward to **only** reflect this Seneca College relocation, almost a third COPA's projected 100,000 movement shortfall would disappear!

And even the COPA Report's projected movement shortfall would turn into a surplus of some 100 -150,000 movements if instead of their projected 42% growth in GA aircraft movements over the period 2010-2032, growth was flat. This is something the COPA study's very tentative growth projections didn't rule out. Growth in aircraft movements they tell us "*could be growing*" and will be "*in the worst case flat*".

3 Is there a Business case for an airport at Pickering or elsewhere?

Small uncertain growth projections do not attract investors to a competitive market that has many airports, including nearby Oshawa, eager to increase market share and already, along with other airports, taking on the Buttonville business.

The reality also is that most Canadian GA airports lose money. Ideally located, Buttonville decided to close after being unable to make up for the loss in 2,009 of the GTAA's annual subsidy of \$1.5 million. Oshawa also considered a well-run airport but continues to receive financial support from the city of Oshawa.

Also if opening a GA airport was a paying proposition why with the closure of Buttonville, has no consortium or entrepreneur made any effort to acquire a new site to accommodate this supposed need. And why by now, hasn't any consortium made a serious proposal to use the Pickering lands? One can only assume investors have assumed the GTAA's assessment is correct and that without significant subsidy a business case cannot be made.

4 Can a case be made for subsidizing a GA airport at Pickering?

Minister Flaherty in 2013, and others in government have indicated an interest in having a consortium build and operate a privately run and operated GA airport. And since the Federal government refused to subsidize Buttonville and has indicated it does not subsidize privately owned airports one would assume any new airport on the Pickering lands would not be subsidized.

Subsidization would also give Pickering a competitive advantage relative to other GA competition – something that could be very difficult to justify to competitors, the general public, and to any Environmental Assessment Review panel.

5 Does a Pickering GA airport support Provincial /Federal policies/priorities?

The Federal Government has indicated its desire if possible to support Ontario's greenbelt and other policies including the Provincial Policy Statement which among other things calls for prime agricultural areas to only permit non-agricultural use if *there is an identified need within the planning horizon.....to accommodate the proposed use,* and *"there are no reasonable alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas."* There are many alternatives from expanded use of existing facilities to locating a new small GA airport that would avoid prime farmland.

Although Transport Canada maintains regulatory responsibility for airports across Canada, in 1994, they created the National Airports Policy (NAP) and described its priority involvement with what it considered the 26 'nationally significant' airports across the country that comprise the National Airports System, (NAS) – airports which serve the very great majority of all passengers and cargo traffic in Canada. Transport Canada has retained ownership of these NAS airports and leased them to local "non - profit" operating authorities.

In the GTA the GTAA became responsible for Pearson, and in 2,001, Transport Canada asked the GTAA to prepare a major airport plan for the Pickering lands; present it for public scrutiny and expert examination through an environmental assessment, and if Government then decided to proceed, the GTAA would have been responsible for funding the airport from the usual sources available to the GTAA, and then proceeding as planned to build and operate the facility.

Unlike the GTAA's 2003 plan, if the Federal Government were to proceed with a GA airport on the Pickering lands, Pickering would be a non –NAS airport and not one of the high priority NAS airports across the country. And the GTAA would appear to have no role in planning, funding, building or operating such a GA airport – an airport the GTAA has indicated is not needed within the planning horizon, and an airport that would have no connection to the interest expressed by Government in 1972 when it expropriated the lands for a major air carrier airport.

Transport Canada will continue to have an ownership interest in the land and will also no doubt continue to pursue airport zoning and other action to protect the Pickering Lands so that a future major international airport could be built there in future if/when needed.

Building a GA airport on the Pickering lands on prime agricultural land would not only be inconsistent with Provincial policy. In addition, particularly since a Pickering GA airport would not constitute a major federal priority, it would be perceived as inconsistent with the agricultural and environmental protection values espoused by Government in the creation of the nearby Federal Rouge Park.

