



TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

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Transport Action Ontario (TAO) is pleased to submit the following response to the 2015 Greenbelt Plan Review

An airport on Pickering lands is unnecessary and is in direct conflict with the need to secure and enhance Ontario's Greenbelt. Although the presence or absence of an airport is not within the scope of the Greenbelt Plan Review, we believe that this airport, because it will be partly on, and adjacent to the Greenbelt, will have a major deleterious effect on the entire region including the Greenbelt lands. TAO has already outlined its reasons for its opposition in its report, *Response to Transport Canada. Needs Assessment Study – Pickering Lands, 2010*.¹ The following is a brief summary.

More than 10% of domestic air travel is in the Quebec City/Windsor corridor. Most of this passenger volume would be better served in a more economically and environmentally efficient manner by enhanced higher speed rail service. This additional 10+ % would also help to add significant capacity to Toronto's Pearson airport.

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The Pearson airport is not nearly at capacity, and predictions of it reaching capacity in near future decades are highly questionable. Smaller airports in the Greater Golden Horseshoe are available, particularly the Hamilton International Airport for freight, passenger and General Aviation needs. Outside the GTHA there is also excess capacity available in St. Catharines, Oakville, London, as well as in other small airports.

Air travel is a heavy polluter. Carbon dioxide combined with other exhaust gases and particulates emitted from jet engines could have two to four times as great an impact on the upper atmosphere as carbon dioxide emissions alone. Furthermore, jet aircraft deposits gases directly into the upper atmosphere, which have a greater global warming effect than gases emitted closer to the earth's surface.

Ground transportation for a proposed Pickering Airport will increase urban sprawl. The 2004 Pickering Airport Draft Plan Report devotes almost four pages to a list of highway and related infrastructures required to serve this proposed facility. Increased highway space will inevitably lead not only to more urban sprawl but also to its resultant regional traffic congestion, noise impacts and air and ground water pollution.

An airport at Pickering may produce jobs, but at what price? Admittedly, building an airport generates jobs, but so does building higher speed railways, a more sustainable option with more sustainable long term jobs.

Construction of an airport at Pickering will permanently take fertile agricultural land out of production. Pickering lands are rated as Class 1 & 2 agricultural. Removing this land from production will require that even more produce must be transported from other countries and regions thus further increasing air pollution. The movement in favor of securing land for more local food production makes uncontrovertibly good sense.

The “demand” for air transportation, in the presence of excess supply, as cited above, is an artificially created demand. This common demand argument is often recited as the reason to build controversial, environmentally destructive infrastructure. There is a belief fostered by those unconcerned about climate change that some modes of transportation are currently more popular than others. “Build it and they will come” is a frequent justification. In other words, provide air travel and highways instead of higher speed railways and better transit connections and the public will have no choice but to fly and drive!

Transport Action Ontario is aware that the Greenbelt is a provincial jurisdiction and that the proposed airport is a federal responsibility. However, just as there is only one taxpayer, there is only one Greenbelt. We therefore strongly urge the province of Ontario to oppose the building of an airport at Pickering.