



## Pearson costlier way to fly, report shows

**Draft figures show Toronto's airport has higher fees, less efficiency than Vancouver or Calgary**

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OTTAWA—Toronto's Pearson airport gets low marks for efficiency and fee levels in a "scorecard" created by Transport Canada, rankings that help confirm the airport's global reputation as a high-cost facility for both airlines and passengers.

The draft scorecards, intended to monitor the financial health of Canada's major airports, were obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act.

The internal rankings were created for all 21 airports that Transport Canada has transferred to local management groups in the last two decades.

Transport 2000, a non-partisan lobby group, analyzed the numbers, specifically ranking Pearson's performance against two other comparable airports in size and growth – Calgary and Vancouver.

"For all measures of cost efficiency ... Toronto was significantly poorer than either Vancouver or Calgary," says the report by the non-profit agency.

"Operating expense per passenger is significantly higher for Toronto than either Vancouver or Calgary."

The scorecards measure the productivity and efficiency of the facilities between 2002 and 2006 based on 29 categories, such as the number of passengers processed daily for each airport employee.

The Transport 2000 analysis showed Toronto processed just 79 passengers daily for each airport employee over the five-year period, compared with 131 for Vancouver and 173 for Calgary.

The report also confirmed what many airlines and passengers know well: landing fees, terminal fees, parking fees and other revenue generators are much higher at Toronto.

Parking revenue over the five years averaged \$3.12 for every passenger who passed through Pearson, twice as much as at Calgary and Vancouver.

"This area is a very profitable one for Toronto," says the report by Transport 2000's Gerry Einarsson.

A spokesperson for the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, which runs Pearson, said the analysis needs context.

"It is important to remember that during this time (2002-2006) Toronto Pearson was being rebuilt, which explains the additional expenses and debt that other airports did not incur during the same time frame," Scott Armstrong said in an email.

"The construction program was completed in early 2007, and the GTAA has been able to increase revenue and decrease expenses since the variable of construction and terminal changes has stabilized."

He noted that landing fees were trimmed by 3.1 per cent on Jan. 1.

The president of Transport 2000 says Pearson's ambitious \$4 billion construction program may be a financial albatross for years to come.

"The airport itself greatly exceeds the capacity that's required right now," said David Jeanes. An industry spokesperson laid much of the blame for Pearson's financial performance at the door of the federal government, which leases the property to the GTAA.

"The overall rent burden is way too high," said Fred Gaspar of the Air Transport Association of Canada.

Gaspar said the current GTAA administration is squeezed between debt servicing for its massive construction program and a demanding landlord, Transport Canada. Transport Canada created its airport scorecards under pressure from the federal auditor general, who in a 2005 report criticized the department for failing to properly monitor the impact of its airport policies.

Department spokesperson Patrick Charette cautioned the scorecard categories are being modified and shouldn't be used to rank one airport against another.

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