



TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

Advocating Environmentally, Socially & Economically Sustainable Transportation
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Hon. Denis Lebel,
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON, K1A0A6

January 19, 2012

Re: Planned Pickering Airport

Dear Minister:

Along with the many opponents of the Pickering plan, Transport Action Ontario has a number of serious reservations about a revival of this unpopular project.

As you know, air travel is the most polluting form of transportation in terms of both greenhouse gas emissions and in oxides of nitrogen which at the high altitudes flown by large jet airliners form ozone in the upper troposphere. It is also important to remember that building an airport involves a heavy investment in depleting oil resources - not a sustainable way to plan for the future. Furthermore, the ratio of aviation-induced emissions will rise as more airports are built.

Secondary effects such as travel to and from the airport, destroyed farmland, the removal of wildlife habitat, noise and the effect on property values add to the destructive effect on our planet of excessive aviation activity.

With respect, governments should consider the health of its nation's ecosystem as well as that of the planet when making decisions regarding infrastructure. Instead of inviting more air travel by building more airports, your government could manage demand by offering the sustainable alternative of higher or high-speed rail in several corridors in Canada that will support this mode. HSR is more environmentally sustainable and more economically efficient than air for short and medium plus distances of 300 – 800 miles based on current technologies - 800 miles is a little more than the distance between Windsor, ON and Quebec City. An efficient rail system is competitive with air travel at this distance and would drive sustainable growth in the region.

A significant portion of current short-haul air travel in the Quebec City/Windsor corridor would be better served by rail. In 1999, Statistics Canada produced a report on air travel within the Quebec City/Windsor corridor. (Please see below) Short-haul is the most polluting form of air travel since takeoff and landing uses the greatest proportion of fuel. If higher or high-speed rail served several city pairs in the table (in addition to absorbing many trips now taken by car) it would reduce the need to expand the airport system in the corridor. Updated data from Statistics Canada are not available, nevertheless the figures below are higher today with the addition of service by Porter Airlines (Please see second table of three city pairs). Reducing demand for air travel in the corridor is far superior to driving demand by building a new airport.

Air Traffic Volumes by City-Pair – Thousands of passengers. Statistics Canada, 1999.

Montreal – Toronto 1261.4
 Ottawa – Toronto 725.9
 Quebec – Toronto 115.2
 Toronto – Windsor 113.5
 Montreal – Quebec 49.9
 London – Toronto 42.4
 London – Ottawa 38.9
 London – Montreal 35.3
 Ottawa – Quebec 29.1
 Montreal – Windsor 21.4
 Ottawa – Windsor 17.5
 Montreal – Ottawa 16.3
 Hamilton (partners n/a) – 48,287
Total - 2,515,087

Air Traffic Volumes 3 City Pairs, Toronto Board of Trade Member, 2011.

Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal Triangle Air Travel

Segment	Two-Way Travel		Year-over-year % change
	July, 2009-June, 2010	July, 2010-June, 2011	
Toronto (Pearson)-Ottawa	1,164,600	1,166,300	+ 0.15
Toronto (Island)-Ottawa	428,900	537,000	+ 25.20
Toronto-Ottawa Total	1,593,500	1,703,300	+6.89
Toronto (Pearson)-Montreal	1,799,000	1,824,500	+1.42
Toronto (Island)-Montreal	472,700	630,500	+33.38
Toronto-Montreal Total	2,271,700	2,455,000	+8.07
Montreal-Ottawa Total	266,800	261,300	-2.06
Total Travel	4,132,000	4,419,600	+7.00

The increasing market share of HSR is evidence of its popularity. Eurostar, the high-speed passenger train service linking the UK, France and Belgium had in 2005 71% of market share on its London/Paris route and 64% on its London-Brussels route. The high market share caused competing airlines to cut their services.

It should be a source of serious embarrassment to the Government of Canada that twenty-two countries around the world have the political will and are managing to fund this popular and environmentally friendly mode of transportation: These countries include: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, China, France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Taiwan, The U.K., and the U.S. Brazil's HSR project is currently under way. In Australia an HSR line linking Melbourne and Brisbane via Sidney and Canberra is planned and it should be noted that the Australian line is supported by

medium, not high, density. In the U.S., several routes are planned including one from the Midwest through Chicago and Detroit that the government of Canada could expand incrementally through a proposed Windsor - Quebec City HSR corridor.

Existing airports should continue to serve, and to concentrate on, long-haul continental and inter-continental travel. Since air transport is a heavy polluter, airports and the airline industry must concentrate on reducing harmful emissions. Canada's federal government should support and promote higher or high speed rail as the mode of choice for short and medium distance passenger transportation and for a larger portion of goods movement.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We appreciate your time, and look forward to your response and continued dialogue on this issue.

Sincerely,



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