



Why Is an Airport at Pickering a BAD IDEA?

In 1972, Pickering's new airport was to be Toronto's own version of Mirabel. But then Mirabel opened, faltered, became an international joke, and failed. It cost taxpayers billions. Do we want a Mirabel here?

- An airport on the Pickering site would destroy a *non-renewable resource* – a huge tract of highest-quality farmland. We're already losing farmland at an alarming rate. On this crowded planet, our future well-being – maybe our future itself – depends on preserving farmland now.
- Even the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, in its 2010 needs assessment study, couldn't make a convincing case for a Pickering airport. Constructing and servicing a commercial airport would cost billions. If it struggled or failed, as is likely, the fall-out would be disastrous for the area. If need for more capacity ever arises, it should be found through expansion of existing airports. There are higher transportation priorities in the GTA.
- A Pickering airport would be just north of Seaton, a planned "livable and sustainable" community of up to 70,000 people, providing "exceptional protection of ecologically sensitive lands." How could this possibly work? Planes are among the world's worst polluters. Studies are showing that living in the vicinity of an airport causes a range of health problems and reduces life expectancy.
- The airport would be next door to the Rouge National Urban Park – a wildlife sanctuary and nature preserve. Transport Canada's policies, understandably, treat all wildlife on an airport and in its vicinity as potential hazards to airport and aircraft safety. Animals and birds within the hazard zone are "dealt with," either by poisoning, fencing-off, trapping, "controlling" with trained raptors, or shooting. A large section of the Park would be within that zone. How would *this* work?!
- The airport site has become a de facto nature preserve over the past 43 years, especially for Canada Geese, ducks and other waterfowl, and raptors. It is an important stop for migratory birds.
- The site is in an area prone to heavy fogs, heavy snow, and whiteouts.
- Airport effluent and de-icing activity spills could contaminate the freshwater resources the area relies on.
- "Warehouse blight" and airport-related development would – if the airport didn't fail – sprawl over surrounding land, much of it agricultural, and eventually destroy rural Pickering.
- A recent proposal, to build a private, small-plane airport, is wrongheaded. There is ample proof that a new corporate jet / general aviation airport will not be needed, even when Buttonville closes. Existing airports have plenty of capacity. Besides, GA traffic has been on the decline for years. More to the point, such usage on expropriated land would open a precedent-setting jurisdictional and ethical can of worms.
- The fact is, no one knows where aviation is headed. Electronic communications are revolutionizing how people connect over long distances. The burning of fossil fuels (not least by aircraft) is doing serious – perhaps irreparable – harm to our planet, speeding climate change and all its consequences. Will aviation escape restrictions? Will it ward off huge cost/price increases? Can viable bio-fuels be perfected/produced in sufficient quantities? There are many such questions and, as yet, no answers.
- Meanwhile, the UN has made it clear that farmland preservation is an imperative, worldwide, if future generations are to have access to sufficient food. **Food is a GROWING concern.**