

Factsheet

What you should know about the draft Pickering Airport Site Zoning Regulation (PASZR), 2015

- ***Purpose of Transport Canada's PASZR:*** To give provincial and municipal planning departments explicit “where” and “what” information so they can ensure that development around the airport site will be compatible with the safe operation of the airport and aircraft.
- ***Prior to Comment Period:*** For 2+ years, there have been closed-door “briefings” and “roundtables” on protecting the site. Meanwhile, virtually no effort has been made to inform local citizens of how the airport would affect their daily lives and environment.
- ***Public Concern:*** Transport Canada has acknowledged public concern about loss of prime farmland, a potential decline in the quality of life for area residents, and a possible need for general aviation infrastructure. Yet the public has been shut out of the discussion until now.
- ***What does the PASZR do?*** It precisely defines areas such as runways and other aircraft surfaces, and identifies lot locations and road allowances that together delineate the area set aside for a possible future airport and the area around it that will require restrictions on:
 - a) building heights,
 - b) activities that could interfere with aviation communications, and
 - c) activities attractive to the kind of wildlife that are hazardous to aviation safety.
- ***What doesn't this PASZR do?*** It doesn't even mention noise, even though noise is a big public issue and although noise areas require zoning decisions. Transport Canada's website states that, through a Noise Exposure Forecasting (NEF) system, local governments receive a basis for zoning, and residents receive details of what may be expected in certain areas. Except that this last bit hasn't happened.
- ***The impact of noise:*** Transport Canada says that if the NEF exceeds 30, new housing should not proceed, or construction should include noise-reduction measures. Even in the larger NEF 25 area, day care centres, residential uses, schools, nursing homes, and hospitals shouldn't be allowed. Based on the NEF map for Toronto Pearson, it seems that Pickering airport's noise would affect the daily lives of rural and urban residents in large areas of north Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Markham, south-western Uxbridge, and eastern Whitchurch-Stouffville.
- ***Why were noise maps omitted?*** Interestingly, noise contour maps were in the info package released to the public in 1972, shortly after the original Pickering airport announcement. So why no maps now? Some possible answers we've thought of:
 - a) *Runway details aren't confirmed yet.* But if “proposed” runways are good enough to allow creation of a PASZR for local zoning purposes, then they're good enough for the creation of a noise contour map for local zoning purposes.
 - b) *They're secret; only planning departments get this information.* If so, the process is underhanded *and* contradicts the government's publicly stated procedure.
 - c) *Transport Canada is afraid to admit that airports and aircraft are noisy.* Bingo?
- ***Bottom Line:*** Areas around the Pickering airport site that are potentially subject to any restrictions need to be identified for the public, thereby ensuring informed and useful public comment during this consultation period. **Or is Transport Canada not interested in receiving informed comment from the public?**

Fig. 1: Toronto Pearson Operating Area (approx. NEF 30 noise contour), within which no residential development is recommended

