

GTAA taking its message into the community

Industry professionals and aviation enthusiasts were given a first hand look at the planning for the proposed Pickering Airport during the 11th Annual Canadian Aviation Expo at the Oshawa Airport.

Known as "Canada's Premier Aviation Event", the Expo featured exhibits from every facet of the aviation industry including; manufacturers, museums, government agencies, aviation colleges, flight training schools, pilots & aviation supply retailers, interest groups, military associations and aviation artists.

Held on the weekend of June 13 - 15, 2003, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority's (GTAA) booth was designed to provide the public with information on the interim planning process related to a possible airport on the federally owned lands in Pickering, and act as a forum for the public to ask GTAA staff questions and collect information. With more than 18,000 in attendance, the Canadian Aviation Expo served as a great opportunity for the GTAA to share information with the public on its work to date.



On the right, Chris Gray, Program and Office Coordinator for the Pickering Project, was on hand at the Canadian Aviation Expo to answer questions and provide information on the planning process.

Please look for the GTAA booth at the Buttonville Municipal Airport's Annual Open House on September 6 from 10 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., and at the Greenwood Community Festival on Saturday September 13 from 12:00 until 3:00 p.m.

Maintaining land policies key

Part of being a good neighbour includes the responsibility of proper planning

For the GTAA, maintaining the positive land use planning policies that have already been established around the Pickering lands will protect both the community and the future operations of a possible airport.

"The GTAA is committed to pursuing every opportunity to enhance the cooperative relationship with nearby communities, and to ensure consistent and compatible land use strategies to protect options into the long term future," says Steve Shaw, Vice-President of Corporate Affairs and Communications.

The GTAA has initiated a study to examine the need for continued and long term land use protection in the vicinity of the airport lands, given that the Pickering lands are situated in a non-urban environment. The findings of this study will be

incorporated into the GTAA's draft master plan, to be released in 2004.

When the Pickering lands were set aside for a future airport in the 1970's, the Province of Ontario put in place a Provincial Minister's Zoning Order as a protective land use policy to the east and the west of the site to ensure future growth would be properly managed.

The foresight shown by the Province more than 30 years ago to protect these lands for a possible future airport was a significant decision, and it will be important that future provincial and local land use policies continue to preserve the options. Many of the world's airports were developed without a sufficient buffer zone between the airport and the surrounding communities. Studies have shown that airports that are protected by buffer zones

have less impact with regard to noise on the local communities. These buffer zones include green or open space areas, agricultural, and/or industrial/commercial development in the surrounding area.

On the 18,600 acres of land that has been designated as airport lands by the federal government, 7,500 acres have been protected as green space in perpetuity. This includes lands on the Oak Ridges Moraine to the north and the Rouge Valley Corridor to the west of the Pickering lands.

Comprehensive and coordinated land use planning in the early stages will ensure any other noise sensitive development around the site is appropriate. As commercial operations are less noise-sensitive, these policies will allow for significant economic development opportunities in the region.

PAST LESSONS HELP WITH AIRPORT PLANNING

Responsible airport planning relies a lot on the lessons learned by others.

Keeping this in mind, the GTAA is taking into account the past successes and failures of other airports in an effort to ensure the federal government is presented with the best possible plan for the Pickering lands.

At a recent Pickering Advisory Committee meeting, a presentation was made outlining why the difficulties of Quebec's Mirabel Airport in the 1970's had little in common with the current planning underway for a possible regional/reliever airport in Pickering. At the same time, the lessons learned from the experience at Mirabel and other airports are instructive for GTAA planners.

The presentation reviewed the circumstances surrounding the development of Mirabel and revealed that there had been an artificially inflated demand for international travel. Under Canada's International Air Policy in the late 1960's and early 1970's, international air traffic was forced to land at Mirabel airport. A large portion of the international traffic was in transit to Toronto, and when changes in bilateral agreements allowed foreign carriers to fly directly to the city, a decline in international traffic at Mirabel resulted.

Steve Shaw, Vice-President of Corporate Affairs and Communications, added that the splitting of domestic and international flights - domestic and transborder traffic continuing to use Montréal's Dorval Airport while international flights switched to Mirabel - caused an expensive split in operational resources for the airlines and discouraged connections between Western Canada and

international destinations. This would not be the case for any future airport in Pickering, as traffic would be based on natural demand and airlines would have the choice to use Pickering or not.

"While the Mirabel situation offers some important lessons, there are significant differences between Montréal and Pickering because of historical development, process and policy," said Shaw.

Slow population growth in the Montréal area, which has only doubled from 4.6 million to 8.7 million in the last three decades, has also helped to limit passenger growth. On the other hand, Toronto has continued to grow dramatically from 1970. This is reflected in the airport passenger growth at Toronto Pearson jumping from approximately 6.6 million to 25.9 million in the same time period.

Finally, and perhaps the most critical difference is the planning process today compared to 30 years ago. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the plans set out by the government were mostly done

behind closed doors, with a decision to build made by the government largely in advance of detailed planning and environmental review.

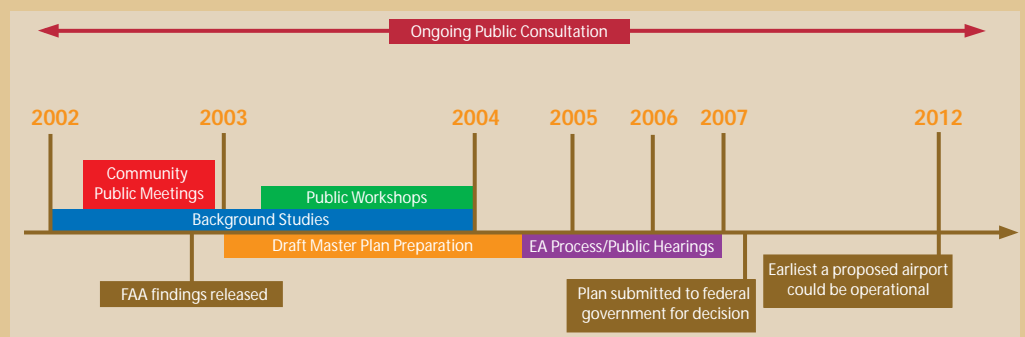
"The Pickering project under the GTAA management is completely different. It is open and transparent, and we are undertaking all the necessary technical studies well in advance of any future airport," says Lorrie McKee, Senior Manager, Government and Corporate Strategy.

Stakeholders can be assured that a decision whether or not to proceed with an airport will only be made by the federal government after the planning and environmental review process is complete.

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Steve Shaw, Vice-President,
Corporate Affairs and Communications

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