

March 24, 2026

Four Main Reasons Why the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Association is opposed to allowing jets at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport (BBTCA)

1. SAFETY

Jets operating next to Canada's largest downtown core and in our busy waterfront magnifies safety concerns.

The Bathurst Quay neighbourhood is located only **120 metres (400 feet)** from the airport located on Toronto island, separated by the narrow water channel of the Western Gap. **BBTCA's proximity to our community and Canada's largest downtown core, makes it unique because it is the only airport in Canada situated so close to high density urban population. It is this close proximity that presents significant safety concerns.**



Transport Canada regulations require that defined areas around an airport must be clear to avoid collisions with obstacles including buildings. The Island Airport has already been given various exemptions from the normal rules, to accommodate the CN Tower and many tall buildings located within a kilometre, and in some cases within hundreds of meters, of the runway.¹ The existing exemptions should never apply to larger, faster, less maneuverable jets. This is particularly worrying as building construction increases along the city's waterfront.

Jets would be at least twice the weight of the current turboprops operating at BBTCA and carry three times as much fuel with take offs at higher speeds. In poor visibility or emergency situations, such as a bird strike or one engine becoming inoperable, jets pose increased danger to surrounding populations.

Jets will also require runway expansion, lake infilling and additional structures in the harbour. A previous 2015 proposal for jets by Porter Airlines and the Toronto Port Authority, called for extending the current runway by 200m to the east and 200m to the west. This would involve costly and extensive lake filling in the harbour. The waterfront is busy with kayakers, tourist boats, water taxis and sailboats. Through a Freedom of Information request, the 2017 AECOM Environmental Assessment Report prepared for Porter was publicly released nine years later in March this year. The report confirms jet blast will be strong enough to overturn small recreational boats, even with 20-foot-high jet blast deflectors built at the ends of the runway.²

2. HEALTH IMPACTS

Increased air pollution will affect us all.

In 2013, following a rapid Health Impact Assessment conducted by the City, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health warned that residents on the central waterfront were already being "exposed to health risks from airport-related air pollution," and that introducing jets would raise their "risk of premature death and cardiovascular and respiratory health outcomes".³

Direct measurement of air pollutants in the Bathurst Quay community by University of Toronto Transportation and Air Quality scientists over 3 years concluded in 2024 that BBTCA is the primary source of ultrafine particles (UFP) in the community when the wind blows from the south (the airport's location).⁴ Because of this, our waterfront community is as polluted as heavy traffic areas of downtown Toronto. This is of particular concern because the highest UFP spikes were next to schools, and children's playgrounds. These results spurred the BQNA to launch Canada's first petition to regulate ultrafine particles.⁵ The introduction of jets will elevate these levels.

Research into the health impacts of living near airports has intensified, particularly for the impacts from UFPs. Recent studies show an increased risk of malignant brain cancer, dementia, lung cancer, high blood pressure, and diabetes.⁶

In 2017, the AECOM report cited above, had also warned of increased risk of respiratory illness, cardiopulmonary problems, lung cancers and respiratory track tumours, with the introduction of jets. The report found highly dangerous air pollutants NO₂, PM_{2.5}, Acrolein and Benzo[a]pyrene, exceeded benchmark Toxicological Reference Values.⁷

Lengthening the runway would mean expanding the pedestrian tunnel that links the airport to the mainland to accommodate the thousands of extra people coming into the terminal each morning. It will also increase emissions from heavier road traffic to the airport – which will directly impact the schools, daycares and playgrounds that exist right next to the airport’s taxi ranks and ferry dock.

Increased noise pollution will affect us all

Health effects from airport noise are well documented.⁸ These include impacts to cardiovascular health and heart structure; cognitive impairment in the development of children’s brains; chronic mental health and sleep disturbance with increased risks of Type 2 diabetes and stroke, attributing the link to the chronic release of cortisol (stress hormone). The addition of jets will increase noise levels that already exceed both Transport Canada and the City of Toronto’s noise standards.

3. NOISE

As BBTCA grew, noise now exceeds Transport Canada’s own standards for residential development.

Transport Canada effectively allows excessive noise levels at BBTCA that contravene their own standard for residential areas. And it’s partly due to the history of this island airport. Airport noise is regulated by Transport Canada’s Noise Exposure Forecast (NEF) which uses models to measure aircraft noise and predict community annoyance in order to “ensure compatible land-use planning.” When the NEF level is 25 it is acceptable by their standard to develop residential communities near an airport. And this was probably the case in the past, when the island airport operated as a small municipal airport, with private planes, flight school, and infrequent military aircraft.

But as the airport grew and turboprop aircraft came in, the NEF would have risen to 30 and 35. This standard is where Transport Canada, by their own standard, would have prohibited the development of residential growth.⁹ However, the community already existed so proactive action was not possible, and now residential housing continues to increase along the Waterfront. BQNA members of the airport’s Noise Subcommittee have repeatedly asked Toronto Port Authority and Transport Canada to revisit the NEF for this airport, particularly in light of the aircraft noise bouncing off the lake and amplified by nearby buildings, including the Canada Malting Silos which directly face the airport. But requests to meet with a qualified Transport Canada professional sound engineer led us to discover that no such competency currently exists among federal staff. That is why BQNA met with Federal MP, Chi Nguyen on March 3, 2026 requesting her to ask Transport Canada to hire a qualified professional sound

engineer to review and update methods to assess NEF noise at BBTCA and provide a summary of the actual noise levels from this airport.

Noise from the airport regularly exceeds the City of Toronto's bylaw for residential noise.



In the meantime, residents continually submit noise complaints to Toronto Ports Authority, who by their own measures, confirm the regular occurrence of noise levels above 70 decibels - which violates any acceptable standard for residential noise. Other than during the Covid shut down, these noise levels are a regular occurrence. Toronto's Municipal by-law establishes a limit of 70 decibels which would impose a sanction on a business or other resident who exceeds this threshold. However, to date, the airport has received no such sanction from the city. The result is a general lack of enforcement and accountability which will only get worse with the introduction of jets.

The idea that 'Whisper Jets' will generate low noise at the airport is false. Measurements show that the current Q400 turboprop operating out of BBTCA is rated around 78.6 EPNdB (Effective Perceived Noise level in Decibels), while the Airbus A220 can measure 86-89 EPNdB, and the Embraer E195-E2 is about 82 EPNdB.¹⁰ These data are even more concerning because decibel scales are logarithmic, so a 10-dB increase is perceived as double the volume. This means modern "whisper jets" can be roughly 60% to 100% louder to the human ear than the turboprops they are meant to replace.

4. DEMOCRACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The future of our waterfront is at stake

Nine years ago, the 2017 AECOM Environmental Assessment Report listed many socio-economic effects from the expansion of the airport to introduce jets¹¹, including: increased congestion, increased air traffic that will affect residents' use and enjoyment of property, how the extended runway will cause visual disturbance and encroach on the area available for water-based recreation, as well as increasing congestion for boaters, loss in local business activity due to congestion and parking problems. These issues were raised without public knowledge and since then over 18 million visitors a year visit the waterfront. Yet Torontonians have had no say about this massive, proposed change to bring in jets.

The City of Toronto and our federal government must ensure that the health, safety and vibrancy of this city's waterfront is not held hostage by private commercial interests.

Premier Doug Ford's announcement on March 12, 2026,^a that he wants to expropriate the airport lands to make way for jets has been endorsed by Toronto Port Authority. But the airport is governed by a tripartite agreement involving the City of Toronto, Toronto Port Authority and the federal government. Our democratic voice is now at stake. The City of Toronto and our federal government must ensure that the health, safety and vibrancy of this city's waterfront is not held hostage by private commercial interests.



REFERENCES

- 1) Waterfront for All: [Safety issues to consider with respect to the proposal to expand the island airport for jets.](#)
- 2) Waterfront for All: PortsToronto [Environmental Assessment of Proposed Runway Extension and Introduction of Jets at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport Environmental Study Report.](#) AECOM. Sept 2017.
- 3) City of Toronto, 2013 (PDF): [Health Impacts Associated with Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport Expansion. City of Toronto, 2013](#)
- 4) BQNA: [Air Quality overview and links](#)
- 5) BQNA: [UFP petition and video](#)
- 6) See ref 5.
- 7) See Ref 2. Page 62. TRVs are used to measure the safety of indoor and ambient air. Levels exceeding benchmark values indicate a need for further investigation.
- 8) See [BQNA compilation of Noise and Air Pollution Health Impacts](#), March 3, 2026.
- 9) Transport Canada: [Noise Exposure Forecast and Related Programs](#)
- 10) Carbon Upfront! [How Doug Ford's airport expansion plans will poison us with deadly Ultrafine Particles](#)
- 11) See ref 2. Pages 80-81.