

Hamilton Chamber Of Commerce Position on the Proposed Pickering Airport

Issue:

Developing a Pickering Airport will draw business and jobs away from the Southwestern Ontario region. A new Greenfield airport has significant environmental, financial and transportation issues to meet a demand that can easily be supported by existing infrastructure in Hamilton, London, Kitchener, et al.

Background:

Key Issues

- The cost to build a new Greenfield airport has been projected to be in excess of 1 billion dollars. Existing secondary airports in Southwestern Ontario have excess capacity available to serve air travel demands for the region.
- Ministry of Finance projections for Ontario's *Places to Grow* strategy indicate that municipalities west of Toronto will attract the largest share of growth in south-central Ontario over the next 20 years. These municipalities, located in the vicinity of existing airports in Hamilton, Kitchener and London will comprise over 44% of central Ontario population growth over the next 20 years. By comparison, eastern municipalities nearby the proposed Pickering Airport will experience only 13% of the regions population growth.¹
- Because the GTAA would operate both Pearson Airport and Pickering Airport, existing carriers could be pressured to migrate their service away from existing airports to service the new site. This will strain the resources of the airlines and eliminate economies of scale that exist for them today. This will reduce the level of air service available to the region and will also eliminate or relocate jobs.
- The Greater Toronto Airport Authority (GTAA) has been given a first right of refusal on the contract to build and operate the potential airport in Pickering. This agreement is subject to a needs assessment to be completed for Transport Canada. The required study has been contracted by Transport Canada to the GTAA and the Terms of Reference for this study are secret. In other words, the body that may benefit most financially by building and operating the airport has been contracted to determine if it is needed with little or no input from the public.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Canada to:

¹ Central Region Geography based on Ministry of Municipal Affairs Smart Growth Zones. 2021 population projections based on 2000 Ministry of Finance Assessment Projections adjusted to reflect the Census population.

1. Ensure that existing infrastructure and unused capacity at secondary airports in Southwestern Ontario region are developed before investing taxpayers' money into an airport in Pickering.
2. Complete an open, transparent and independent study to determine if a strong supporting business case exists for a new airport in the southern Ontario region, and where the infrastructure should be located based on demand.