

BRIEF

Submitted to:

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Regarding the Study Assessing the Impact of Aircraft Noise in the Vicinity of Major Canadian Airports

Submitted By:

Author: The Markland Wood Homeowners Association

Toronto, Ontario

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Introduction

The Markland Wood Homeowners Association has been asked to provide their input into the Standing Committee on Transport's study on the impact of aircraft noise. This Brief summarizes the Association's research and recommendations. It provides information and suggested solutions on the topics of night flights and government oversight regarding noise, which apply to communities situated near all the major airports in Canada.

Markland Wood: Markland Wood ("Markland") is a community in the west end of Toronto. It is important to note that Markland was founded in 1960, when Pearson International Airport ("Pearson") was still Malton Airport, a regional operation. The Markland Wood Homeowners Association was founded around that time. For decades, the Association has held an annual food drive (for shelters and food banks in greater Toronto), awarded scholarships, kept residents informed and advocated on issues that affect the community.

Markland is a neighbourhood 5 kilometres south of Pearson. Many other neighbourhoods across Canada are as close or closer to major airports, so the information herein may be of interest to those communities as well.

Markland is a vibrant, active residential area, with a small commercial and professional strip mall. There are 1200 single family houses plus over 1400 rental, townhouse and condo apartments. An application for approval to build more apartments has been made. The population comprises seniors, many of whom moved to Markland in the 1960's, and young families. We are located in the riding of Etobicoke Centre.

There are 4 excellent schools in Markland, that attract students from all over western Toronto, particularly the high school and the French Immersion junior school. A total of 2,200 students spend every school day in this community.

Pearson International Airport Runway Design

Pearson is an East-West airport¹. The three East-West runways were designed to direct traffic over mostly commercial and industrial areas. NAV CANADA built the 2012 STAR arrivals system based on the East-West design.

But Pearson also includes two North-South runways (33 and 15). The two North-South runways produce traffic that passes over our community – one on the west side and one on the east side.

The Greater Toronto Airport Authority ("GTAA") assures the public that North-South runway traffic over Markland only occurs, whether day or night, when required by extreme weather conditions or necessary maintenance on the East-West runways². In addition to this assurance, there are strict rules for using only preferential runways at night³. The preferential runways that must be used at night prohibit flights over Markland, except when required by weather conditions. Under these rules, if the North-South runways

¹ GTAA 2017-2037 Master Plan and Hillary Marshall's Comments at CENAC Meeting December 6, 2017.
https://www.torontopearson.com/uploadedFiles/Pearson/Content/About_Pearson/Noise_Management/CENAC/2017-12-06%20Hillary%20Speaking%20Notes.pdf

² GTAA 2017-2037 Master Plan pp. 47-48.

³ GTAA 2017-2037 Master Plan pp. 145-149.

are used at night, aircraft traffic is directed to arrive and/or depart north of the airport⁴. Nonetheless, pilots ask to use these runways to depart south, and NAV CANADA routinely gives them permission. It is our understanding that these requests are often simply for time or fuel saving, to accommodate the pilot or carrier (“rogue requests”). The GTAA investigates numerous breaches⁵, many of which are sent to Transport Canada for penalties, with little consequences.⁶

Although Pearson’s North-South runways are much less frequently used than the East-West runways, the impact on a residential community close to the airport is significant. Aircraft using the North-South runways pass at altitudes as low as 1000 feet and slow speed (causing longer duration)⁷, due to the proximity to Pearson. In addition to slow speed, the deployment of flaps, slats, landing gear and air brakes creates noise as a result of air flow through and around these features, noise that only occurs at this stage. Prior to initiating landing mode, the airframe is cleaner and quieter. This impacts all the residential communities immediately south of Pearson.

Note that traffic that is required to use the two North-South runways is shared between the two, based on safety, aircraft size and corresponding runway length. It is not feasible technically to reduce traffic on one without reducing it on both.⁸ Furthermore, an attempt to move traffic from one North-South runway to the other North-South runway would result in even greater noise impact, which is untenable. The only answer is to reduce traffic that uses the North-South runways, by design and by demanding that NAV CANADA adhere to its stated policy of refusing rogue pilot and carrier requests.

This traffic has a major impact on all the residential communities in Etobicoke and Mississauga that are immediately south of the airport. In the first six months of 2018 over 28,000 noise complaints were filed with the GTAA in the riding of Etobicoke Centre.⁹

With respect to all Pearson’s runways, additional capacity could be achieved by adding another facility. Why has the Government not re-opened the construction of a second major airport in the Greater Toronto Area, such as Pickering or the expansion of Hamilton?

In summary, do not allow Transport Canada to increase traffic on the North-South runways:

- no changes whatsoever except to reduce traffic on both;
- require strict adherence to their rule of using these two runways solely when East-West runway maintenance or extreme weather conditions require it;
- require that Transport Canada and NAV CANADA enforce the rules against rogue pilot and carrier requests at night.

⁴https://www.torontopearson.com/uploadedFiles/Pearson/Content/About_Pearson/Noise_Management/CENAC/CENAC_Backgrounder_PreferredRunwayUtilization_2013-02-13.pdf

⁵ GTAA CENAC – July 2018 Noise Statistics Update - Enforcement Investigations p. 22.

<https://www.torontopearson.com/en/cenacpastagendasandminutes/#> September 20, 2018 Meeting

⁶ Transport Canada Aviation Enforcement Publications – Corporate Offenders:

<https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/civilaviation/standards/standards-enforcement-publications-corporate-menu-680.htm>

⁷ For example, arrivals passed over Markland on October 29, 2018 at an average of 230 km/h, as noted on the GTAA Web Trak on that day.

⁸ GTAA 2017-2037 Master Plan p.47-48.

⁹ GTAA CENAC July 2018 Noise Statistics Update p. 4.

<https://www.torontopearson.com/en/cenacpastagendasandminutes/#> September 20, 2018 Meeting

The Impact of Night Flights

There is now sufficient evidence to link environmental noise, including aviation noise, to significant negative health effects¹⁰. The Toronto Public Health Department published an updated report in 2017 on the health impact of environmental noise in urban areas, including automobile traffic, construction, amplified sound and aircraft noise that describes the impact not only on quality of life but also health impacts, such as cardiovascular effects, cognitive impacts, sleep disturbance and mental health effects¹¹.

The noise from night flights is particularly bad because of sleep deprivation.

European countries are well ahead of Canada. They have implemented noise regulations that are much stricter than ours, and some have banned night flights.

Why does our government allow night flights?

Airports claim that they are needed to maintain the just-in-time deliveries that are essential to our modern economies, yet cargo flights account for only 12% of night flights at Pearson¹². Most of the rest are passenger flights and many of them are to holiday destinations in the Caribbean.

Airports claim that night flights are big revenue generators, yet, at Pearson they account for 3.7% of total flights and presumably 3.7% of revenue. No airport would become financially unstable by losing night flights. Frankfurt is proof of that. Both the city and the airport are thriving after night flights were banned in 2011. Other airports with night-flight bans include Zurich, Paris-Orly, Sydney and Montreal-Trudeau. The last two allow only small planes with lower noise footprints, such as regional jets, to operate at night. And Heathrow will ban night flights when the third runway becomes operational.

It appears that where there is the political will, there is a way.

The Pearson night period was originally from 10 pm to 7 am and there were no scheduled night flights. The first encroachment reduced it to eight hours (11 pm to 7 pm); now it is only six (12:30 to 6:30 am). Transport Canada must recognize that the human body needs uninterrupted sleep.

Night flights at Pearson have doubled in the last 20 years to 18,000 and are scheduled to increase again over the next 20. By reducing the defined “night period” and increasing the night flights during that period, NAV CANADA and Transport Canada impact the health of all communities near airports. This is unacceptable.

Health Canada states that it provides advice to regulatory authorities, such as Transport Canada, on the health effects of aircraft noise and that this ensures that health risks are taken into account when decisions are made that affect exposure to aircraft noise. However, we do not believe that they are going far enough to try to influence airport decision-making in the matter of night flights¹³.

¹⁰ World Health Organization Report “Burden of disease from Environmental Noise” 2011.

¹¹ “Health Impacts of Environmental Noise in Toronto”; May 29, 2017; Dr Eileen de Villa Medical Officer of Health. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2017/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-104524.pdf>. This document includes “How Loud is Too Loud: Health Impacts of Environmental Noise in Toronto” by Kelly Drew, Ronald Macfarlane, Tor Oiamo, Meghan Mullaly, Desislava Stefanova, Monica Campbell.

¹² GTAA CENAC July 2018 Noise Statistics Update p. 20 “Night Flight Usage by Operation Type”. <https://www.torontopearson.com/en/cenacpastagendasandminutes/#> September 20, 2018 Meeting

¹³ Health Canada Bulletin Updated January 2010 “Aircraft Noise in the Vicinity of Airports”.

We ask that you recommend that all scheduled night flights are banned.

Government Oversight Regarding Noise at all Major Canadian Airports

The lack of government oversight for GTAA seems unprecedented internationally.

Governments world-wide have a strong influence on airport operations and public health. The public needs and expects this level of oversight.

In Canada, there is oversight regarding safety through the Transportation Safety Board but no independent oversight regarding noise and health issues that affect airport communities. Other countries, such as the UK and Australia, have strong independent bodies to protect their citizens¹⁴.

It appears that the GTAA is not accountable. The Ground Lease executed in 1996 between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada and the GTAA gives the Federal Government some authority over the GTAA. This document stipulates that the GTAA must establish a noise management committee to ensure the mitigation of noise¹⁵. The Community Environment and Noise Advisory Committee (“CENAC”) has been established but CENAC has become essentially a mouthpiece for the GTAA. Community concerns are often ignored. For this reason, Canada needs an empowered and independent Ombudsman (such as exists in other countries) to ensure that community concerns are addressed fairly and objectively.

Modifications of the Ground Lease regarding noise abatement flight procedure must be approved by the Minister of Transport¹⁶. Despite the support of our local Member of Parliament for the last two years, we have yet to see Ministerial approval for the latest night flight increases.

Lack of accountability and lack of Government oversight regarding Canadian airport noise impacts the health and enjoyment of life of all surrounding communities. The current management philosophy emphasizes the economic benefits of growth at the expense of health. What the government has forgotten is that healthy citizens are the real economic engines of our country.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. Do not permit any increase in traffic, or other transfer of traffic, on Pearson’s two North-South runways.

2. Eliminate night flights at all major airports in Canada.

¹⁴ Aircraft Noise Ombudsman. Australia. ano@ano.gov.au

¹⁵ Ground Lease December 2, 1996 Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada and the GTAA. S.8.11 & 8.12; p. 146. <https://www.torontopearson.com/en/gtaa/corporate-documentation/>

¹⁶ Ibid.

3. Appoint an empowered and independent Ombudsman whose responsibilities include airport and aircraft noise.

References

GTAA 2017-2037 Master Plan

Hillary Marshall, Vice President Stakeholder Relations and Communications. Comments at CENAC Meeting December 6, 2017 regarding GTAA 2017-2037 Master Plan.

GTAA CENAC – July 2018 Noise Statistics Update.

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Transport Canada Aviation Enforcement Publications

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“Health Impacts of Environmental Noise in Toronto”; May 29, 2017; Dr Eileen de Villa Medical Officer of Health.

Health Canada Website. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada.html>

<http://ano.gov.au/reportsstats/>

The Toronto International Airport Ground Lease executed December 2, 1996 between Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada and the GTAA

GTAA Web Trak