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## Focus on the facts in the Porter jets debate

The debate over whether to bring jets to the Billy Bishop Airport has been driven by fear, rumours, specious information and speculation.

Much has been written recently on the Porter Airlines' proposal to allow new-technology jets at the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. The debate over the proposal is indeed a complicated one. However, it is not a forgone conclusion that the introduction of new-technology jets would come at the expense of the waterfront, the community, the airport or the city. I hold this view based upon the facts of the situation, and have concerns that these facts are being disregarded as debate on this issue continues.

For the most part the Toronto Port Authority (TPA) has stayed out of the jet debate. In recent weeks, at the request of City staff, the TPA has taken a more active role in analyzing the Porter proposal. The TPA has committed to the City of Toronto that we will share information, participate in consultations and answer questions about how the Billy Bishop Airport currently operates, so that everyone has the facts and can consider the proposal within an informed and accurate framework.

My goal here is not to change opinion, but rather to simply state the facts so that individuals can base their decisions on true facts – rather than fear, rumours, specious information or speculation. According to a January 2014 Ipsos Reid poll, Torontonians support the jet proposal 61%-35%, which means this issue deserves our care and consideration.

First, despite reports to the contrary, Billy Bishop Airport has no aspirations to become an operation on the scale of an Ottawa International Airport. In fact, while almost every other airport in the world is working to grow bigger, Billy Bishop's total noise footprint has been capped since 1983, which ensures the airport fits into our mixed-use waterfront. Further, as proof that the "Ottawa scale" isn't the goal, the TPA has offered to implement annual local passenger caps to allow for whatever city-side infrastructure improvements would be needed as a result of the jet proposal.

Second, should City Council approve the introduction of jets, the existing safeguards that have been in place for the community will remain.

**Fact:** Billy Bishop Airport is a slot-restricted airport. Through the NEF 25 noise cap specified in the Tripartite Agreement governing the airport, Billy Bishop is the most

capacity- and noise-restricted airport in North America today. Air Canada and Porter currently operate 202 commercial slots, and we believe the jet proposal would lead to better utilization of those existing 202 slots. As there are currently no new slots available, the introduction of jets just means that the existing slots will be better utilized.

**Fact:** Billy Bishop Airport operates a strict curfew. The airport is closed to private and commercial flights between 11:00 p.m. and 6:45 a.m. It has been this way for many years and it isn't going to change. When the community sleeps, so does the airport. Unlike Pearson, which sends 155 commercial movements each night over the neighbourhoods of Midtown, Leaside, Don Mills, Etobicoke and North York, for example.

**Fact:** 90% of flights paths to Billy Bishop Airport are over water, causing minimal disruption to residents. Our initial review of the Porter proposal indicates that these flight paths will not change and new navigational technology will, in fact, not hamper the city's development of condo and office buildings in the vicinity of the airport, if so desired. Further, there is no requirement to implement navigational light towers in the Toronto Harbour.

Much of the discourse over the Porter proposal hinges on the impact that jets will have on the waterfront. This is as it should be.

As a member of the waterfront community, the TPA's role is to ensure that the airport's operations fit into, and not dominate, Toronto's remarkable mixed-use waterfront. That's why we are working with City Council to make sure members have what they need to make an informed decision. Should a positive decision be rendered by City Council, the TPA will ensure: completion of a full environmental assessment, preserved access for the private aviation and boating communities, maintained noise restrictions, increased use of shuttle and transit, and improved vehicle traffic flows.

The airport is a success, 90% of Torontonians call it "an asset," and that success deserves to be embraced. But, as the airport's operator, the TPA recognizes that we have to get this right, the Porter proposal can "Do No Harm," and we have to ensure that Toronto's mixed-use waterfront continues to thrive.

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