

sent by e-mail

March 6, 2015



Dear Mr. Iler,

I write this letter to you on behalf of Mark McQueen, PortsToronto Chairman; Gene Cabral, EVP of Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport; and the other PortsToronto staff who you have contacted in recent weeks. I am writing to you on the subject of emergency response and preparedness at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. You may find the information in this letter somewhat repetitive as it is the same information that we have provided to you on several occasions over the last several weeks. I would also like to confirm that this is the last letter we will write to you on the subject, as what we have provided to you to date is comprehensive, detailed and the full extent of what can be said on the matter.

Over the last seven or more years you have made it very clear that you do not approve of the airport or support its operations. You are in fact the founding Chair of an organization dedicated to the airport's closure, a position I might note that is clearly out of step with the sentiment of the vast majority of Toronto residents. You are, of course, entitled to your opinion regarding the airport. However, I do take issue with your transparent and repeated efforts to bring the airport into disrepute by questioning the emergency preparedness and safety of this airport. You have no specific expertise in this area and appear disinterested in the views of those who do. Specifically, experienced and accredited professional individuals such as Chief Jim Sales of the Toronto Fire Department who "*is confident that we have the ability to mitigate an incident...*"¹ or Kim McKinnon from the Toronto Paramedic Services who has "*no qualms about its ability to respond to any kind of incident...*"² or PortsToronto's Gene Cabral, who has more than 20 years of aviation industry experience – having worked at Pearson International Airport prior to coming to Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport in 2011 – and who has already and repeatedly provided you with answers to many of the questions you have asked in this regard.

You continue to reference a report that was written in 1993 that commented on access to the airport in the event of an emergency situation. At more than 20 years old, this report is no longer relevant as it was written in relation to the building of a bridge to the airport, and how such a project would facilitate access and emergency response. This bridge was obviously never built. PortsToronto (then Toronto Port Authority) has subsequently taken a variety of important steps to facilitate appropriate levels of emergency response and site access.

¹ Ben Spurr, "Island Airport Safety Test", *NOW Magazine*, February 25, 2015

² Ben Spurr, "Island Airport Safety Test", *NOW Magazine*, February 25, 2015

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As a result, a significant investment was made by PortsToronto to build an on-site emergency centre and fire hall on the island-side airport grounds so there would be no lapse in response regardless of the situation or mainland access. Enhancements were also made to access and protocols which I will detail later in this letter. The fact that a report that was written in 1993 is now being introduced into a current, modern context – with no reference to what has changed and evolved since then – is misleading, opportunistic and without merit.

Ensuring the safety and security of those at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport is always a top priority for PortsToronto, as it is for every airport. While we do not share the details of our emergency response plan for security reasons, I can assure you that all of our emergency prevention and response protocols and procedures at our airport meet or exceed all Transport Canada regulatory requirements, a fact easily confirmed with Transport Canada and that was published in the *NOW* magazine article of February 26, 2015.

As detailed above, we have a fully functioning fire hall and emergency response centre on the island-side of the airport. This centre is staffed by more than double the number of emergency personnel required by Transport Canada, with state-of-the-art equipment and vehicles which have been upgraded and expanded over the past few years, including two new airport firefighting trucks, a new mid-size pumper and a Fire Command vehicle. The airport's fire department does regular internal and external emergency services training throughout the year, including a full-scale simulation every two years, the most recent of which was done in November 2014, with a full simulation table-top exercise in intervening years. These exercises test our airport's protocols, procedures, communications and planning for emergency and security-related incidents, and to ensure that our airport is ready to respond to any situation. All of our emergency response partners, including Toronto Fire, Toronto Police Service and Toronto EMS, as well as staff and officials from the various security agencies and airlines that operate out of the airport, participate in the training to ensure a fully coordinated response to any situation.

In addition to the emergency centre and fire hall located on the island-side of the airport, we have the fixed-base presence of the Province of Ontario's Ornge Air Ambulance and Paramedics Service at the airport, which provides yet an additional layer of expertise and equipment, should the need arise. Ornge, as you should be aware, is the largest air ambulance and critical care provider in Canada, serving over 13 million people annually.

Given the airport's proximity to the water, the Billy Bishop Airport Fire Department, Toronto Fire Services Squad and the Toronto Police Services Marine Unit also go above and beyond the safety measures required by holding joint ice- and cold-water rescue training to practice water-specific rescue operations during the winter months. At this training, specialized safety equipment is utilized and trained with, again, to ensure we are ready to respond in any situation. Most recently, a training session was held in January 2015 and another will be held later this month, as is standard practice. You may have seen some of the photos we released following prior ice-training exercises.

In addition to having an emergency response centre and full fire crew at the airport, Toronto's emergency responders have the ability to access our airport within minutes by water, through the Toronto Marine Units, and by our ferry, which would be made solely available to emergency response vehicles in the event of an emergency. Our ferry service has also been enhanced with two new ferries being added following the publication of the dated report you continue to cite. The airport's main ferry, the *Marilyn Bell*, was launched in 2010 and can carry up to 200 passengers, crew and up to 15 vehicles. We also have the modern *David Hornell VC* ferry as a backup auxiliary ferry, permanently on ready standby, which is docked to the east of the ferry slip and can be called into service as required. You might note that currently, and for the last two weeks, the City of Toronto ferry is not able to run due to severe weather, yet the airport ferry continues to operate. We have been responding to the City of Toronto's urgent requests for assistance and are readily transporting Toronto Island residents back and forth to their homes, schools, and places of employment without charge, further indication of the reliability of our ferries.

With regard to other means of emergency access and response, a local Fire Hall is located on the neighboring Algonquin Island, and an additional city fire hall, police station and paramedic facility are all located within one kilometre of our airport. Toronto Police Service have acquired a special ice boat to quickly access the airport and harbour areas during the winter months, if required. Toronto Fire has the *William Lyon MacKenzie*, which is capable of ice-breaking and can be used to clear an alternative path to the island if required. In the *NOW* magazine article Fire Chief Jim Sales confirmed that he has no concerns about accessing the island in the event of an emergency, a sentiment that a Toronto Paramedic Services representative echoed. Chief Sales also pointed to our new pedestrian tunnel (which I recall you opposed), will open in the next few months and serves as another important point of access for the airport. In the article he confirms that in an emergency, deploying personnel, not vehicles, is the most important factor and the pedestrian tunnel will be a fast link to get personnel to the island in a matter of minutes. For your reference, approximately 85 emergency responders can access the island through the tunnel every 5 minutes.

All of these measures are part of the extensive Emergency Response System we have in place to ensure we are prepared and able to respond in a rapid and coordinated manner in the unlikely event of a large-scale emergency at our airport. Ensuring the safety and security of our travellers and neighbouring community are top priorities for PortsToronto. I would encourage you to visit our website by clicking [here](#) for information on this subject. On this page you will also learn about some of the recent enhancements to our emergency systems and see images from our November 2014 full-scale simulation that involved more than 100 professionals from all areas of emergency services to test and ensure a coordinated and highly effective response in the unlikely case of a large-scale emergency at the airport.

I hope that this letter and the additional detailed information on our website will provide much-needed context and assurances of the steps we take at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport to ensure the safety and security of all who travel from, or live in close proximity to, the airport. Thank you for your ongoing interest in the airport and our operations. I hope that you will take the opportunity to share its contents with members of your organization.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey Wilson
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Mark McQueen
Gene Cabral, EVP PortsToronto and Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport
Councillor Pam McConnell, Ward 28
Councillor Joe Cressy, Ward 20
Tamara Rudge, Director, Port Policy, Transport Canada
Chris Dunn, City of Toronto, Waterfront Secretariat
Chief Jim Sales, Toronto Fire Department
Nicole Swerhun, Swerhun Facillitation
Kim McKinnon, Toronto Paramedics Services