



CommunityAIR (Airport Impact Review)

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*CommunityAIR - devoted to restoring the lands and harbour now occupied by the Toronto Island airport to park, recreation, and cultural uses.*

## **Results of Candidate Questionnaire -Toronto City Centre Federal By-election**

- What are the positions of the candidates?
- Who cares about Toronto's waterfront?
- Who has taken the time to understand the issues, and respond to the community's concerns?

CommunityAIR put the following questions to the candidates (listed alphabetically). The Conservative candidate chose not to respond. Bob Rae chose to respond with a statement, that appears at the bottom.

Here are the questions, and the answers:

1. The Toronto Port Authority operates a port that is neither self-sufficient , or "of strategic significance to Canada's trade" as required for designation as a Port Authority under the Canada Marine Act. In fact, the port has consistently lost huge sums - \$4,610,000 in 2006 (2005: \$3,366,000), on income of only \$9,913,000 (2005: \$9,686,000). These losses were incurred from the actual operation of the port, and from the Toronto Port Authority's airport operation. Losses of this magnitude have been consistently incurred every year since the Toronto Port Authority was established. The only cargos handled by Toronto's port do not require the Port Authority overhead – cement, gravel, sugar, and salt, for local use, delivered directly to private wharves.

As there is insufficient national interest to justify continuing federal government control, through its five appointees to the board of the Port Authority, of hundreds of acres of prime waterfront land (including 215 acres currently occupied by the Island Airport), Community AIR, and others have called for the federal government to relinquish control of the TPA, and permit the City to appoint five of its seven directors.

Do you support Community AIR's position?

El-Farouk Khaki (NDP): Yes. I support Olivia Chow's initiatives to remove the Toronto Port Authority from the Canadian Marine Act.

Don Meredith (Conservative): No response

Bob Rae (Liberal): See statement below.

Chris Tindall (Green Party): Yes. I am a strong supporter of enabling and empowering communities to make their own decisions. The federal government should not be imposing its incorrect vision for our waterfront on the people of Toronto against our will.

2. The Q400 flown by Porter clearly violates two community rights contained in the tripartite agreement that governs the Island Airport operation:

- it is not within the categories of aircraft permitted to be used for commercial flights, and
- it is prohibited from the airport as an aircraft generating excessive noise, as defined in that agreement.

The TPA and Porter have ignored the community's requests for compliance with those provisions. Noise has become an increasing problem for residents and recreational and cultural users of Toronto's waterfront – and will get far worse if Porter proceeds with its announced expansion from its current four aircraft to 20.

What steps will you take to ensure that Porter and the TPA respect these community rights?

El-Farouk Khaki (NDP): I will work closely with the community to document complaints and bring them to the attention of the Transport Minister. The Toronto Port Authority must consider the local community concerns. I will work to close the airport and return the Toronto Port Authority's control to the city of Toronto.

Don Meredith (Conservative): No response

Bob Rae (Liberal): See statement below.

Chris Tindall (Green Party): Ideally, the island airport wouldn't exist at all. I oppose expansion of the island airport, and would work to build alternatives (for example, better rail service including high speed rail) so that there is no longer a demand for an island airport and the land can be returned to the community.

3. Safety is a serious concern at the Island Airport – the runway safety areas are far shorter than international standards, the runway is too short for a fully loaded Q400, bird strikes are common and can cause serious accidents.

Given that there is little margin for error – the runway's ends are perilously close to deep water - do you support Community Air's position that an independent safety audit should be done of the airport?

El-Farouk Khaki (NDP): Yes. Absolutely.

Don Meredith (Conservative): No response

Bob Rae (Liberal): See statement below.

Chris Tindall (Green Party): It is not wise to have a busy airport so close to a downtown core to begin with, the least we can do is ensure that it's as safe as possible.

4. The TPA has refused to pay its fair share of property taxes to the City, but at the same time expects the City of Toronto's emergency services to be available should an emergency occur. Community AIR believes that the TPA should pay its fair share of property taxes.

Do you support removing the current exemption from property taxes for the Toronto Port Authority?

El-Farouk Khaki (NDP): Yes. The Toronto Port Authority must pay its fair share. The federal government is already starving Toronto of infrastructure and transit funding. The least this federal agency can do is pay its taxes.

Don Meredith (Conservative): No response

Bob Rae (Liberal): See statement below.

Chris Tindall (Green Party): Yes

5. Bill C-23 amends the prohibition on port authorities receiving federal subsidies, and gives Port Authorities access to limited infrastructure funds, intended for municipalities only.

Do you support Bill C-23?

El-Farouk Khaki (NDP): No. The NDP is firmly opposed to C-23. Our amendments would remove the TPA from the Canadian Marine Act.

Don Meredith (Conservative): No response

Bob Rae (Liberal): See statement below.

Chris Tindall (Green Party): On the one hand, it is important for the federal government to be able to fund ports. However, in Toronto's case, many have argued that what we call a port is not, in fact, a port. Therefore, I believe that federal funds for Toronto infrastructure would be better directed towards the municipality. (There may be cases in other cities where there actually are busy, functioning ports that require infrastructure funding from the federal government.)

6. Do you think it is important for the Federal Government to retain the 215 acre 'footprint' (the airport lands) in Toronto?

El-Farouk Khaki (NDP): The Island Airport should be closed and turned over to the City of Toronto for parkland.

Don Meredith (Conservative): No response

Bob Rae (Liberal): See statement below.

Chris Tindall (Green Party): No. I would advocate for that land to be turned over to the authority that manages Toronto Island parkland so that it remains in the public domain. It's important that once the airport is shut down it's not just replaced with giant condos or some other private space.

Bob Rae's statement, in response to this questionnaire, was:

"Thank you for sending me your questionnaire. I find it simpler to state my position, which I have expressed on a number of occasions.

I believe the Toronto Port Authority should be devolved to the City of Toronto. I also believe the contract between the Authority and Porter Airlines is a legally binding contract, and that breaking or dissolving that contract would be a commercially unwise decision.

Issues have been raised about the safety of the airport, noise issues, and so on. The regulatory responsibility for any airport rests with the Department of Transport, and if letters and complaints are not answered satisfactorily, there are further legal steps that can be taken to require the federal government to exercise its responsibility if the courts conclude that authorities have not been doing their job.

I am not opposed to the Port Authority receiving infrastructure funding - I would presume that if it was a municipally controlled authority it would also be eligible.

Thank you for your questions."

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