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Poilievre backs Billy Bishop airport expansion as Liberals face pressure to oppose plan; Conservative Leader says move would be 'massively profitable' and would pay for itself through airline fees

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Conservative Leader [Pierre Poilievre](#) says he supports expanding Billy Bishop Airport in downtown Toronto, as critics ramp up pressure on Prime Minister [Mark Carney](#) and local Liberal MPs to oppose the Ontario government's push to allow jets there.

Mr. Poilievre, at a press conference in Toronto on Sunday, said expanding the island airport would be good for the economy as well as the environment, because it would stop cars from having to commute to Pearson International Airport west of the city.

He added that an airport expansion would be "massively profitable" and would pay for itself through airline fees, and he called on the federal government to issue permits immediately.

"I'm unequivocal: I'm for more flights, for more competition, for lower costs, for an expanded Billy Bishop Airport," said Mr. Poilievre, who first supported the expansion three years ago.

Ontario Premier [Doug Ford](#) has been vocal about his desire to expand the airport and recently introduced a bill to take over the City of Toronto's land at the airport and override municipal objections to jets.

At the same time, Mr. Carney and local Liberal MPs are facing pressure from provincial New Democrats as well environmentalists and others opposed to jets to come out against the potential expansion.

Opponents warn that jets and more frequent flights will spoil waterfront parks and the city's harbour. But Mr. Ford, who has also said he will declare the airport a "[special economic zone](#)" where provincial or municipal laws could be ignored, insists expansion will provide competition for the larger Pearson airport and create jobs.

The Ontario government's bill, introduced on April 23, would remove Toronto from the tripartite agreement with the Toronto Port Authority (a federal agency) and the federal government that has long governed the airport and bans jets.

The bill also appears to empower the province to potentially take over almost all of the rest of the Toronto Islands, but the provincial government says it only intends to take land needed to expand Billy Bishop.

Last week, Ontario NDP Leader Marit Stiles released an open letter to Mr. Carney, demanding that he quash what she called "a callous land grab" that threatens the parks and beaches of Toronto Islands, which attract thousands of visitors every summer.

Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz, who chairs the Toronto Liberal caucus of 23 MPs, said Sunday that she won't respond to "political positioning" on either side of the debate. She acknowledged there is "a lot of worry" about Ontario's plans for the airport, but added that the city, the province and the federal government have worked alongside each other for three decades to produce a healthy Toronto waterfront.

She said any changes to the airport must be made unanimously by all three parties in the tripartite agreement and only after meaningful consultations with community groups, stakeholders and Indigenous communities.

“There’s no plan to actually respond to. I do acknowledge the consternation and the fear that Torontonians have. And you know, I spent all Friday, by the way, listening to constituents tell me about their concerns.”

The Prime Minister’s Office did not respond to a request for comment on Sunday. Federal Transport Minister Steve MacKinnon’s office repeated its previous statements on the matter, saying any decisions regarding the airport will require the consensus of all three signatories on the agreement.

“The federal government will continue working with all parties to ensure that strong standards for safety, environmental protection, noise and community impact are upheld for any future proposals,” said spokeswoman Marie-Justine Torres.

In an interview on Sunday, Ms. Stiles said she wants to hear directly from Mr. Carney.

“This is about the Prime Minister very clearly using the power that he has to make sure that this Premier doesn’t continue to play games with the future of the city of Toronto. It’s outrageous,” she said.

Ontario Transportation Minister Prabmeet Sarkaria said the province intends to use “every tool available” and will work with its partners to expand the airport.

“The economic benefit to Ontario in expanding Billy Bishop Airport is too important to not move forward. If it were up to the NDP, nothing would ever get built and this project would never reach its full economic potential,” he said in a statement on Sunday.

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