



**Submission to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy**  
**Regarding Bill 110, Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026**

**Submitted by**

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## **About the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario**

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) is recognized by the Government of Ontario and by industry partners as the voice of tourism in the province. TIAO represents a broad membership base that includes tourism businesses and operators, destination marketing and management organizations, regional tourism organizations, sector associations, educators, and other stakeholders. Through industry consultations, working groups, policy roundtables, data collection and evidence-based advocacy, TIAO works to ensure that the political, economic, and regulatory environment supports a strong, competitive, and growing tourism industry across Ontario.

## Introduction

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the *Building Billy Bishop Airport Act*. As the recognized voice of tourism in Ontario, representing a broad membership base that includes tourism businesses and operators, destination marketing and management organizations, regional tourism organizations, and more, we are supportive of the government's efforts to modernize airport infrastructure, support more choice and convenience for air passenger traffic, and unlock the economic potential of the tourism sector.

## Background

Tourism is one of Canada's top service exports, and an important pillar of Ontario's provincial economy. In 2024, tourism contributed \$31 billion to Ontario's GDP, supporting over 300,000 jobs and over 93,000 businesses.<sup>1</sup> In Toronto alone, over 28 million visitors contributed \$13.5 billion to the city's economy, supported 70,000 jobs, and generated \$2.3 billion in total tax revenue.<sup>2</sup> As a tariff-free services export, tourism is uniquely positioned to help Ontario diversify trade and convert overseas demand into local revenue, with a recent report indicating that a 1% rise in national inbound tourism volumes could generate a \$1.06 billion increase in total Canadian exports over a two-year period.<sup>3</sup>

Strong air connectivity is an important part of the tourism ecosystem, with over 55 million passengers enplaned and deplaned in Ontario in 2024.<sup>4</sup> In addition to tens of millions of Canadians, over 4 million international visitors landed at Ontario airports in 2025. Approximately half (49%) of them were from the United States.<sup>5</sup> Air travel from the US is also projected to grow more quickly than land arrivals over the next few years, with the former forecast to grow an average of 6.7% each year between now and 2030.<sup>6</sup> With interest and demand growing, our infrastructure needs to keep up to realize this economic potential.

Against this backdrop, the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport is an important hub for both Toronto and for the province. The airport currently welcomes 2 million passengers per year and offers service to more than 20 cities in Canada and the United States.<sup>7</sup> The airport generates approximately \$2 billion in total annual economic output, while those who arrive to the airport spend another \$150 million per year on accommodation, transportation, retail,

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada; MTCG's Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

<sup>2</sup> Destination Toronto. (2026). Annual Report: 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Destinations International. (2026). The Impact of the Visitor Economy on Canadian Exports

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 23-10-0253-01 Air passenger traffic at Canadian airports, annual

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 24-10-0056-01 Leading indicator, International visitors entering or returning to Canada by air, by country of residence and traveller type

<sup>6</sup> Destination Canada. (2026). Canada's Global Moment: Canadian Tourism Outlook

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.billybishopairport.com/corporate/economic-impact/>

and food and beverage. With the recent introduction of US Customers and Border Protection preclearance and the increased activity it will facilitate, the airport is projected to support up to 32,000 jobs and generate \$5 billion in annual economic activity.

### **Building Billy Bishop Airport Act, 2026**

TIAO is therefore supportive of the *Building Billy Bishop Airport Act* and the government's effort to modernize Toronto's downtown airport, create more choice and convenience for air passenger traffic, and support the economic potential of tourism in Ontario. By authorizing the Minister of Transportation to prescribe and vest prescribed lands owned by the City of Toronto in the crown, compensating the City of Toronto based on market value, and updating the Tripartite Agreement under which the land is currently governed, the proposed legislation promises to support the long-term modernization of Billy Bishop Airport, help meet future demand in southern Ontario, and support more routes within Ontario and beyond.

The proposed legislation recognizes the important role that governance plays in planning and designing Billy Bishop Airport for the future. This includes facilitating the development of new infrastructure to support modernization and unlock investment, as well as the due diligence and assessment needed to ensure long term and sustainable growth. TIAO is encouraged by recent public polling, for instance, which shows that three quarters of Toronto residents believe that Billy Bishop Airport is a good use of land and are supportive of adding new destinations across Canada and the United States.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, TIAO has heard from its members regarding the restrictive effect of the current governance model, and its negative impact on industry growth.

In addition to improving international connections to Ontario, the proposed legislation also sets the stage for improved air connectivity within the province. This includes improved connections between southern and northern Ontario. This is a valuable opportunity to unlock the tremendous economic potential of northern Ontario, which offers some of the most extraordinary natural, cultural, and adventure experiences in the country. Despite limited connectivity, this part of the province already draws 8 million people per year and generates \$1.5 billion in direct spending. Better connectivity through a modernized downtown airport will create a more seamless path from Toronto's core to northern destinations, opening the region to a new wave of domestic and international visitors.

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<sup>8</sup> Viewpoints. (2024). "Public Opinion Survey Report."

## **Conclusion**

The *Building Billy Bishop Airport Act* is a valuable opportunity to improve the governance model of the Billy Bishop Airport and create a path towards long-term certainty. These changes are especially timely given increased interest in domestic travel among Canadians, growth in international arrivals, and world class events like the FIFA World Cup, which are bringing global attention to the province. TIAO is therefore supportive of the proposed legislation and looks forward to further engagement and ongoing communication with the provincial government regarding the modernization and expansion of Billy Bishop Airport.