

Toronto Pearson should not become the next Hong Kong Airport, says reader

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To the editor:

The GTAA is racing to make Pearson International a mega-hub like the Hong Kong Airport. For Howard Eng, it's the logical next step. He was responsible for the phenomenal growth that turned Hong Kong into an international mega hub.

In 2012, Mr. Eng became President and CEO of the GTAA, and in the ensuing six years he transformed its management culture and corporate goals. From an organization responsive to the needs of the communities within which it operated, the GTAA's sole focus now is to become a mega-hub like Hong Kong, despite the opposition of angry and frustrated communities that are being steamrolled.

Should Mr. Eng's Hong Kong success be repeated in Toronto?

There's a simple reason why it shouldn't. While the Hong Kong Airport is situated in the bay, surrounded by water and far away from the city, Toronto Pearson is in the heart of the GTA, surrounded by residential communities, all of which are up in arms as a result of the growth in flights that Mr. Eng has won kudos for.

Can the GTAA be stopped from transforming Pearson into the next Hong Kong?

It's not an easy task. Both public and private corporations, as well as crown corporations, have shareholders that they are accountable to. But, in the case of the GTAA, a not-for-profit organization, there are no shareholders. Mr. Eng is responsible to the Board of Directors and the latter is accountable to no one!

How can such a governance model lead to policies and decisions that are equitable to all stakeholders, including GTA communities?

The GTAA mantra is simple and attractive to the aviation industry and politicians at all levels:

Pearson Growth = Economic Growth.

But this equation is flawed. It should be:

Pearson Growth = Economic Growth minus Community Impacts.

The impacts are real and significant enough to warrant a reduction in growth, not the acceleration we have seen in recent years.

How can such a dichotomy occur in a civilized and enlightened society?

It's possible only because the GTAA is accountable to no one!

Isn't it time that it's held to account?

Antonio Natalizio, retired engineer from Etobicoke

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