

# BURLINGTON EXECUTIVE AIRPORT

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April 10, 2014

As the owner of the Burlington Executive Airpark, I am proud of our long and accomplished history in Halton Region.

The Airpark opened in 1962. Since that time, it has served as a flight training centre, an aircraft maintenance base, a recreational flying facility, and a key transportation hub for the residents and businesses of Halton.

Thousands of pilots have received their training at Burlington Airpark, many of whom now fly the airliners and charters that safely transport thousands of Canadians every day.

For most of its existence, the Airpark has been home to aircraft maintenance facilities. The training and maintenance facilities, along with the charter services, are independently owned, and provide skilled employment opportunities for our community. In addition, there are jobs for those who provide services to the Airpark and the businesses located there.

Many leading companies, including Ford Motor Company, Mercedes-Benz Canada, Evertz Microsystems and L-3 Communications, use the Airpark for the transportation of people and key materials.

The Airpark is also utilized for patient transfers and organ donation flights, given its proximity to world-class medical institutions that serve Burlington, Milton, Oakville, Mississauga and Hamilton. Ontario's air ambulance service uses special facilities installed at the Airpark for advanced training. The Airpark is also used for law enforcement, search and rescue, military and ambulance flights.

Finally, the Airpark is home to a thriving recreational aviation community. It is the host of community service events such as educational flights for school groups, the semi-annual Big Brothers/Big Sisters Air Lift and serves as a partner and rest stop in the PwC Epic Tour Halton, a regional biking event.

There is a shortage of smaller general aviation airports in Southern Ontario with reasonable proximity to population centres. The Airpark represents a unique, essential asset for Halton Region.

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But we want to improve and do more.

I purchased the Airpark from the Kovachik family in 2006, having done my own flight training here. I thought it was a wonderful facility, but I could envision areas for improvement. Since that time, I have invested more than \$4-million in infrastructure improvements. I have received no financial assistance from any level of government in doing so. This has included widening and improving the main runway and taxiways, improving the refueling facilities and building additional hangars, as well as future plans to modernize the hangars, taxiways and the terminal building.

We have always been open about our plans and goals to improve the Airpark. Over the years, we posted plans on our website, we have contributed material for economic development publications issued by the City of Burlington, we have held a yearly reception as well several Open Houses and barbeques which have been attended by neighbours, Airpark users and politicians of every level, including the Mayor and City Councillors. At these events, we have shown the improvements to the Airpark and explained our plans for the future. We have specifically sought and attended meetings with representatives of the City of Burlington over the past several years concerning the improvements to the Airpark. We want to continue to inform and involve our neighbours in our planning.

Our efforts to improve the Airpark were halted in July of last year, after complaints were raised by a few of our neighbours, some of whom had only recently purchased their homes, being well aware of the existence of the Airpark. They started making unsubstantiated claims that the fill being imported to level the remaining Airpark lands was waste, which of course it was not.

The situation then became political. Councillors at the City of Burlington began to listen and to repeat the unsubstantiated rumours of water contamination. The City of Burlington, citing its Site Alternation by-law, took steps to stop the improvements. Despite the fact the Airpark is federally regulated, we met with the local Councillors, City officials and our neighbors to try to address everyone's concerns reasonably. Notwithstanding, the Mayor of Burlington publically vowed to take whatever steps the City could to "hammer" the Airpark.

To be clear, every test of neighbouring streams and wells has met or passed the federal and provincial environmental standards. There have been six inspections, studies and/or tests carried out since 2009. None have indicated any problem with the fill or an adverse impact on the quality of

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local water. Further, after discussions with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment last summer, the Airpark is in the process of completing the most comprehensive study to date by carrying out a voluntary test well program.

Sadly, both the City and ourselves are spending time and money addressing issues in court as to whether or not the City is entitled to control the improvements at the Airpark. Over the past 60 years, courts of this country have held that the Federal Government, acting through Transport Canada, has exclusive jurisdiction over the operations of the nation's airports and aerodromes – about where they are located and the way they are designed, laid out, built, and improved. There are more than 1,400 airports in Canada. If each one was subjected to different municipal standards, there would be chaos, which is what the courts have consistently held. We hope for a resolution to this in June.

I am saddened the situation has come to this.

I've always respected our neighbours, and the City of Burlington, and was hopeful that we could have reached a compromise that protected and enhanced the interests of all parties.

I'm an optimist. I still believe it can happen.

In the meantime, the Burlington Executive Airpark will continue to serve the interests of our community, and our Region. We're here for the long term and look forward to moving forward with our neighbours.

Vince Rossi

Burlington Airpark Inc.