

# City okays airport expansion

## Waterfront residents horrified

By Adam Giles

As far as the city is concerned, Toronto's City Centre Airport should expand.

Toronto City Council put an end to years of meetings, debates and chaotic public forums when it voted 29-11 to approve a bridge link to the island airport late in November.

Council's approval followed a November 24 joint recommendation from the Parks and Economic Development and Planning and Transportation

Committees to expand the TCCA.

Airport opponents were angry then – the joint committee's recommendation flew in the face of the Waterfront Reference Group's recent disapproval of airport expansion – and they are infuriated now.

"We're horrified by council's decision. It's reckless and totally unwarranted," said Bill Freeman, spokesman for Community Air, a group of local residents and environmentalists opposed to expanding the airport. "This goes a long way to ruining the clean, green waterfront that was promised to us by the mayor."

"It was the stupidest decision council could make. Of course, council has never passed up the opportunity to make stupid decisions," said Joe Pantalone, councillor for Ward 19 Trinity-

Spadina and chair of the Waterfront Reference Group. Pantalone represented one of the 11 "no" votes at council.

Council's approval includes plans to construct a new terminal at the airport and connect the island to the mainland with a bridge link.

"This was a very significant victory," said Henry Pankratz, chair of the Toronto Port Authority, which owns the airport. "This has been under discussion for so long, but council's approval now brings some sense of closure to it. I think council members recognize this airport is an underutilized asset and wanted to make it a viable part of the city."

"The waterfront is an asset," said Joe Mihevc, councillor for Ward 21 St. Paul's.

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# Residents will continue fight

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Mihevc, who cast a “no” vote, said airport expansion is smart in the short-term because it is good for the economy, but in the long-term it will destroy the waterfront.

Community Air and fellow airport opponents are regrouping and they remain optimistic that they can halt the TCCA’s progress further down the approval process. Under the Tripartite Agreement, the Port Authority, the city, and Transport Canada must all consent to expansion. It is now up to Minister of Transport David Collette to sign off on the city’s recommendation.

“We haven’t given up. We’re

developing our strategies and pursuing different ways to approach this. This is a setback but it’s not the end,” said Freeman.

Freeman said Community Air will ask the Port Authority to carry out another environmental assessment before the bridge is built—the Port Authority commissioned an assessment after council approved a bridge link in 1998.

Even some councillors who voted “yes” to airport expansion don’t expect anything to come of council’s decision.

“I don’t think it will ever become an expanded airport. I truly believe we’ll wind up with a casino on the island,” said Rob

Ford, councillor for Ward 2 Etobicoke North.

Ford said he voted in favour of expansion because people in his ward urged him to do something to reduce the number of Pearson airport planes overhead.

But other airport supporters are confident that Transport Canada will uphold City Council’s plan to expand the airport.

“I think the federal government will have no trouble approving it. It would surprise me if they didn’t,” said Frances Nunziata, councillor for Ward 11 York South-Weston.

Pankratz anticipates construction of the bridge will begin in the spring and completed by the same time in 2004.

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