

Airport near Markham, Stouffville would be larger than Buttonville

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

A business case is emerging behind the scenes for a Pickering airport larger than the facility it would replace, Buttonville Airport in Markham.

In a study to be presented next month, politicians and other members of a special Pickering Advisory Committee expect to see the proposed location, size and flight patterns for an airport somewhere on federal holdings in north Pickering and east Markham.

Opponents and supporters of the project agree that an airport primarily for general aviation — as Buttonville is today — cannot break even.

"Building an airport the size of Buttonville won't be doing anyone any good," said Durham Regional Chairperson Roger Anderson in an interview.

Mr. Anderson said he's not suggesting an airport as big as Lester B. Pearson International, but one capable of handling any plane so it can receive Pearson's emergencies and provide the larger airport with relief.

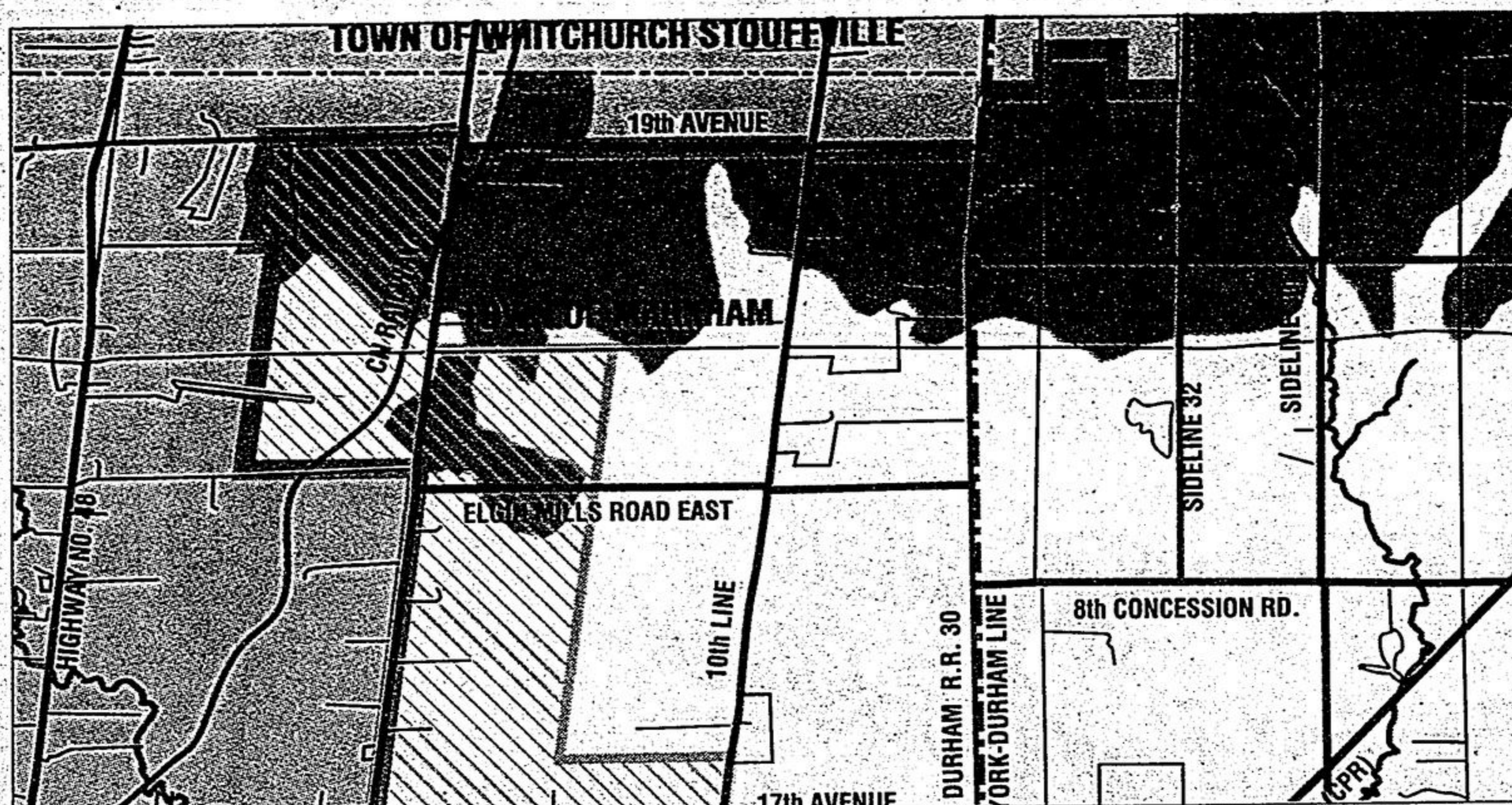
Pickering would also launch charters to Florida and short-flight destinations such as New York City, he said, adding, "That's not unreasonable."

In 1972, the federal government expropriated 18,500 acres in Markham, Pickering and Uxbridge for Toronto's second international airport.

The plan was shelved in 1975, but recently the government reserved 7,500 acres as protected greenspace and allowed the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, operators of Pearson, to develop an airport plan for Pickering.

Although part of a larger study which will take years to complete and review, the financial study appearing next month "will help us make some decisions," said Peter Gregg, GTAA communications manager.

Mr. Gregg said the GTAA's consultants are considering a 2012-2013 opening for a "regional reliever" airport at Pickering, primarily for general aviation. A second phase, "moving to commercial services," would begin by 2018-2020. There may be a third stage after that, he said.



Land set aside for a Pickering airport (within green border) extends into Markham and up to the border of Whitchurch-Stouffville. Inside that area, the brown section (within the Oak Ridges Moraine) and diagonal lined area (7,500 acres of greenspace) are protected from development. YRNG GRAPHIC

Meanwhile, expansion will give Pearson capacity to handle 50 million passengers a year. About 28 million used Pearson last year, down 3.1 per cent from 2000, according to the Swiss-based Airport Council International.

Even so, Ruth Burkholder, president of the Markham Board of Trade and a PAC member said the committee was told Pearson "will be full" by 2019, making Pickering a necessity.

Whitchurch-Stouffville's mayor Wayne Emmerson, also on the PAC, said he's hoping financial estimates next month will show the airport can pay for itself. "I feel confident that they'll be able to do well," he said.

But Dave Pickles, a Pickering city councillor present at some PAC meetings, said he's not convinced an airport is needed or that the non-profit GTAA can make a credible business case. "I don't think it stands on its own without some form of subsidies," he said.

One available arrangement, which Mr. Gregg acknowledged "is an option that could be looked at," is a special "free trade" industrial zone around the airport.

Mirabel, operating north of Montreal at one-tenth its capacity and restricted to charter flights and air cargo, opened such a zone in

2000 to attract export-oriented companies. So far, 12 have relocated at Mirabel to enjoy freedom from customs and an income and capital tax holiday.

Durham Regional Councillor

Mark Holland said from a federal perspective there's "an inherent logic" to such a zone at Pickering.

"It stands to reason that would be the strategy," he said.

Though he supports an industri-


al area around the airport, Mr. Anderson insisted such development be taxable, not free. "They're going to have a hard time getting a sewer from us if they don't pay taxes," he said.

Airport opponents say they are frustrated by a lack of information on the proposed airport and possible development strategies for the large assemblies of provincial land remaining in Pickering and Markham.

At a rally which drew 150 to 200 people to a farm on the Markham-Pickering boundary late last month, speakers urged people to apply pressure to politicians in order to protect the vast and well-preserved agricultural area — known to preservationists for three decades as Toronto's Green Door — from urban sprawl.

Markham resident John Kay directed people to look at the corn and farm animals around him. "Isn't this all beautiful?" he said. "It's all up on the block ready to be carved."

Last week, Canadian Alliance Transport critic James Moore said people have written him to say they want more involvement in the airport planning process. "The public has to be brought in at the front end," the MP concluded.



The Markham Village

OLDEN DAYS & ANTIQUE CARS

Sunday, August 25, 2002


10am - 4pm Markham Main St., North of Hwy 7

COME FOR THE FUN

Vintage & Antique Cars

Antiques, Crafts and Other Treasures

- Antique Vendors •
- 3 Stages of Entertainment •
- Best Costume Competition •
- Raffle •
- Poker Run •
- Rain or Shine •
- The street will be closed •
- and more... •




Do you have an item you want appraised?

Bring your treasure to our **Antiques on the Road Show** where Tom Keeling will give you an appraisal. (\$5 per item. All proceeds to Markhaven Home for Seniors).

ENTERTAINMENT

- Briar Crawford
- Not Affiliated Big Band
- Nuraw Blues Band
- Tim Clarke
- Elvis, King Creole
- Rob Christian on Flute
- Tartan Pleasure Celtic Band
- Simon Maxwell sings Sinatra

SPONSORED BY



MARKHAM ECONOMIST & SUN

To register, or for information, call 905-472-2462
Register on-line at www.markhamvillage.com/autoregistration.html
or by e-mail at auto@markhamvillage.com

DENTURES

- Complete and partial dentures
- Dentures over dental implants
- Repairs & relines of existing dentures
- New patients welcome
- No charge for consultations

ED EDWARDS D.D.
Denturist

6212 Main Street (just east of the train station)
Stouffville

(905) 642-7474

