

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF 45 MAIN ARGUMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN RAISED FOR/AGAINST KEEPING EDMONTON CITY CENTRE AIRPORT OPEN

Over the last two weeks of June 2009, I conducted an extensive review to determine all of the issues raised for/against keeping the ECCA open.

A number of issues seemed to keep coming up again and again in the media, without any analysis or verification of statements made.

This review examines the 45 issues individually, and demonstrates a clear winner in this "debate": keeping the ECCA open.

Special thanks to the staff at the City Archives for their assistance in these research efforts.

Please direct any questions about this spreadsheet to Myron Belej (myronbelej@yahoo.com).

Most current/accurate edition available at: "<http://www.cityplanner.ca/ecca/CriticalReview-ECCAarguments.xls>" (Last updated: July 2, 2009)

ISSUE	√	FOR CLOSURE	FOR KEEPING IT OPEN	√
1. Maintenance is Required		An estimated \$35-million worth of rehabilitation to both runways, roads, storm sewers and other work should be completed at the Edmonton City Centre Airport by 2017. It has been suggested that much of this cost would be borne by Edmonton's taxpayers.	<p>\$35 million is equivalent to a mere \$5.33/citizen per year over the next 8 years.</p> <p>Our homes require routine maintenance, and so do airports. Keeping up with the maintenance on the existing facility is a lot less expensive than building another airport somewhere else. A new airport costs upwards of \$4-7 billion, with Dubai's "World Central" airport coming in at \$30 billion, plus the cost of land.</p>	√
2. Tax Revenues		It has been suggested that new housing means increased property taxes (estimated at \$75-90 million/year by completion of redevelopment)	<p>Property tax revenues are not surplus revenues - they are spent on the upkeep of roads, parks, and recreation facilities; and on services such as police, ambulance, fire. Property tax revenues typically do not cover all the costs associated with managing and maintaining an average residential neighbourhood.</p> <p>Although tax revenue at ECCA presently appears low (\$ 950,000: property + business taxes), ECCA and associated businesses contribute about \$18 million to City coffers yearly. As well, the leaseholders should be largely responsible for their own maintenance, so the point is moot whether property tax revenues are currently low or not, as they should cover the costs they are intended to.</p> <p>However, ECCA currently generates \$407 million/year in economic output, which would disappear almost entirely in the event of closure. It has been pointed out that ECCA pays \$5.1 million in provincial taxes and \$18.6 million in federal taxes, and offices for both provincial and federal governments are on site. One would therefore expect financial benefits to the City of Edmonton, such as grants, from both these governments to decrease, in the event our City was responsible for such a large decrease in each of their respective budgets.</p>	√

<p>3. Proceeds from the Sale of the Land</p>		<p>It has been suggested that the airport lands could be sold for \$500 million. It has further been suggested that these monies would exceed potential revenue from the ECCA.</p>	<p>The ECCA currently generates \$407 million/year in economic output, which is twice the \$230 million that the sale of the lands may actually earn under current market conditions - not \$500 million. The net earnings of course would be much lower, considering the expensive environmental cleanup costs (because the City cannot sell contaminated land), significant upgrades to roadways and other infrastructure, and lease payouts and compensation that would be required. Even more importantly however, the Airport Lands represent a significant physical asset, one that the City can leverage financing against, perhaps at 10 times the land value. This means that even the lands were worth \$500 million, the City could be giving up a leveraging capacity of \$5 billion. Or if the land is now actually worth only \$230 million, the City could be giving up a leveraging capacity of \$2.30 billion.</p> <p>Land value, over the long term, particularly near the centre of the city, goes up. To illustrate this point, \$35,400 was all that was required to set up the original runway 80 years ago, and the land may now be worth 10,000 times that original amount. Think what it will be worth in another 80 years. And given the City of Edmonton is a Corporation - a Corporate body or eternal entity, if you will - that will be able to take advantage of further leveraging as the lands increase in value over time, it makes no economic sense to sell off such a major asset. Edmonton City Council recently approved the sale of another capital asset (\$75 million for the sale of the Epcor plant), and that money will be gone in 5 years - and not even for another capital project.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>4. Mixed Use Opportunities</p>		<p>It has been suggested that new housing on the ECCA lands could be built mixed use with commercial opportunities as well.</p>	<p>The Edmonton Municipal Airport lands represent the only municipally-accessible industrial neighbourhood within a 4.5-kilometre radius of the downtown. These industrial lands take up about 3.4% of the 64 km² area surrounding the downtown. The remainder consists of residential neighbourhoods, and two owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway. (see fourth tab of this spreadsheet named "Use Map") Therefore converting the site to housing and commercial uses would significantly decrease the mix of uses. If anything, we need additional industrial lands within that radius to achieve a greater "mix" of uses. A mix of uses already exists on the airport lands - industrial lands are co-located with commercial users, schools, doggy day care, hotels, small businesses and more. Additional commercial and residential dwellings, as well as public parkland are located immediately across the street from the ECCA lands. There are plenty of other existing neighbourhoods with underutilized multifamily zoning in the city where multifamily housing projects could be built.</p>	<p>√</p>

<p>5. Environmental Cleanup Costs</p>		<p>It has been suggested that any cleanup measures that are required will not be that expensive, based on comparisons by Edmonton Airports to two other airport redevelopments in the United States, including one in Texas where the cleanup cost \$55 million.</p> <p>It has been suggested that contamination on the airport lands may be localized, based on results from Level 1 Environmental Site Assessments.</p>	<p>The Texas comparison is poor. At Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, a Former Air Force base was redeveloped into a civilian airport - a continuation of an industrial use. The estimated cost for cleanup of \$55 million in 1998 dollars (when the cleanup was done) is equivalent \$72 million in 2009 dollars. Although the site was larger than the ECCA lands, environmental standards have become more stringent since 1998. Also, cleaning up a site to residential standards is significantly more expensive than cleaning up to industrial standards for another airport.</p> <p>It was pointed out that Epcor has refused to put new water lines into certain buildings on the airport lands because of the level of toxic contaminants in the soil.</p> <p>Considering the quantity of jet fuel and industrial chemicals that have been used by the airport and associated businesses over the last 81 years, environmental testing and cleanup to residential standards could easily cost hundreds of millions of dollars to remediate.</p> <p>One writer pointed out that the cost of even remediating a typical service station site is \$1 million to \$2 million.</p> <p>Level 1 Environmental Site Assessments identify potential sources of contamination. Level 2 Environmental Site Assessments involve conducting borehole tests (drilling into the ground for soil samples) to see how bad the contamination is and how far it extends, before starting the cleanup process. Level 2 testing would therefore be required before we could have a full picture of how bad the contamination really is.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>6. Only Small Planes</p>		<p>Flights out of ECCA are limited to 10 passengers.</p>	<p>According to Edmonton Airports' 1999 Annual Report: "Edmonton Airports manages a Passenger Access Policy that regulates the capacity of passenger aircraft utilizing Edmonton City Centre Airport. In 1999, Edmonton Airports approved a change to the policy to allow 19-seat aircraft to operate at Edmonton City Centre Airport, while maintaining the restriction of carrying a maximum of 10 passengers."</p> <p>Running planes at full capacity (19 passengers instead of 10) would effectively double the number of passengers without increasing air traffic. It has been suggested that allowing 19 passenger planes to run at full capacity would enhance business traffic into the city centre, thereby reducing the loss of offices to Calgary, because Calgary cannot compete with the convenience of the City Centre Airport; however, Calgary's international airport is twice as close to the downtown as ours, and would be more competitive to big business flyers.</p>	<p>√</p>

7. NAIT Expansion		It has been suggested that NAIT "needs" the land because it is "land-locked" by the airport.	<p>It has been pointed out that the province already has land available for NAIT's expansion south of the River. ECCA was there first, and NAIT knew it only had so much space when it was established in 1960. However, NAIT could expand on site. It has parking lots it can and should expand over top of, since the LRT is coming soon and less parking will be needed. For additional building space, NAIT can fully expand over their parking lots and put the parking spaces underground. Or, perhaps NAIT should move and allow the ECCA to expand.</p>	√
8. Lease Agreements			<p>The fact that such a long lease agreement was signed shows the initial commitment on the part of the City of Edmonton to keeping ECCA open. Edmonton Airports has a lease until 2052 and would have to be paid out in the event of a closure. Even if the leaseholder, Edmonton Airports, gave the property back to the city for free, it has been pointed out that the airport's subtenants would continue to enjoy the right to possession under the subleases and the city would become liable. The City would therefore be responsible for relocation costs and compensation for every impacted airport business, and this would represent a significant cost for taxpayers given over \$400 million dollars of economic output are generated on the airport lands each year.</p>	√
9. Height Restrictions		<p>The Federal agency in charge of air traffic control, Nav Can, regulations impose height restrictions on buildings near the airport lands to 36 stories. It has been suggested that these height restrictions serve as an economic disincentive to developers.</p>	<p>There are many other places in Edmonton where highrises can be built without these height restrictions. These height restrictions have been around for some time, and most of Edmonton's buildings have not been built to the full height limit. As well, there continues to be lots of development happening downtown. It was pointed out that a world-class designer who visited Edmonton said he liked the "human scale" of the buildings. This "human scaled" skyline contributes to Edmonton's character.</p>	√
10. 24-Hour Service	Draw	<p>The International offers 24-hour service, something the CCA can't because of noise restrictions. Edmonton International Airport also has plenty of room for expansion.</p>	<p>ECCA is open 24 hours a day, and noise restrictions operate from 10pm until 7am. ECCA doesn't serve people that travel during the middle of the night.</p>	Draw

11. Medevac Flights		<p>It has been suggested that more medevac flights are being handled by helicopter, and that helicopters often land directly at hospitals. For example, STARS air ambulance can cover 94 per cent of Alberta's population and has the ability to land directly at hospitals in Edmonton. It has also been pointed out that most medevac flights are not emergencies.</p>	<p>It has been pointed out that 90% of all medevacs are carried out by high-speed, pressurized, fixed-wing turboprop airplanes. Helicopters are slower than airplanes, and have a limited range. Helicopters typically land directly at hospitals, but an average of 4,000 fixed-wing medevac flights land at the ECCA each year. Of those, time is critical for 350 adult patients and 15 of the 290 neo-natal and pediatric intensive-care cases. As the Edmonton region grows, more and more flights of all types, including those with time-sensitivity, will be required. Without ECCA, people will die, more people will suffer, and the taxpayers will pay more in health-care costs. Dale Monaghan, chief operating officer for Air Mikisew and other companies owned by the Mikisew Cree First Nation, has stated that it takes about 30 minutes longer for people to reach hospital when they land at the Edmonton International Airport rather than the ECCA.</p> <p>Closing the City Centre Airport would add 30 minutes to typical medevacs to the International or Calgary. It has been pointed out that medevacs from Yellowknife, Whitehorse or Inuvik would have to make an extra refuelling stop, adding an additional hour. Medevac flights, if they were sent to the International, would sometimes delay international carriers, due to the priority given to medevacs. It has been suggested that in most cases, it would be less expensive and faster to send the fixed-wing medevac airplanes to Calgary, rather than use helicopters to Edmonton. This could mean a loss of health-related jobs in Edmonton.</p> <p>A Council member has suggested that medevacs are a Provincial responsibility. If that is the case, perhaps more funding should be requested from the Provincial Government to maintain the ECCA, but threatening to make the Provincial Government's job more difficult is not helpful and does not support intergovernmental cooperation, especially for those hundreds of emergencies each year when lives are at stake. As the capital city of Alberta, Edmonton needs to accept some responsibility for regional activities, otherwise the capital may as well be moved to Calgary.</p>	√
12. Civic Identity		<p>New housing and new commercial shops are unlikely to add anything significant to Edmonton's civic identity.</p>	<p>The ECCA, dubbed the "Gateway to the North", is part of Edmonton's civic identity and heritage. Edmonton has already given up the "City of Champions" slogan (now "It's Cooler Here") and Alberta has already given up the "Alberta Advantage" slogan (now "Freedom to Create. Spirit to Achieve.")</p>	√

13. We Need this Particular Piece of Land for Housing		The airport lands encompass 217 hectares (536 acres, 2.17 km2). The land is needed for housing.	<p>The ECCA lands take up just 0.36% of Edmonton's area. There is lots of room elsewhere in existing residential neighbourhoods for housing. It has been suggested that the airport lands could house an additional 32,000 residents, but just by walking past the lands one can see that 32,000 seems quite high, even if high density projects are pursued, and these plans are likely to encounter significant opposition from surrounding neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Even if 32,000 people could be accommodated, this will serve only about 2% of the need predicted for 2040. Where will the other 98% go? Surely we can find a way to incorporate an extra 2% wherever those people are going.</p> <p>The size of the ECCA lands is comparable in size to the Dunluce neighbourhood (6,800 people - 2005 statistic), in which single family housing makes up just under half the dwelling units.</p> <p>Having at least one airport within the city limits of any capital city is pretty logical. The Via Rail station is nearby. Edmonton Transit buses go by. The LRT is coming. Downtown is a 5-minute drive.</p>	√
14. Travel Time		Edmonton International Airport is only a 35-minute drive from downtown.	<p>Edmonton City Centre Airport is only a 5-minute drive, or a 35-minute walk from downtown.</p> <p>ECCA has the shortest travel time to the heart of any major Canadian city's downtown. The Edmonton Municipal Airport 1994 Guide to Services stated: "We offer the most convenient airport location in Canada."</p>	√
15. The Need for a Second Airport		Edmonton International Airport is the fastest-growing major airport in Canada.	<p>The reality is that both airports have seen steady increases in traffic while complimenting one another. In terms of yearly aircraft movements, ECCA accounts for 40% and EIA accounts for 60%.</p> <p>EIA is not be able to accommodate all of the general aviation and other service presently offered at ECCA, so jobs and services would be permanently lost from Edmonton. For the selection of jobs/services that could be accommodated at EIA, which is not even in Edmonton, the associated property/business tax base would go to Leduc and Nisku, and their business parks.</p> <p>With continued population growth, there will come a time when ECCA will need to be used to its full potential again. The median population of a North American city with two airports is 810,000, and Edmonton just passed 750,000. Metro Vancouver has six airports, and Toronto has three, including its City Centre Airport, eight minutes from downtown. If ECCA were closed, another airport would have to be created, and that airport plus associated/accompanying infrastructure would cost at least \$4-7 billion, plus the cost of land.</p> <p>In the past, ECCA has accommodated over a million passengers/year and brought in over \$10 million in revenue/year.</p>	√

16. Infill Growth Nearby		It has been suggested that flight activity discourages infill growth in adjacent districts.	<p>Infill development has been happening in adjacent districts, particularly in Spruce Avenue, but infill projects have more to do with economic conditions, the real estate market, and supply and demand forces, than with flight activity.</p> <p>Many investors are holding onto existing properties as rentals and waiting until the time is right to redevelop them, perhaps once renovations to 118 Avenue are complete, and positive commercial activity on 124 Street successfully moves north of 107/8 Avenue. Much of the land in the adjacent districts is already zoned for multifamily housing (RA3/RA7). As well, many residents living in these communities have been living in their homes for decades, which helps to explain why many lots have not been redeveloped.</p>	√
17. Adjacent Property Values	Draw	It has been suggested that closing the ECCA could raise property values in nearby Prince Rupert, Westwood, and Inglewood.	Property values are complicated. Prince Rupert has held its value well despite the downturn in the real estate market. Property values may very well decrease in these neighbourhoods, once brand-new "world-class" housing that outshines it is built adjacent to it. Alternately, if another Clareview ends up on the site, that also could very well lower land values in these neighbourhoods.	Draw
18. Safety Concerns		<p>It has been suggested that ECCA should be closed because planes crash, and pose a safety risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 1954, a plane crashed into Calder Yards, killing the pilot. - In 1980, a twin-engine plane crashed into the Royal Alexandra Hospital, killing the pilot. - In 1985, two Canadian Forces planes collided in mid-air just north of Edmonton and crashed into a building, killing 10 people. - In 1992, a suicidal man circled Edmonton for several hours trying to gain the attention of his former girlfriend before deliberately crashing his plane into the side of a house, killing himself. 	<p>Flight training has been ongoing for decades out of ECCA without any deaths or serious crashes.</p> <p>An Edmonton Journal article pointed out that: "Planners say that while safety is a valid concern, the odds of a major crash are too remote - about a million to one - to warrant closing the airport."</p> <p>Murderers kill more people in Edmonton each year than have been killed in plane crashes in Edmonton in the city's entire history (about 13 people).</p> <p>More people are killed in automobile crashes and in pedestrian collisions each year.</p> <p>Planes typically have a very localized impact if and when they do crash. A lot more people are killed in car accidents.</p> <p>To that end, we could reduce automobile traffic along Highway 2 to the EIA, we would want to extend service at the ECCA.</p> <p>If a plane for whatever reason ended up flying over Edmonton's downtown and needed to land quickly, wouldn't it be safer to have an airport there to give the pilot an option of a safer place to land?</p>	√

<p>19. There are Other Airports in the Region</p>		<p>It has been suggested that air traffic from ECCA could be moved to regional airports at Villeneuve, Josephburg, and Cooking Lake, or to a military airport at Namao.</p>	<p>ECCA offers the "most convenient airport location in Canada", being situated closest to any major Canadian city's downtown. None of these airports offer the convenience, time savings, and competitive advantage associated with direct air service in/out of downtown Edmonton. Edmonton is Alberta's Capital City, and it is more important to be able to fly into the centre of a capital city than any other.</p> <p>These airports do not have bus or taxi service or hotels, and are as much as an hour from Edmonton, meaning additional economic and environmental costs (greenhouse gas emissions) to travel there. These commutes will get longer as development intensifies and traffic levels increase.</p> <p>It has been suggested that closing the municipal and transferring its flights to other existing airports is not viable.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>20. Part of our History</p>			<p>The ECCA was the first licensed airfield in Canada. The history of Edmonton is intimately tied to the history of this airport. It is the famous "Blatchford Field" and "Gateway to the North", from which pilots such as W.R. "Wop" May, Punch Dickins, and Max Ward have flown from. Flights from ECCA opened up the North. From ECCA, the first commercial flight in Western Canada was made in 1919. ECCA was the busiest airfield in North America in during the Second World War, and has in more recent history been the busiest general aviation facility in Canada.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>21. Environmental Impact/ Urban Sprawl</p>		<p>It has been suggested that the airport lands could house 32,000 residents, thus saving farmland, infrastructure costs and commuter gasoline.</p>	<p>32,000 people represents about one year of population growth in Edmonton, thus delaying "urban sprawl" for one year.</p> <p>Ultimately, more farmland would be lost when it is determined that a new airport is "needed", because high costs will mean the airport is built in a non-central location, likely over farmland, and after that, all sorts of accompanying commercial and industrial infrastructure, and hotels, would also have to be built to support the airport.</p> <p>Regarding infrastructure monies, a new airport costs upwards of \$5 billion to build, plus the cost of the other infrastructure.</p> <p>Regarding commuter gasoline, people presently commuting to and from the ECCA for jobs/trips would now have to commute farther.</p> <p>As a result of people driving to and from the International Airport, the amount of greenhouse gases spewed into the atmosphere each year was conservatively estimated at 60,000,000 tonnes - if we were serious about reducing commuter gasoline, we would direct more passengers to the ECCA, which is already connected to Edmonton Transit buses, the VIA Rail Station, is a short trip downtown to connect with Greyhound and Red Arrow buses, and will soon to be connected to an LRT station.</p>	<p>√</p>

<p>22. Airplanes Produce Sound</p>		<p>It has been suggested that the ECCA is noisy for nearby residents, and closing it could improve the quality of life for adjacent neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Edmonton Airports staff tell me that current data on noise complaints is not public information, however, relatively few noise complaints were received historically at ECCA (only 5/month in 1986), and this was before the comprehensive Noise Management Policy approved by Edmonton City Council in 1984 was fully implemented.</p> <p>As stated in a 1984 Edmonton Journal article, "The short-range goal [of that Policy] to be achieved by 1986 would see 6,700 housing units and 16,000 people in all neighboring residential areas fall within noise levels of less than 40 on the scale called the Noise Emission Forecasts (NEF). By 2001, all residential areas will fall in the acceptable 30 NEF range." The Edmonton Municipal Airports 1988 Annual Report indicated that the medium-term reduction goal of the Policy was reached and surpassed three years early (in 1988).</p> <p>In 1990, an airport planner estimated that the long-term target would be achieved by 2000, one year early. Also, airplanes continue to get quieter, as technology improves.</p> <p>Noise is not a major problem. One of the city's larger sports parks, Airway Park, has multiple baseball diamonds and sportfields situated directly across the street from ECCA, and many leagues and tournaments continue to keep the fields busy.</p> <p>If anything, the ECCA provides adjacent communities with activity and a sense of vibrancy, with planes coming and going. Land values have increased in all the surrounding residential neighbourhoods.</p> <p>As well, the presence of the ECCA helps to support the nearby hotels and businesses in the low density neighbourhood of Prince Rupert, which it would not be able to support on its own. Thus, removing the airport could decrease the quality of life for adjacent neighbourhoods.</p> <p>It has been suggested that neighbouring communities would prefer to see a few more planes in the air, as opposed to thousands more cars on their streets.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>23. Sporting Events</p>		<p>It has been suggested that the airport lands are not worth saving because they only host one event each year.</p>	<p>The zoning of the Airports Lands presently allows only one major sporting event (the Indy/Grand Prix), but Edmonton Airports could apply for a rezoning to allow additional events. Of course, the primary purpose of the airport is serving as an airport.</p> <p>Nevertheless, it has been suggested that the Airport Lands could be used to host the 2017 World Expo, or that other local or national events could take place there too. The view of the skyline from there is spectacular and Edmonton brands itself as the "Festival City".</p> <p>With more events on the site, people could be encouraged to get there by flying in directly on a special flight, or by taking a bus or train (VIA rail). Travellers could use the LRT to get downtown quickly, making our city even more attractive to conventions and other events in the city.</p> <p>Of course, if the airport were again run to its full potential, there would be no need to worry about hosting events there.</p>	<p>√</p>

24. Jobs		Lots of new jobs would be created by a new mixed-use development.	<p>Any jobs that would be created by a new mixed-use development would largely be menial service or retail jobs, many of them part-time, low-paying jobs.</p> <p>There are currently 2,280 jobs linked to the airport that produce \$104 million in wages (Kingsway Business Association).</p> <p>Many of the current jobs on the airport lands are highly skilled jobs, such as for pilots, aircraft maintenance, or welders, mechanics and other tradespeople, that contribute to a diversified economy. The people working in these specialized positions would have difficulty finding other suitable employment within the city limits, certainly within any redevelopment project, and would move. The specialized tradespersons doing work related to the airport would be forced to move out of the city to continue their trade - is this a message we want to be sending?</p> <p>The ECCA Business Directory lists 57 aviation-related businesses on site, although 300 businesses and about 2,300 jobs (1,000 direct and 1,300 indirect) have been referenced. This employment associated with the airport lands contributes \$407 million in economic output yearly. It has been suggested that closing ECCA will needlessly sacrifice thousands of jobs and undercut Edmonton's competitive position when we can least afford to.</p> <p>The economic numbers from the airport lands were impressive, even back in 1989: 82 businesses employing 2,150 people, producing revenues of \$139 million and a payroll of \$58 million in 1989, and the numbers will continue to be impressive into the future.</p> <p>Few businesses located on the airport grounds are open to the prospect of moving. As an example, four adjacent hotels with meeting facilities would likely be faced with sharply decreased clientele.</p> <p>Of course, we could have even more jobs on the site if restrictions were lifted and/or if the existing office buildings on the lands were expanded/added onto.</p> <p>ECCA lands are home to many corporate aircraft (for those head offices we'd like to encourage), and we could encourage more.</p> <p>If closure of the ECCA led to the transfer of Alberta's capital to Calgary, this would result in drastic consequences for Edmonton's business community and job market.</p>	√
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<p>25. Non-Stop Flight Routes</p>	<p>Draw</p>	<p>It has been suggested that the existence of the City Centre Airport undermines the ability of the International to lure new non-stop flight routes to Edmonton.</p>	<p>Edmonton just hosted an international conference (ICLEI) with delegates from 57 countries - guaranteed not all of them were able to fly here non-stop (i.e., without transferring planes/airlines), but that didn't prevent them from attending.</p> <p>However, there are business leaders, executives, politicians and others in the region that wish to fly non-stop in and out of downtown Edmonton. Unfortunately, the presence of the EIA, coupled with Edmonton Airports' guiding policies, undermines the ability of the ECCA to offer non-stop flights to more than a few different destinations.</p> <p>Lifting passenger restrictions (from 10 to 19 per plane) and adding even one or two more destinations to ECCA's flight list would create significant additional revenue for ECCA. At one time, 75% of ECCA's revenue came from passenger flights.</p> <p>As an aside, if a person's greatest need in life is to be able to travel non-stop to a wide variety of different cities (for business or pleasure), they would not have moved to Edmonton, since such a Northern city cannot possibly compete with considerably larger and/or more centrally located urban centres (such as Toronto, Chicago, Vancouver, etc.)</p>	<p>Draw</p>
<p>26. Threats of Terrorism</p>		<p>It has been suggested that having a downtown airport leaves Edmonton open to terrorist attacks.</p>	<p>Given the volume of traffic at Edmonton International Airport, the potential for a terrorist attack is significantly greater there. And if a major terrorist attack were to ever strike Edmonton International Airport, Edmonton would have no backup. Therefore it makes sense to have a second airport in the centre of the city.</p> <p>The scale of damage caused on 9/11 in New York is completely unrealistic in Edmonton, given the difference in population and building sizes and the size of the planes flying into/out of the ECCA.</p> <p>As an example, a small twin-engine airplane crashed into the Royal Alexandra Hospital in 1980, killing the pilot, when the plane embedded itself into the building. Natural disasters have killed more people in the Edmonton area.</p> <p>Again, the terrorism concerns are greater at EIA. From there it would take less than 10 minutes for a plane flying over the EIA to redirect its course at Edmonton's downtown, which is hardly enough time for military planes to shoot it down, and even if they could shoot it down, where and how would they do that? Over Whyte Avenue?</p>	<p>√</p>

<p>27. Making Edmonton World-Class</p>		<p>It has been suggested that Edmonton has the opportunity to create a "world-class urban village" on the airport lands.</p>	<p>An urban village, even if linked to downtown by LRT, is considerably less likely to be "world-class" than a downtown airport which has already been world-class and which at one time was the busiest airport in North America. Linking an airport with LRT connections and other forms of mass transit, as has been done in Washington DC, is being pursued by other airports, including Toronto's Pearson International Airport, at great expense.</p> <p>Many Edmontonians want the city to be "world class," and world-class cities such as London, England, Washington, D.C., Vancouver and Toronto have downtown airports.</p> <p>Other major cities including Detroit, Chicago, and Cleveland have found that a downtown airport is important to the region's economy and desirability.</p> <p>One writer made the comment that: "It's funny -- every major city in North America would kill for a downtown airport and Edmonton is trying to get rid of ours. It makes no sense."</p> <p>Incidentally, how many of the developments in Edmonton in the last decade have been "world-class"? How can the citizens of Edmonton be assured that "world-class" development will be constructed on the ECCA lands?</p> <p>What specifically would a "world-class urban village" look like? Would the buildings have extra thick insulation? Low-flush toilets? Would there be transit-oriented development? Would they recycle rainwater? Would they use solar power? There is no merit to demolishing ECCA for the sake of such development.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>28. Regional Value</p>		<p>It has been suggested that closing the City Centre Airport will be inconvenient for cabinet ministers, for rural mayors and councillors, for executives and aboriginal leaders, but that Edmonton isn't "their city".</p>	<p>Edmonton became the capital city of Alberta in 1905. Just because 99.9% of today's Edmontonians were not even born then, it doesn't make this fact any less relevant. A capital (provincial) city has capital (provincial) obligations.</p> <p>If people want to close the only airport in Edmonton's city limits, a symbol of regional connectivity, they may as well move the capital to Calgary.</p> <p>It has been suggested that blaming the people who fly into the City Centre Airport from Fort Chipewyan, Peace River, High Level and Grande Prairie on medevac flights or to do their business with Edmonton's business community for the lack of international flights flying into Leduc is not logical because making money from the region does not prevent international business opportunities.</p> <p>It has also been suggested that the access to Northern communities provided by ECCA is, for many workers, the only safe and fast mode of transport commuting between their homes in Edmonton and their places of work in the North.</p>	<p>√</p>

29. A Physical Asset			<p>The original value of the airport lands has appreciated 10,000 times in value over less than a century to perhaps \$230 million. Think of what the land will be worth in another 80 years.</p> <p>The value of this land can be leveraged by the City of Edmonton many times over, and selling a physical asset this large significantly reduces Edmonton's current and future buying/leveraging power.</p>	√
30. People for Whom Time is Money		The vast majority of business travellers use the International Airport.	<p>For high-end business travellers, time is money, and they would much rather pay more to fly into the heart of the city to save time.</p> <p>To that end, the Edm. Municipal Airport 1994 Guide to Services stated: "We offer the most convenient airport location in Canada," presumably because it offers the shortest travel time to the heart of a large urban area in Canada.</p> <p>The same Guide stated: "With no queues and a 5-minute check-in time, the Municipal Airport offers travellers the most time-saving, trouble-free way to fly to destinations in Alberta and Saskatchewan."</p> <p>For the people making the biggest deals and bringing the biggest amounts of investment into Edmonton, every minute counts. This is why our Prime Minister recently flew into ECCA, for example.</p> <p>High-profile leaders, politicians, business persons, and executives will fly into ECCA, given the option.</p> <p>Shutting down the City Centre Airport will cost Edmonton about \$180 million dollars each year in lost time and other costs/opportunities over the next decade (study commissioned by the Alberta Enterprise Group).</p> <p>In a recent media event called the Great Airport Race, two groups of reporters were sent on two different roundtrips meant to simulate typical business trips. The groups caught cabs in downtown Edmonton, then travelled to the airports and flew out. One group went on a round trip out of the City Centre Airport, the second took a round trip from the Executive Flight Centre at the International Airport. Both trips included flights past Westlock and back.</p> <p>In total, the International Airport trip took 65 minutes longer than the City Centre trip.</p> <p>Most of that extra time was spent on the road, travelling by cab to the International Airport, although things were also slower on the runway at the Edmonton International. It took two minutes to land at the City Centre Airport and taxi in, but 10 to 15 minutes to do so at the International Airport.</p>	√

31. Number of Travellers		In 2007, Edmonton International Airport served 6.1 million passengers; ECCA served 19,060 passengers.	<p>A more appropriate measure is aircraft movements: Transport Canada reports that City Centre had 85,354 civil aircraft movements (40% of Edmonton's total) in 2007 and the EIA had 129,328 aircraft movements (60% of Edmonton's total) in 2007.</p> <p>Comparing "passenger" statistics is comparing apples to oranges, because the activities of several flight schools and other groups making use of ECCA don't fall under the standard definition of "passengers". Out-and-back training flights by student pilots currently make up 41 per cent of air traffic at the Municipal.</p> <p>ECCA serves a niche market, including many executive travelers, and many employees and residents of Northern communities, that are doing much bigger business and talking much bigger dollars (e.g., the Prime Minister) than the majority of passengers flying into and out of Edmonton International.</p> <p>ECCA has served over a million passengers in multiple years, and could do it again. The ECCA 1997 Annual Review indicated that ECCA was the "busiest general aviation facility in the country in terms of passenger movements."</p>	√
32. LRT Connection		It has been suggested that decommissioning the ECCA could make the NAIT LRT station better aligned and cheaper.	<p>Decommissioning the ECCA would make air traffic into downtown Edmonton more poorly aligned (impossible, actually, except by helicopter) and more expensive (via lost time primarily, but also because of lost opportunities should business move to Calgary, which has a bigger executive business community and a closer airport to downtown).</p> <p>An LRT station serving NAIT could be combined with a new City Centre Terminal on east side of the airport.</p> <p>The cost of building a new airport when it is "needed" in the future could cost upwards of \$4 billion, completely eclipsing any gains for NAIT.</p> <p>It has been suggested that an LRT connection could also be built below grade for 1,524 metres, going straight across the existing airport in an open cutting.</p>	√

33. Pressure on Roads / Traffic		It has been suggested that decommissioning the ECCA would increase the freeflow efficiency of the Yellowhead Trail, and that transit-oriented residential development on the airport lands would put less pressure on roads than a new sprawl community.	<p>The Yellowhead Trail already gets clogged and crowded. As Edmonton continues to grow and 32,000 residents are injected into the core, this would only make traffic worse. (Ironically, over the short-term, some reduction in traffic could be seen, given all the people going to jobs on the airport lands who wouldn't be working there anymore.)</p> <p>Freeflow efficiency of the Yellowhead Trail would necessitate the construction of an expensive interchange, and the interchange at Gateway Boulevard/23 Avenue was estimated to cost \$250 million, more than could be earned for sale of the airport lands.</p> <p>Ultimately, the traffic impacts from 32,000 new residents are an insignificant dent in the 1.7 million residents expected by 2040, that everyone else's traffic patterns will matter a lot more.</p> <p>The best option would be continuing with LRT plans to enhance the connectivity of the ECCA with mass transit to put less pressure on Edmonton's road network.</p>	√
34. Highest and Best Use		Housing and commercial uses can be built just about anywhere.	<p>A new airport requires massive financial investment, public consultation and approvals - and since it is already here and supported by a majority (KBA-commissioned survey) - we should keep it downtown, because we will never get the chance to put it downtown again.</p> <p>The city has a duty to ensure its assets are managed in the best possible manner for the greater good of the community. Land should be utilized to its highest and best use.</p> <p>The airport land is extremely valuable real estate, and can be leveraged against as long as it maintains in the City's inventory - this option is lost if the land is sold.</p>	√
35. Benefit to Edmontonians		It has been suggested that the public enjoys little benefit from the ECCA, and that relatively few Edmontonians/Albertans will be hurt by ECCA's closure.	<p>The public will not benefit from the ECCA lands at all if they were redeveloped with housing. Only 32,000 Edmontonians (many of them would be arriving in the years to come, and don't live here now) may strongly benefit from having their dwelling on the site.</p> <p>Edmonton is currently Alberta's Capital City, and Edmontonians/Albertans benefit from Edmonton's enhanced regional connectivity offered by the ECCA, and by the provincial government jobs/grants/etc. held here.</p> <p>Perhaps the capital would be moved to Calgary with the removal of the ECCA, since Calgary would then have better connected/faster air service closer to downtown than Edmonton does.</p>	√

36. Safety Concerns		<p>It has been suggested that the potential for plane crashes merits the closure of the ECCA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 1954, a plane crashed into Calder Yards knocking several railcars off the tracks. - In 1980, a twin-engine plane crashed into the Royal Alexandra Hospital leaking 100 gallons of fuel into the hospital. - In 1985, two Canadian Forces planes collided in mid-air just north of Edmonton and crashed into a building, killing 10 people. - In 1992, a suicidal man circled Edmonton for several hours trying to gain the attention of his former girlfriend before deliberately crashing his plane into the side of a house. 	<p>Flight training has been ongoing for decades out of ECCA without any deaths or serious crashes.</p> <p>An Edmonton Journal article pointed out that: "Planners say that while safety is a valid concern, the odds of a major crash are too remote - about a million to one - to warrant closing the airport."</p> <p>Murderers kill more people in Edmonton each year than have been killed in plane crashes in Edmonton in the city's entire history.</p> <p>More people are killed in automobile crashes and in pedestrian collisions each year.</p> <p>Planes typically have a very localized impact if and when they do crash. A lot more people are killed in car accidents.</p> <p>To that end, we could reduce automobile traffic along Highway 2 to the EIA, we would want to extend service at the ECCA.</p> <p>If a plane for whatever reason ended up flying over Edmonton's downtown and needed to land quickly, wouldn't it be safer to have an airport there to give the pilot an option of a safer place to land?</p>	√
37. Flight Training Opportunities		<p>Villeneuve Airport offers flight training services and is becoming a more popular location for flight training.</p>	<p>Villeneuve and ECCA both have three flight schools.</p> <p>There is great value and logic in situating a region's schools (of any sort) where the population base is (i.e., in Edmonton).</p>	√
38. Economic Potential		<p>It has been suggested that general aviation traffic at the ECCA, just like at similar airports across Canada, is not currently producing enough revenue to meet infrastructure needs.</p> <p>There have also been estimates from the City of Edmonton which suggest that each floor of an office building that is not built results in lost tax revenues of \$0.11 - \$0.18 million/year.</p>	<p>The ECCA already generates \$407 million/year in economic output, and economic losses resulting from ECCAs closure have been estimated at \$180 million for the next decade. (Alberta Enterprise Group)</p> <p>ECCA revenues have been as high as \$10-11 million/year, with \$4 million/year going directly into City coffers. Lifting flight restrictions would allow ECCA to reach this mark again, and help contribute to more jobs and a revitalized downtown.</p> <p>A 1987 Edmonton Sun article noted that: "Scheduled air service at the Municipal contributes about 75% of the Airport's \$9 million annual revenue." Also, "the City... earned \$2.1 million in 1985 from the Municipal..."</p> <p>It has been suggested that the City Centre Airport has far more economic potential than other proposed developments, and that much was lost when the city and the airports authority chased away revenue-generating business, so they should be welcomed back.</p> <p>A 2004 Edmonton Airports Press Release included the following statement: "With the plan that we've outlined today, Edmonton Airports has demonstrated that this airport will be financially and operationally viable for the long-term."</p>	√

39. Resilience			<p>From a June 2009 Edmonton Journal article: The key benefits to keeping the City Centre Airport operating are convenience and connectivity, said Peter Morris, chief economist of Ascend Aviation Insight, the London-based author of the report. "You have got one of the best-connected airports to the city centre anywhere in North America," Morris said. "Why would you want to lose that?"</p> <p>The calculation of a dollar figure on lost time equals roughly \$100 an hour for an average business person, which he said was a conservative estimate, Morris said.</p> <p>The City Centre Airport has a level of demand he has rarely seen. "The interesting thing is that limiting flights to nine seats would have ruined most airports in the world, but it didn't ruin this one. It kept on going. To me, that shows a huge demand."</p> <p>Also, ECCA has a strong financial track record, and ECCA has operated with efficiency. For example, ECCA's 1997 Annual Review indicated that a number of operational efficiencies were introduced to reduce operating expenditures from \$3.2 million to \$1.8 million without compromising existing service levels. Revenues have also been as high as \$10-11 million/year.</p>	√
40. Diversified Economy: Links with Corporate Investment and Regional Industries		It has been questioned whether corporate investment can be enticed to Edmonton by having a downtown airport.	<p>Corporate investment has been, and will continue to be brought in, by the ECCA. Tenants on the airport lands include SPAR Aerospace (which built the Canadarm) and others as listed in the "ECCA Bus. Dir." tab of this spreadsheet. This corporate investment contributes to Edmonton's diversified economy, and most if not all of these jobs would be lost to other cities if ECCA were closed down.</p> <p>Many of these companies have regional offices in other parts of the province.</p> <p>Provincial and Federal government offices related to air travel are also on site.</p> <p>The Edmonton Municipal Airport 1988 Annual Report indicated that: "The airport might be seen as something of a barometer of the general economic climate of Alberta," and a decade later, ECCA's 1997 Annual Review demonstrated that: "The increase in passengers is primarily the result of the strength of the economy in Edmonton and Northern Alberta."</p>	√

<p>41. Commitment from Edmonton Airports</p>		<p>It has been implied that Edmonton Airports may not be committed to keeping the ECCA open.</p>	<p>Edmonton Airports has a documented history of strong commitment to ECCA's continued operation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Edmonton Airports' website states that: "Edmonton Airports is committed to operating ECCA as a GA (general aviation) airport for as long as the City chooses to maintain the lands as an airport." - An Edmonton Airports Press Release from 2004 indicated that: "Today, Edmonton Airports released its decisions on Edmonton City Centre Airport (ECCA), which reflect the Board's ongoing commitment to ensuring the facility remains a viable airport for the long-term." - Edmonton Airports' 1997 Annual Report, two years after the plebiscite, indicated that: "Significant efforts were made in 1997 instilling confidence in ECCA, resolving issues with tenants and other key stakeholders, and in demonstrating Edmonton Airports' commitment to keep ECCA operating as a viable general and corporate aviation airport." Also that year, "VIA Rail was signed as a long term tenant that will have considerable positive spinoff benefits to the local business community." - An Edmonton Airports News Release from 1996 indicated that: "We are committed to operating this airport as a viable centre of excellence for general aviation," said Scott Clements, President of Edmonton Airports. "We are also looking forward to supporting Edmonton's strong aviation heritage which is centered around the history of this facility." - One of the reasons may be that Edmonton Airports has the understanding, as relayed recently by spokeswoman Traci Bednard, that: "We don't own that land. The citizens of Edmonton do." 	<p>√</p>
<p>42. Plebiscite - What did Edmontonians vote for?</p>			<p>On October 19, 1992, a majority of Edmontonians voted to adopt Bylaw 10205, which stated that "The City shall take all reasonable steps, either alone or in cooperation with others, to maintain and promote scheduled air passenger service in and out of the Edmonton Municipal Airport." This Bylaw was repealed by a plebiscite vote on October 16, 1995, with the understanding that: "Under both options the City will continue to own and offer general air services (e.g. private planes, small charters, air ambulance) at the Municipal Airport." As stated in the Edmonton Regional Airports Authority's 1995 Annual Report: "A plebiscite campaign occupied the eight weeks from mid-August to mid-October, and many projects at Edmonton International Airport were held pending the decision. On October 16, Edmonton voters chose by a majority of 77% in favour to consolidate scheduled passenger traffic at the International, and maintain the Municipal as an airport for general and corporate aviation."</p>	<p>√</p>

<p>43. What have Edmontonians voted for more recently?</p>			<p>The Kingsway Business Association released a poll indicating that 74% of respondents disagree with shutting down the City Centre Airport and turning it into housing. The poll also indicated 75 per cent of the Edmonton residents questioned say they'd vote to continue operating it as a general aviation airport, chairwoman Mary Anne Stanway told a news conference. Even within the range of error, this represents a clear and significant majority.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>44. An Irreversible Decision</p>			<p>Housing can be put just anywhere, which is not the case for an airport. One writer noted that: "Future generations will wonder why this city council allowed this jewel to be sold off to developers. Once it's gone, it's gone forever." The City would never again receive the opportunity to build another airport downtown. The prudent decision would be to keep ECCA open at this time.</p>	<p>√</p>
<p>45. Alterior Motives and Conspiracy Theories</p>			<p>A number of different writers over the last year have hinted at the possibility of conspiracies and/or shady deals surrounding the ECCA airport and the talks about its closure. Some of their thoughts are included here: - "Since consolidation of scheduled services at the International Airport in the 1990s, the City Centre Airport has been held down by restrictions that one might conclude were part of a deliberate intention to close the airport. Authorities now point to low passenger counts as proof that Edmonton would be better off using that property for other purposes." - "It is curious that the city's legal advisers apparently say that allowing commuter aircraft to carry more than 10 passengers on flights into and out of the Muni would violate the terms of the lease with Edmonton Airports, but say it would be OK for the city to close the airport entirely." - "The Edmonton Airport Authority says it supports the Muni and it's dying off on its own. That's not true. Edmonton Airports has encouraged non-aviation users to move it and has increased user fees at the airport to discourage its use." ...continued next page...</p>	

45. Alterior
Motives and
Conspiracy
Theories
Continued

- "The airports authority was unable to increase traffic at the International Airport because of competition from the City Centre Airport, so it persuaded City Council to close the downtown airport to scheduled traffic using large planes. This inconvenienced 750,000 passengers a year, made the International look good and left Edmonton with a white elephant."

- "Just before the City Centre Airport was closed to most scheduled commercial flights, business was so good that airlines were ordering bigger planes to fly more people in and out of the downtown airport."

- "The demise of legendary Peace River Air is a direct result of the present 10-seat moratorium on operators of essential air service to the North."

- "These benefits accrue despite efforts to restrict the operations of the Edmonton City Centre Airport. Allowed to grow and develop in line with most other city airports around the world, it is likely that the real benefits in maintaining the airport would be self evident."

- Ron Hayter has been quoted in saying that: "I think this whole process is designed to get rid of the City Centre Airport."

- [Regarding the 1995 Plebiscite] "But city council ignored the referendum. We were bombarded with misinformation for weeks and went back to the polls. Fearmongering by Edmonton Airports and city hall that we would lose status as an international hub had their effect and they got the result they wanted."

- [Regarding the 1995 Plebiscite] "When we voted to consolidate flights at the International, we were told that it would change us from a feeder airport to a major hub, but it never did. Most international flights still go through Calgary, Vancouver or even Toronto."

I add the following points of my own:

- Some of the graphical information that has been presented to reflect the passenger data at the ECCA and EIA has been blatantly skewed, showing only 13 years of data (back to 1995/6). However the numbers were considerably higher even just a few years earlier at ECCA. ECCA served over a million passengers in four different years, and served over 900,000 passengers every year for the entire decade between 1985-1995.

- At least one of the comparisons shown by Edmonton Airports to address potential environmental cleanup costs is out-of-date and references an airport site that would have been cleaned up to less stringent industrial standards instead of residential standards.

- I have read that Edmonton Airports' Passenger Access Policy allows 19 passenger planes, but only allows them to fly with 10 passengers, whereas 19 passenger planes had flown full in the past.

- The numbers relating to property taxes do not represent "free money", as they go toward maintaining each neighbourhood's services and infrastructure, yet these numbers have been perpetuated by multiple parties.

And if any of these points raised by myself or other writers are true, the question is 'Why?'

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