His Worship Fred Eisenberger  
Mayor  
City of Hamilton  
71 Main Street West  
Hamilton ON L8P 4Y5

Dear Mr. Eisenberger:

Mr. Dean Allison, Member of Parliament, has provided me with a copy of your correspondence of September 26, 2007, regarding the Needs Assessment Study for the proposed Pickering Airport.

I am pleased to provide the following comments in response to your concerns on this matter.

Last winter, Transport Canada completed a rigorous contracting process to determine an appropriate company to complete the previously announced Needs Assessment Study on aviation requirements in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) area. A team of qualified experts from Transport Canada evaluated the bids, and on May 9, 2007, I announced that the contract was awarded to the Greater Toronto Airports Authority. The Needs Assessment Study will broaden and update previous work on the role and capacity of airports in the GGH in meeting future needs of passengers, businesses and general aviation. The Study is only one part of the overall process that will allow the government to make informed decisions regarding aviation needs in the GGH, including whether there is a need for a Pickering airport and, if so, the timing of its development.

Please rest assured that John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport is one of the key airports under study, and that Transport Canada recognizes that Hamilton has a major role to play. The Needs Assessment Study will once again examine the capacities and traffic volumes at Hamilton and other key airports, including their potential to supplement the role of Lester B. Pearson International Airport (LBPIA). Indeed, previous studies have found that southern Ontario requires a system of airports, including Hamilton to the west and a potential Pickering Airport to the east, to supplement LBPIA.
I can also assure you that, in addition to the Needs Assessment Study, the department will complete a Due Diligence Review of the Study and others that relate to aviation needs in the GGH. The Due Diligence Review is an independent, comprehensive, and arm’s-length peer evaluation of relevant studies. It will be an open and transparent process. As such, stakeholders and public representatives with technical expertise in the areas of review will be asked to participate. Once the Due Diligence Review is complete, the department will make the findings public.

Please note that Transport Canada is not conducting an environmental assessment process at this time. In fact, only after the Due Diligence Review is complete, and on the basis of the Review findings, will the Government of Canada decide on next steps and whether this includes an environmental assessment. Should the government decide to take this step, the public would once again be able to participate, as the environmental assessment process involves full public consultation. Only after all these steps have been undertaken would a decision be made on whether or not to develop an airport on the Pickering Lands.

I trust the foregoing has clarified my position on this matter. Thank you for writing to the federal government.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, P.C., M.P.

c.c. Mr. Dean Allison, M.P.
     Mr. David Sweet, M.P.
     Mr. Mike Wallace, M.P.