



The City of Owen Sound
808 2nd Avenue East
Owen Sound, ON N4K 2H4
Email: Feedback@owensound.ca

Sent via email

Re: New landing fees at CYOS

Dear Mayor Ian Boddy,

Founded in 1952, the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA) is a federally registered not-for-profit association that fosters the advancement of General Aviation (GA) in Canada. As the leading voice for the flying community nationwide and the largest Canadian aviation association, our mission is to advance, promote and preserve the Canadian freedom to fly. COPA is proud to represent close to 16,000 members from every province and territory who recognize the need for strong, effective representation resting on our core principles of integrity, commitment, unity and leadership.

One of our regional chapters located at the Owen Sound Billy Bishop Regional Airport (CYOS), several of the airport users, and other COPA members, have reached out to COPA so that we may inform you of our concerns regarding the City of Owen Sound's plan to commence implementing landing fees at your airport starting in 2021. COPA is especially concerned that the values assigned for these fees, \$35 per aircraft landing weighing less than 5,000 kg and \$70 above this weight, making them some of the highest not only in this region but across Canada. GA aircraft operators will be penalized by these additional costs. We are also aware of many online petitions initiated to oppose this course of action.

Your City's position indicates that Council is concerned that the taxpayers are shouldering approximately 80% of the airport's annual operating costs. From the data available to us, your declared annual costs are slightly less than \$290,000 per year. We are also aware that Council needs to raise enough revenue to cover the anticipated costs of resurfacing your 4,000 feet by 75 feet runway that is due in approximately five (5) years. Additionally, the airport has not experienced much growth in hangar leases or new construction due to, according to your contracted airport manager, your higher rates than in most of the region. We are also aware that Owen Sound's air movement numbers have been in decline for the past several years.

Your November 2020 Staff Report indicates that as a guiding principle the airport must operate on a cost-neutral basis. The report also states that: "Staff has calculated that to have the airport operate 90 per cent cost-neutral to the Owen Sound taxpayer, a landing fee of \$90 would be the target fee." However, staff does not have a model to fully assess the market impact caused by imposing a landing fee; for example, airport movements may decrease, fuel sales may drop, etc. Mr. Mayor, imposing a \$90 landing fee would push your airport onto an "avoid at all costs" list for many GA pilots.

COPA appreciates that airports don't operate without the operator incurring expenses. Most smaller GA airports that do not benefit from scheduled air service, such as yours, are not funded by provincial or federal monies. Funding comes from aviation fuel sales, hangar leases or rental fees, itinerant parking fees and other non-aeronautical sources (such as concessions, parking, car rental facilities, and advertising).

COPA and its members have supported airports such as yours, assisting in the production of economic impact studies for various airports across Canada for several years. In every case, these reports showed the impact of how airports generate revenue several magnitudes greater than the money collected from landing fees.

General Aviation Economic Impact

General aviation has played an important role in Canada's economy for decades. Apart from allowing individuals to experience the joy of private flight, GA activities maintain and support a large amount of important infrastructure. Through the years, a dedicated industry has emerged that supports the needs of general aviation participants around the country, such as airports and flight training units.

The influence of General Aviation (GA) on the Canadian economy is significant. A 2017 economic impact study compiled by Vancouver-based InterVISTAS for COPA estimates that General Aviation operations in Canada contributes \$9.3 billion in economic output nationally (Ontario alone contributes 1.3 billion) and directly accounts for almost 36,000 full time jobs in small communities across the country.

The Owen Sound Billy Bishop airport can continue to generate revenue for the city and will continue to be a significant contributor to the economic growth of the City. To do so, the Council would have to modify the planned landing fees initiative. In its present form the fees will inhibit GA activity and revenue generation from the types of small aircraft that would visit CYOS for recreational or flight training purposes from neighboring airports such as Wiarton, Waterloo-Wellington or Collingwood airports, to name but a few.

Amending the proposed landing fees would lessen the impact on the small GA user's community. Wiarton Airport, which is located less than 40 kms away, implements a landing fee to aircraft that weigh more than 8,000kg, only \$15.00 for aircraft weighing between 1,800kg to 2,999kg (which covers the majority of GA aircraft) and charges \$25 for aircraft weighing 3000kg to 4999kg. Owen Sound's proposed fee structure will in all likelihood alienate GA who will fly to more favorable and hospitable airports with more services. Most flight training unit aircrafts fit inside this GA category and their movements are huge economic contributors. Keeping these customers at your airport should be carefully assessed prior to implementing a landing fee for these operators. The viability of your airport might actually be at risk because of these landing fees.

Advance, promote and preserve the Canadian freedom to fly.

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The sustainability of general aviation infrastructures, such as CYOS, and aircraft operators, such as flight training units, that utilize these infrastructures cannot be overstated. Not only are they important economic contributors but provide safety management systems for the flying community as a whole.

COPA understands the concerns of the Owen Sound City Council and welcomes the opportunity to assist your Worship and the Council to find a solution that helps you achieve reasonable revenue goals and a viable airport which is welcoming to the GA community. Our membership wants to keep the significant aviation history that is associated with Billy Bishop airport, and his namesake, alive and thriving.

Sincerely,



Christine Gervais
President and CEO
Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA)
cgervais@copanational.org

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