



# Toronto Pearson January 2014 Operations Disruption: Review and Recommendations

## Executive Summary



Toronto Pearson

To our passengers and stakeholders:

The operational disruption at Toronto Pearson International Airport between January 5 and 9, 2014 inconvenienced many passengers and their families. Immediately following these disruptions, the Board of Directors of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) established an ad hoc committee to review the impacts of unusual weather and to make recommendations to the Board that will enable the GTAA to take concrete and tangible steps to improve Toronto Pearson's operations, communications and customer service.

Following a substantive and comprehensive review, which included public feedback, stakeholder consultation, and an operations review by GTAA management, as well as independent feedback from industry experts and a Blue Ribbon Panel, the Ad Hoc Committee issued to the Board the report that follows.

The Board has unanimously accepted each of the committee's twelve recommendations and the associated actions as set out in the report and has authorized the report's release to the public. GTAA's management team has already begun to implement the report's recommendations, which, as part of its mandate, the Board will oversee. In November 2014, the Board will update the public on the progress that has been made to improve airport operations, customer service and communications.

I would like to personally thank the members of the Ad Hoc Committee for their tremendous effort in producing a comprehensive and very useful report. I would like to also thank Toronto Pearson's service providers for their cooperation, collaboration and their candid and constructive feedback.

Finally, I would like to thank GTAA's leadership team and employees, and all those who work at Toronto Pearson for their dedication and hard work during what has proven to be a challenging winter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vijay Kanwar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vijay Jeet Kanwar  
Chairman, Board of Directors  
Greater Toronto Airports Authority

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## Committee Chair's Foreword

Toronto Pearson strives to provide visitors with the world-class travel experience they expect and deserve. As Canada's leading transportation hub and a vital economic engine, Toronto Pearson takes great pride in its people and its contribution to the Greater Toronto Area, to Ontario and to Canada.

As the manager, operator and integrator of Toronto Pearson International Airport (Toronto Pearson), the GTAA serves a number of key stakeholders including the travelling public, surrounding communities and airport service providers (e.g., airlines, government agencies, commercial service providers). This is a responsibility we take very seriously. Each of these stakeholders expects Toronto Pearson, as a world-class airport, to meet a high standard of performance.

That starts with ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for our passengers.

The unusual combination of winter weather conditions experienced at Toronto Pearson between January 5 and 9, 2014 caused numerous unforeseen challenges that significantly inconvenienced many passengers and their families and we fell short of the level of service we strive to provide. For this we take responsibility. We can and will do better and we are taking clear and decisive action. We have used these challenges as an opportunity to improve the services we offer.

To that end, the Board of Directors of the GTAA established an ad hoc committee to study the cold weather challenges we experienced and to propose action items to the Board to enable us to take definitive and expedient action to improve airport operations, communications and customer service. This review has been substantive and comprehensive. It has included public feedback and consultation, an operations review by GTAA management and independent feedback from industry experts.

The goal of our review is to improve the service we offer our visitors. We can do so by improving our operations during unusual winter weather to prevent and mitigate the impacts of disruptions, where possible. When disruptions do occur, we will do a better job of communicating with the public; we will treat our passengers with a high standard of customer service.

This report details the findings of our review. The action items included in this report, many aspects of which have already been implemented, are designed to improve our preparedness and responsiveness when faced with unusual winter weather conditions in the future. However, our responsibility does not end here. In November 2014, the

GTAA will update the public on the progress we have made, and will continue to make, to improve airport operations, customer service and communications during unusual winter weather conditions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shaun Francis". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "S" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Shaun Francis  
Chair, Ad Hoc Committee  
Board of Directors, GTAA

## Letter from the Blue Ribbon Panel

April 7, 2014

Shaun Francis  
Chair, Ad Hoc Committee  
Board of Directors  
Greater Toronto Airports Authority  
P.O. Box 6031, 3111 Convair Drive  
Toronto, ON  
Canada L5P 1B2

Dear Mr. Francis:

### **Blue Ribbon Panel Review on Improving Service and Communication in Unusual Winter Weather Events**

As members of the GTAA's Blue Ribbon Panel on improving service and communications in unusual winter weather events, we are presenting our comments on the Committee's report to you.

The Panel confirms to the Ad Hoc Committee of the GTAA Board of Directors (the Committee) that it has independently reviewed and evaluated the relevant submissions and recommendations related to the unusual winter weather disruption experienced at Toronto's Pearson International Airport between January 5 and 9, 2014. We believe our collective expertise in airport operations and corporate communications has allowed us to conduct a comprehensive and thorough review of the Committee's report and its recommendations.

The Panel affirms that each member of GTAA management as well as the Ad Hoc Committee has invested significant time and resources on this review to ensure there is a comprehensive understanding of both what occurred and what is necessary to improve the Pearson International Airport community's readiness for providing the best possible passenger experience during unusual winter weather conditions.

We agree with the opportunities for improvement identified by management and the Ad Hoc Committee, and through our discussions believe that the report — titled the *Toronto Pearson January 2014 Operations Disruption: Review and Recommendations* — accurately reflects our thinking and input. We are confident that with effective implementation of the recommendations in the report, Pearson International Airport will be better positioned to provide the experience its passengers deserve.

It has been an honour for us to serve as members of the Blue Ribbon Panel. We have observed a strong openness and willingness of both management and the Board to critique their respective performances throughout the disruption. At the same time, we

have also witnessed their commitment to use this disruption as a platform for improving future organizational performance.

We look forward to following the progress of the GTAA in the coming months ahead and remain committed to providing any additional support.

Sincerely,



Normand Boivin  
Chief Operating Officer  
Heathrow International  
Airport



Krista Scaldwell  
Vice President, Public  
Affairs & Communications  
The Coca-Cola Company



Murray Sigler  
President  
Axia North America



## About Toronto Pearson Airport

More than 450 organizations provide service at Toronto Pearson, from the largest airline alliances to small, independent retail businesses and a number of federal government agencies. In addition to carrying out its responsibilities, the GTAA coordinates many of the operations between these airlines, other airport service providers and agencies so that the Toronto Pearson community is working together to continuously improve the airport travel experience. Collectively, we strive as a community to provide a high level of customer service.

Figure 1: Overview of Toronto Pearson roles and responsibilities



- Activity is the responsibility of GTAA and is delivered primarily by GTAA
- Activity is the responsibility of Pearson airport service providers and delivered primarily by the Pearson airport service providers
- Activity is the responsibility of the airlines, but some or all of the activities are provided by a third party, depending upon airline
- Activity is the responsibility of GTAA, but some or all of the activities are provided by a third party



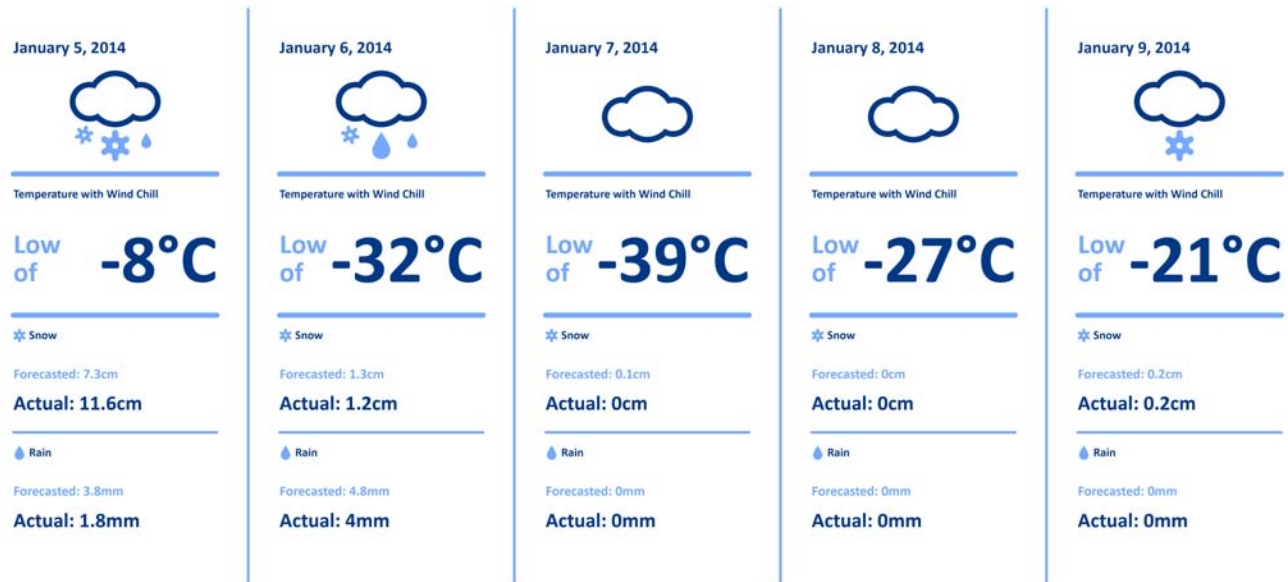


## Executive Summary

### Background

From January 5 to 9, 2014, much of Canada and the United States experienced an unusual combination of winter weather conditions. Over the period, Toronto Pearson experienced a combination of rain, snow, unexpected snow squalls and wind chills that reached as low as -39 C.

Figure 2: Weather conditions at Toronto Pearson - January 5 to 9, 2014



The weather challenges, which were also experienced by many other airports, resulted in passengers being inconvenienced to an extent that was inconsistent with the level of service we strive to achieve. This report examines why, looks at how to prevent similar levels of disruption in the future, and provides recommendations to minimize the inconvenience to passengers in situations when disruptions are unavoidable.

The combination of unusual winter weather conditions from January 5 to 9, 2014 led to operational challenges at Toronto Pearson that severely disrupted passenger's experiences. Compounding matters, the Toronto Pearson community did not effectively communicate with passengers during the disruption to reduce their inconvenience.

These challenges have presented an opportunity for us to improve our operations and passengers' experience. Implementation of the action items presented in this report will improve the effectiveness of our planning for, and monitoring of, potential disruptions. This will allow the Toronto Pearson community to mobilize the appropriate tools and resources to either avoid or mitigate the impacts of potential disruptions, to the extent possible. When disruptions do occur, communication with our passengers and other audiences must be clear and timely. In keeping with our commitment to provide a high standard of customer service we must seek to make any future disruptions more bearable for passengers.

Following the events of January 5 to 9, the GTAA Board of Directors established an ad hoc committee (Committee). The Committee was asked to work with management and to independently study the impact of, and operational response to, the unusual combination of winter weather conditions. Further, the Committee evaluated the recommendations of management and recommended action items necessary to improve airport operations, communications and passenger well-being.

### Recommendations for Improving our Passengers' Experience



The Committee's goal is to improve passengers' experience during disruptions by avoiding or mitigating the impacts of potential disruptions, where possible. In the aviation industry, some unusual weather and other service disruptions are unavoidable; in these instances, the Toronto Pearson community will improve its operations, communications and guidelines for addressing passenger well-being.

This report includes a number of recommendations that have been developed collaboratively among the Committee, GTAA management and a Blue Ribbon Panel of independent, external experts, taking into consideration the events that occurred and the feedback received from numerous airport stakeholders. The Committee was supported in this effort by Deloitte.



A number of these recommendations will directly benefit passengers; these include improved protocols for communications, a new Toronto Pearson "app," revised guidelines for addressing the needs of passengers during irregular operations, and improvements to the Toronto Pearson website, WiFi capacity and cellular capacity. While recommendations related to operations may not be noticed in the same way by passengers, they will have important

positive impacts on passengers' experience. The table below highlights the full list of the Committee's recommendations.

### Summary of Recommendations

Observation	Recommendation	Status	Completion Date
<b>Operations Recommendations</b>			
Preparation and planning for unusual conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 1: Revise and test the GTAA's Irregular Operations Plan to harmonize with the operations plans of airport service providers to improve the airport's response to unusual winter weather and other disruptions.</li> </ul>	Working with airport service providers	October 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 2: Establish clear early-warning criteria and define joint escalation levels and procedures within the GTAA and among key airport service providers to ensure timely, responsive and coordinated decision-making where large-scale service-level disruptions occur or are imminent.</li> </ul>	Working with airport service providers	July 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 3: Expand and better equip the Emergency Operations Centre to allow for improved coordination of airport service providers.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	December 2014

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 4: Secure additional equipment for unusual winter weather operations to improve the resilience of the airport to weather.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	November 2014
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 5: Proactively deploy warming stations to protect ground support crews during unusually cold weather.</li> </ul>	Complete	January 2014
Traffic management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 6: Establish a joint traffic management team to improve aircraft arrival and departure metering to allow for active management of potential imbalances during irregular operations.</li> </ul>	Working with airport service providers	November 2014
Apron conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 7: Improve the GTAA's Apron Snow and Ice Removal Plan to enable better gate access during weather disruptions.</li> </ul>	Working with airport service providers	November 2014
Baggage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 8: Develop, implement and test an arrival baggage Irregular Operations Plan and identify baggage system and handling escalation criteria to better monitor the inbound baggage process.</li> </ul>	Working with airport service providers	November 2014
<b>Communications Recommendations</b>			
Information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 9: Improve GTAA internal communication. Improve communication protocols with airlines and other airport service providers to enable a clear, consistent and accurate flow of information among service providers.</li> </ul>	Working with airport service providers	September 2014
Passenger, media and employee communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 10: Create a passenger-facing app, and enhance joint protocols and develop the necessary processes and other tools for irregular operations communications to passengers, media and Toronto Pearson employees to enable timely and effective communication.</li> </ul>	Working with airport service providers	November 2014
<b>Passenger Well-being Recommendations</b>			
Passenger experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 11: Develop and publish GTAA guidelines for responding to the needs of passengers during irregular operations.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	September 2014
Communications infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendation 12: Establish an 'Airport Updates' web page that becomes the GTAA website's dominant web page during a service disruption, and improve Toronto Pearson's WiFi and cellular capacity.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Various Completion Dates

As part of its continuous effort to improve passenger service, the GTAA has already completed a number of key initiatives, both during and since the disruption, that have improved Toronto Pearson's response to unusual weather and addressed key components of the Committee's recommendations, which are discussed in more detail under the heading "Recommendations" in the full report.

### Our Commitment to You



The GTAA sought to understand why the operational challenges occurred, the expectations of the public when travelling through Toronto Pearson during such a disruption, and what the GTAA could do to improve service for travellers during unusual winter weather situations and more generally.

These recommendations range from necessary operational changes to improvements in how Toronto Pearson communicates with passengers and the public and improvements to ensure passenger well-being is a priority.

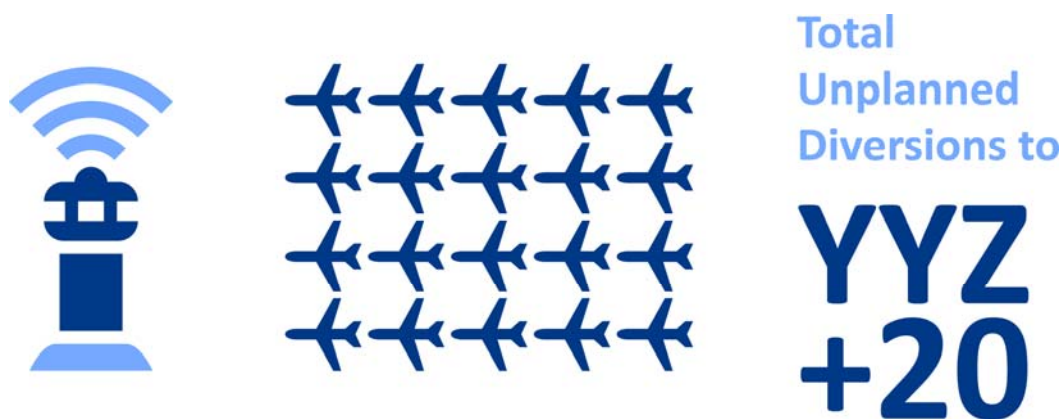
Our responsibility does not end with proposing these recommendations. The Board is accountable for the efficient implementation of these recommendations by management. As such, we will issue a public progress report in November 2014.

### Committee Observations

While the unusual weather conditions were the primary catalyst for the disruption, the Committee has determined there were several factors that contributed to the magnitude of the impact felt by passengers, including the following:

- The severity of the weather conditions between January 5 and 9, 2014 exposed weaknesses in the Airport's preparedness including equipment underperformance in an unusually cold weather environment and the impact of unusually cold weather on aircraft turnaround times.
- Arriving aircraft far outnumbered departing aircraft, and the difference became unmanageable. The traffic management tools in place for managing this difference proved inadequate in these circumstances.

Figure 3: *Unplanned diversions to Toronto Pearson*



- The GTAA and the airlines were faced with a choice: they could focus on clearing the backlog of waiting arrivals and get people off arriving planes as quickly as possible, or they could concentrate on measures to ensure gate areas were thoroughly clear of snow and ice. They chose the former. However, this ultimately led to a deterioration of the facility grounds (apron) near the gates, which increased the length of time to turn around aircraft and resulted in even longer delays for passengers waiting on arriving aircraft for a gate.
- The preceding factors caused baggage to arrive late at the baggage carousels. Baggage issues were exacerbated by the decision to allow passengers to deplane but to leave their checked baggage on the aircraft. Once the passengers were off each plane, it was pushed back, another took its place and the same procedure was followed. This allowed passengers to be deplaned much more quickly than if each plane had to wait at the gate



until all the checked baggage was removed. However, airport protocols for baggage did not adequately address a situation of this complexity.

- Information was not shared frequently enough and effectively across airport services providers.
- Existing communications protocols and tools did not sufficiently address the information requirements of passengers, the media and employees.
- The GTAA has a number of amenities (water and diapers, for example) on hand during irregular operations. Other than water, these amenities were not proactively offered to passengers, demonstrating a need for clearer guidelines, and greater awareness of those guidelines and of the amenities available during irregular operations.
- The GTAA's website was not configured to provide timely updates on the status of the airport during an irregular operation of this nature. The website ultimately became unstable and could not be updated during the disruption. With the volume of users at Pearson during the disruption, the airport's WiFi and cellular capacities reached their limits, creating communications issues for passengers and the rest of the Toronto Pearson community.

Notwithstanding the unusual weather event, safe and secure passenger operations and employee work conditions were maintained at Toronto Pearson throughout the event.

The hard work and dedication of GTAA employees and all those who worked at Toronto Pearson during this challenging winter season merit special attention. Their continued support throughout this period is greatly appreciated.

### **Stakeholder Feedback**

The GTAA sought input from three key stakeholder groups: the travelling public, employees and other airport service providers (e.g., airlines, agencies and commercial service providers).

Frequent travellers who took part in small focus groups most often mentioned issues related to the level and quality of communication during the unusual winter weather disruption.

According to the feedback, passengers want communication to be:

- frequent and timely;
- accurate; and
- consistent.

### **The Review Process**

The Committee conducted a fact-based review of the GTAA's "cold weather operations," focused on the events of January 5 to 9, 2014 at Toronto Pearson.

Figure 4: Overview of Committee Reporting Structure



Further, the Committee engaged a Blue Ribbon Panel (Panel) of independent, external experts to independently review and evaluate submissions received by the Committee to ensure that the Committee's recommendations sufficiently addressed the issues and would contribute to improving the service offered to passengers. See Appendix B for biographies of the Panel members.



