

CITIZENS AGAINST AIRCRAFT NOISE IN DELTA

AANOID (aanoid.yes@gmail.com)

Group Name: AANOID

Primary Purpose:

Monitor aircraft noise and work with all levels of government and aviation administrations to reduce the level of disruptive aircraft noise in Delta.

What has created this concern?

NAV CANADA, a corporation created by an Order-In-Council to assume the role that Transport Canada had to oversee air transportation safety and airport management, is responsible for operating Canada's large metropolitan airports and for establishing flight paths into these airports.

NAV CANADA operates with a unique corporate charter making it virtually independent of any oversight in how it executes its mandate. Although its charter mentions that the corporation should operate in a cooperative manner with its stakeholders including the airlines and airport operators (which you think should include the public served and those affected by aircraft movements), it only does so when it is to the corporation's interest.

Aircraft noise has steadily increased throughout Delta since 2006. In the spring of 2007, NAV CANADA changed the flight paths of inbound to Vancouver Airport (YVR) without any public consultation. Citizens of North Delta, Ladner, Tsawwassen, Surrey and White Rock were impacted.

Quick action on the part of vigilant citizens mobilized municipal governments to demand that NAV CANADA change the flight paths. This was done in April of 2008 but several issues still remain to be resolved.

What would the AANOID Group like government to do to end or reduce the concerns?

AIRCRAFT NOISE, IS IT HERE TO STAY?

In April, NAV CANADA implemented a number of recommendations to reduce aircraft noise in South Delta and South Surrey. Most would agree that our sky isn't quieter since those changes went into effect. NAV CANADA would like us to believe that the new arrival route has taken the bigger planes out over Boundary Bay and that the noise we are hearing now is from aircraft flying in tighter corridors over Boundary Bay plus the additional departures around and over us. Members of AANOID (Against Aircraft Noise in Delta) tried to check this out to be sure, but it is very difficult for citizens to monitor aircraft from the ground.

When we asked what information had to be collected to make our point with authorities, we are told that the data should include the exact time of day or night, heading of the flight, aircraft height above ground, the type of aircraft (jet or propeller), wing position (low or high), color; and, if possible, the airplane's call numbers displayed on the fuselage. Said another way, the same kind of information an air traffic controller assimilates from his display terminal and from his observations in a control tower on a clear sunny day. Good luck!

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Observations AANOID members made on three days after April 14th do not correlate well with YVR radar tracings of flights for the same time periods. The harsh reality is that it is hard to argue a point if the best data you have is anecdotal. Many people that we have spoken with feel outraged that we should have to gather this much data to make a case.

NAV CANADA has 24-hour radar tracings for any day going back to well beyond 2001 to the present but they won't share this information for security reasons. The truth is that airports in the USA and England provide this information over the internet with a small time delay. It certainly would be nice to have access to this real-time flight track information.

On a positive note, YVR Noise Management staff has identified two possible sites in Tsawwassen for a noise monitoring station, Beach Grove and South Park Schools. Each site has its merits but we really need a noise monitor in both locations. Delta Council should request that YVR place a noise monitoring station at each site.

But will proving to authorities that we still have a problem get us quieter skies? Possibly not, as there are a number of other factors that enter into the process of air traffic control.

Type of Airplane: NAV CANADA prescribes the routes that airplanes are to use on approaching and departing a runway but many factors come into play as to when an aircraft will come into and leave this corridor, for example, aircraft size, weight, power, wind, weather, visibility and whether the aircraft is under visual or instrument flight rules. Airport approaches are the most controlled air spaces we have but even these must have a lot of latitude to accommodate different aircraft and weather conditions.

Air Traffic Control Priorities: Safety is the number one priority for air traffic controllers and this is done by maintaining aircraft separation both in the air and on the ground. As long as there are no safety issues with the flight path being flown, the air traffic controllers won't intervene. Keeping aircraft on a tight route is not a priority if there are no safety issues. However, the health hazards of disturbing noise on the population over which they fly is not included in their safety mandate.

Air Space Jurisdictions: YVR's control tower controls aircraft within 10 nautical miles of that airport. Boundary Bay's control tower controls aircraft within 2 nautical miles of that airport. Air space beyond those tower control zones and above 2,500 feet is controlled by the NAV CANADA Area Control Centre in Surrey. Unfortunately, Tsawwassen is outside the responsibility of either tower and Nav Canada's Area Control Centre won't intervene unless there is a safety issue. It's up to the citizens of Delta and Surrey to police the sky and report infractions to Transport Canada.

Aircraft Altitude: Commercial aircraft are required to fly 2,500 feet above populated areas except when landing and taking off. Civilian aircraft under visual flight rules are required to fly not less than 1000 feet above populated areas and may fly as low as 50 feet over unpopulated areas. When outside of control tower jurisdictions, like we are in Tsawwassen, civilian aircraft can fly virtually anywhere between 1,000 - 2,500 feet providing they abide with safety regulations laid down by NAV CANADA and Transport Canada. There are very few restricted flight zones in Canada.

NAV CANADA: NAV CANADA's mandate is to operate Canada's airways in a safe and efficient manner. It has the freedom to change airspaces, approach and departure procedures

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without consulting the communities affected by its decisions. The corporation is only accountable to Transport Canada on issues of safety and to its shareholders (the major airlines and airport operators) who are interested in operating airports and airplanes as efficiently as possible. This mandate has produced a private corporation that is secretive and unwilling to deal directly with the public. Community health and well-being are not big concerns to them and it shows. This must change. There are numerous studies showing that the increased stress levels due to aircraft noise can cause cardiovascular problems from loss of sleep.

No Noise Limits: Once an aircraft is licensed by Transport Canada, the amount of noise produced by the aircraft in flight is not regulated in Canada. YVR's Noise Management Group only has the responsibility to manage and monitor issues concerning aircraft noise. It has no authority to enforce compliance on measures to mitigate aircraft noise because there are no noise limits. Thus recommendations can be made to reduce aircraft noise but no penalties can be levied for noise violations in the absence of noise limits. There are no incentives for pilots to comply.

Aircraft Guidance Systems: Most but not all large commercial aircraft have guidance or flight management systems which allow them to follow specific flight paths. In time, all commercial and many civilian aircraft will be required to have this technology. Until that time, many aircraft will continue to be flown manually and under visual flight rules (VFR) over much larger spaces in the sky. If there are no safety issues, authorities don't seem to care where they fly especially outside of control zones.

Political Reality: Citizens and special interest groups such as AANOID in Delta and SCAANS in Surrey cannot succeed if elected officials in our Councils, Legislatures and Parliament do not lead. Each must step forward and work hard to address the issues which are in their jurisdictions. Have we not learned anything from our experiences with the high voltage transmission lines in residential areas and the Deltaport expansion?

In Summary: Moving all YVR flight paths away from Tsawwassen, may not significantly reduce the noise we experience due to the fact that there are so many other factors at work in the system.

So What Can Be Done?

Delta's Council has a unique opportunity to demonstrate its resolve for quieter skies by mandating that planes using Boundary Bay Airport avoid flying over residential areas. After all, Delta owns the airport and thus has the power to limit and control its operations. Once Council has demonstrated its will to mitigate noise from Boundary Bay Airport, they will be in a good position to lead other Lower Mainland municipal and regional governments into a coalition which will have the political clout to get new noise legislation and regulations for controlling aircraft noise over residential areas.

The Act that created NAV CANADA's mandate needs to be amended to make the corporation accountable to a higher authority, such as the Minister of Transport, and to require the corporation to seek approval from affected communities before flight paths and air spaces can be altered. Transport Canada needs to enact lower noise limits on aircraft licensed to fly in Canada and phase out older/noisier aircraft. It should also fast-track the implementation of aircraft guidance or flight management systems.

YVR's Noise Management Team must be given the authority to establish noise limits for residential areas in Metro Vancouver (including Tsawwassen) and be permitted to issue hefty

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penalties to aircraft that do not comply with these regulations, especially at night and in the early morning. Issuing explanations and apologizes to people who lost a night's sleep just isn't enough.

Should these attempts fail, the coalition of local governments has the political power to get the provincial government to support a nightly closure of YVR and other regional airports to permit residents to get an undisturbed night's sleep to cope with aircraft noise.

In Conclusion

Airplane noise may be here to stay but it need not always be in our ears and over our heads. Our Delta Council can do things to significantly mitigate the problem. Please contact Delta Council (Phone: 604-946-4141 or Email: "mayor-council@corp.delta.bc.ca") and ask them to take the lead in resolving this problem for Delta and, in time, for all Canadians. As our urban populations grow, so does the need for noise mitigation standards and enforcement against disruptive aircraft noise.

Sincerely,

Ron Wasik

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