

# With so many uncertainties, now is probably not the time to spend more money on the Breslau airport



**STEVE KANNON**  
Editor's Point of View

The federal government is currently soliciting input on the proposed runway extension at the Region of Waterloo International Airport in Breslau.

That's the technical part. The bigger consideration for residents is whether or not the region should continue to put more into the money-losing operation.

The region's airport master plan, approved in 2017, calls for spending of \$375 million over the report's 20-year scope, including \$34.5 million for runway extensions. First up is the extension of runway 14-32 to a length of 2,134 metres (7,000 feet) from 1,250 (4,100) at a budgeted cost of \$23 million. (The region has already spent some \$10 million of land acquisition.)

It's for that project that the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada is seeking public feedback until April 18.

A second proposed runway extension isn't part of the current review. The region expects the \$11.5-million work on runway 08-26 – which would include unbudgeted costs for some kind of realignment of Shantz Station Road – is still years away, as it wouldn't be required until annual passenger traffic hit 500,000, more than double the as-yet-unreached 250,000 being used to justify extending runway 14-32.

The region argues the runway needs to be longer to accommodate larger aircraft, making the airport a more attractive hub for airlines.

Therein lies the rub: the region has spent millions of dollars upgrading the

facility to largely little avail. A number of airlines have attempted to offer service from Breslau over the years, most eventually winding down. In operating losses alone, taxpayers are on the hook for about \$6 million annually.

While some on regional council have shown reluctance to push ahead with expansion plans, the region continues spending in the hope, on a wing and a prayer, that airlines and passengers will choose to fly from Breslau, though there's no end in sight to the capital expenses and taxpayer subsidies.

Right now, it makes no sense to be spending money on the airport

given the extreme losses the industry is experiencing due to the pandemic. Some of the changes may be permanent, particularly when it comes to remote meetings replacing business travel, a practice that has also been hit by heightened environmental concerns.

As with a number of work-related practices in a post-pandemic world, business travel is expected to take a permanent hit, though how big the impact will be is up in the air. Bill Gates, for instance, has suggested business travel will decline by half, while the head of Delta Air Lines expects the new normal will be 10 to 20 per cent lower than the pre-pandemic numbers. Come what may, we're talking significant figures, as international business

travel was a \$1.3 trillion industry in 2019.

The local airport's share of the business is a tiny slice, but the trend is likely to have an impact on every facet of the industry.

A number of the past airline services in Breslau have been aimed squarely at business travellers – vainly, in the end – which is less likely to drive passenger numbers. While the convenience is high for residents, the relatively few flight options means we have to look to flights from other locations, a situation compounded by ticket costs that were often much higher than comparable flights from even the likes of Toronto's Pearson airport.

Cost being a significant factor for most travellers, Canadian airports are generally at a disadvan-

tage in comparison to U.S. facilities. Pre-pandemic, millions of Canadians flew from U.S. airports each year, largely for purely economic reasons. Flying from, say, Buffalo to another U.S. city could be a fraction of the cost of taking off from Toronto, for instance. (The Canadian Airports Council (CAC) estimates a third of passengers at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport are Canadian.)

The pandemic has not been kind to the global airline industry as a whole. That's especially true in Canada, which has been subjected to more stringent restrictions and lockdowns, particularly in relation to the U.S.

A CAC report in December projected revenue losses for Canada's airports to top \$5.5 billion

for 2020 and 2021, up \$1 billion from a previous report from last August. Canada's airports expect to take on about \$2.8 billion in additional debt in 2020 and 2021, the group predicts, calling on the government to do more.

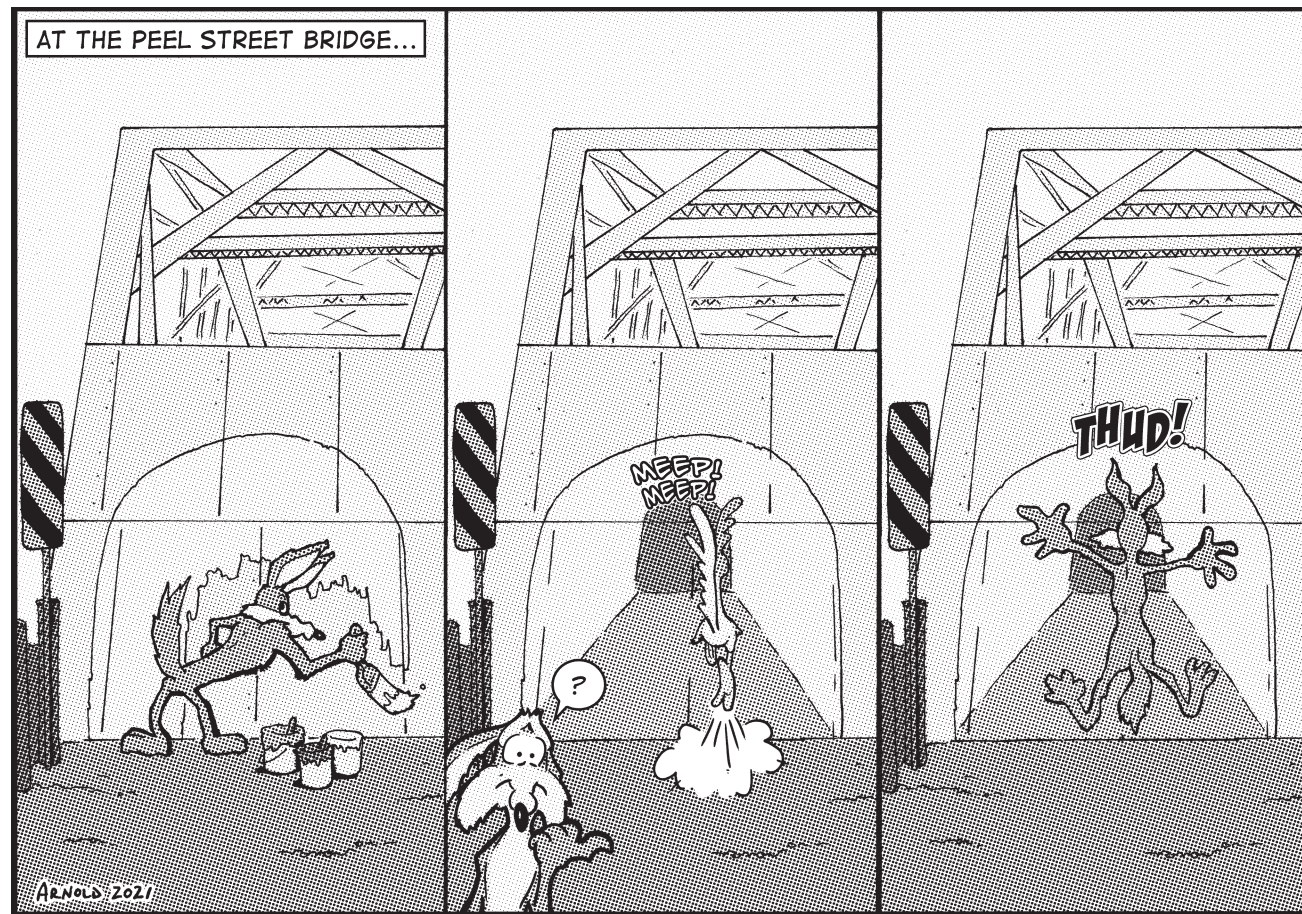
While the federal government has been supportive, it is missing the sense of urgency to act quickly and decisively. The reality is that these losses are unsustainable. Without government action, air travel will not only become a lot more expensive, but Canadians everywhere will have fewer choices of routes and destinations, including at the four major hub airport," said CAC president Daniel-Robert Gooch in a statement.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, the majority of Canada's airports were almost entirely funded through passenger and aeronautical fees, which have dropped catastrophically with passenger traffic at zero to 15 per cent of pre-COVID levels at most airports. Government mitigations such as ground lease rent relief and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy provided only minimal aid, he said.

"These measures provided some assistance, but not enough to help support airports dealing with higher costs and cratering revenues. In fact, our analysis shows that even their modest impact was far less than the government projected."

The Breslau airport has long been in the market for additional routes that connect the region to other parts of Canada. The current situation won't

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The Peel Street bridge may need some dressing up, but roadrunners aside, nobody's crossing it now.

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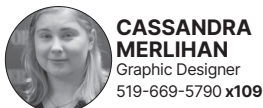
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# It's more than the shorter days that's making us feel sleepy



**STEVE KANNON**  
Editor's  
Point of View

That it gets dark so early in the evenings now – as we head toward the winter solstice, many of us are heading out before the sun's up and returning home after it's set – that it's easy to feel somewhat disoriented at night. It feels like bedtime long before that's actually the case.

Coupled with the general malaise and lack of activity of the coronavirus era, feeling sluggish isn't a rare occurrence.

While there may be more naps on some people's agendas, the reality is that we continue to feel tired because we are tired, the result of not getting enough sleep. Today, some 60 per cent of Canadian adults feel tired most of the time and get, on average, 6.9 hours of sleep a night, although experts recommend eight hours. Canadian research indicates 30 per cent of adults get fewer than six hours a night.

In fact, we're now sleeping as much as two hours less than just four decades ago when people slept eight and half hours or longer each night.

Studies show we're increasingly sleep deprived, adjusting to the relentless demands of a 24/7 society.

The lack of sleep isn't just inconvenient – and great for coffee vendors – it's bad for your health. More widely, it has societal impacts due to the increase of car crashes, workplace accidents and other industrial mishaps, some of them potentially serious.

The scientific evidence is mounting that getting less than the recommended seven to nine hours of nightly sleep is having wide-ranging impacts on our bodies, our minds and, especially, on the health of our children,

who need even more sleep: 10 to 11 hours per night.

Sleep is increasingly recognized as important to public health. Unintentionally falling asleep, nodding off while driving, and having difficulty performing daily tasks because of sleepiness all may contribute to these hazardous outcomes, studies show.

Sleep deprivation is linked to a higher mortality risk. An individual that sleeps on average less than six hours per night has a 13 per cent higher mortality risk than someone sleeping between seven and nine hours. An individual sleeping between six to seven hours per day still has a seven per cent higher mortality risk.

Multiple factors are

associated with shorter sleep. These include obesity, excessive alcohol and sugary drink consumption, smoking, lack of physical activity, mental health problems, stress at work, shift work/irregular working hours, financial concerns, and long commuting.

On something of a side note, if you're dieting, you'd be advised to mind your sleep: People eat 20 per cent more, on average, after one night of acutely reduced sleep. Studies have shown that persistent under-sleeping results in measurable weight gain over an extended period of time. Given that the average nightly sleep has been declining steadily over the past four decades, the natural conclusion is that sleep deprivation has contributed to the corresponding increase in obesity rates over the same period.

Sounds like a pretty high price to pay for staying up to binge watch whatever's streaming to your TV. Or, more likely, try to get a long list of things done in the quiet time when the kids are asleep. Or deal with those work emails and texts that arrive at inappropriate hours.

Work is a big reason why we go without sleep. Longer hours. More technology. Longer commutes. Multiple jobs. Shift work. All of it contributes to our lack of sleep and resultant poorer health. (All, not coincidentally, symptomatic of the falling standard of living and quality of life in the past few decades.)

Overall, the more we work, the less we sleep. According to Statistics Canada, working full-time translated into 24 minutes less sleep compared to not being in the labour force. Men sleep less on average about 11 minutes less

than women a night, but women have a higher rate of trouble falling asleep and staying asleep – 35 per cent compared with 25 per cent for men. Work schedules have much to do with the gender gap in sleep schedules. Working full-time is a key factor: Men who work full-time sleep 14 minutes less than women who work full-time, or about 85 hours or 3.5 days less sleep per year. However, for Canadians who work part-time or have no employment, there is no difference between the sexes in terms of sleep time.

More than three-quarters of Canadian workers say they work while tired, with one-third saying they do so very often, according to a new survey released this week. The costs of working tired are high: Respondents cite lack of focus or being easily distracted (50 per

cent), procrastinating more (44 per cent), being grumpy (36 per cent) and making more mistakes (26 per cent) among the consequences of foregoing sleep.

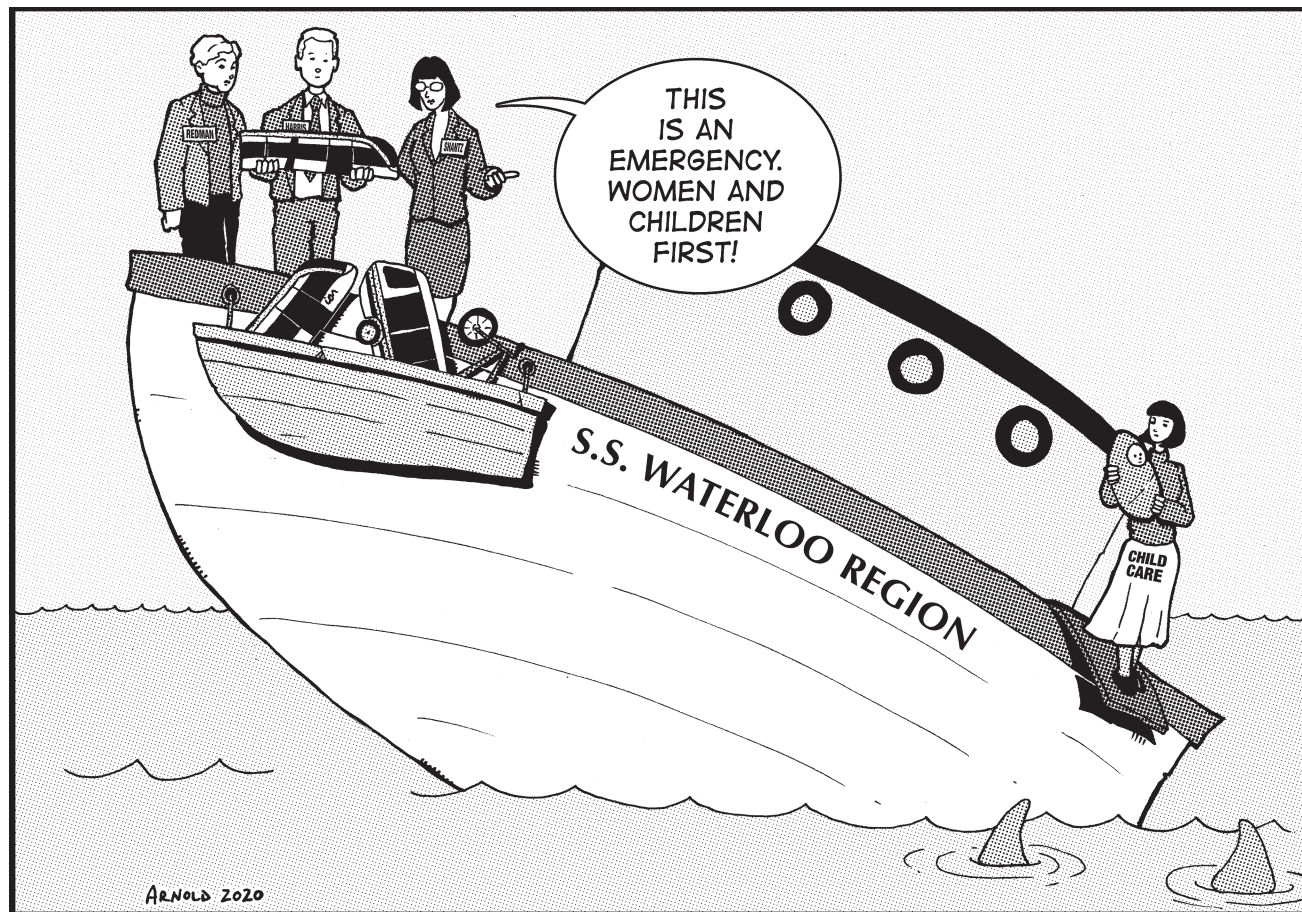
Eighty-five per cent of professionals between the ages of 18 and 34 admitted to being sleepy at work often, compared to 75 per cent of workers age 35 to 54 and only 57 per cent of respondents age 55 and older. Slightly more women (80 per cent) than men (72 per cent) said they often work while tired.

As noted, all this missing sleep comes at a price.

The cost of sleep disorders in Canada are estimated at \$1.6 billion a year in direct costs and another \$5 to \$10 billion in related losses. All told, sleep deprivation costs the Canadian economy some \$21.4 billion, or 1.35 per cent of GDP.

In the short term, reducing the impacts of our tiredness is more sleep – better sleep hygiene, as your doctor might suggest. In the longer term, well, we're going to need some changes to the way society has evolved, especially as it applies to work schedules.

Early on the industrial era we began to hear about the leisure society. That ideal became even more talked about in the computer age: we were going to have so much leisure time that society would actually have to make arrangements for it. That's certainly not been the case. In fact, statistics from the last three decades show we're typically working increasingly longer hours for modest, if any gains. And at great cost due to the lack of sleep as we go through the impossible effort of cramming more hours into the day, the increased downtime of the pandemic notwithstanding.



When it comes to cuts, the bureaucracy makes sure some priorities are more equal than others.

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# Everybody knows we're facing long-term threats to our way of life

*Everybody knows that the dice are loaded  
Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed  
Everybody knows the war is over  
Everybody knows the good guys lost  
Everybody knows the fight was fixed  
The poor stay poor, the rich get rich  
That's how it goes  
Everybody knows*

Our current situation – democracy under threat, civil unrest, racial tensions, economic woes, divisive politics and creeping authoritarianism, all underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic – requires the kind of gravitas only Leonard Cohen can provide.

Cohen's 1992 album *The Future*, particularly the title track, 'Anthem' and 'Democracy', certainly provides an appropriate soundtrack to what we're experiencing today. That's not surprising given the turbulent events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Los Angeles riots that occurred as he was writing and recording the album.

His previous album, the comeback offering *I'm Your Man*, provides us with 'Everybody Knows' and 'First We Take Manhattan' as songs filled with imagery suitable for a time three decades removed from its release.

Known for his songs of romance and sexuality, of course, Cohen also explored politics along with depression, loss and death. The dark was contrasted with the light, his deep, gravelly delivery lending a sombre note to his nuanced words. A very good fit with the goings-on today, particularly as we head into a second wave of the coronavirus and get caught up in a U.S. election now only days away.

How the world emerges



**STEVE KANNON**  
Editor's Point of View

from the pandemic remains unknown, just as we don't know what to expect on November 4.

What we do know is that democracy and liberalism in the West are under threat from without and within, the latter being the greater threat, particularly in places as diverse as Hungary, Poland and the United States.

Just as the great prosperity that followed the Second World War came under attack a generation later, with the eventual rolling back of many of the gains, the freedoms won in the intervening years are also under attack, often by the same elements of corporatism and fascism that look to drive down wages, pollute the environment and strip away

civil rights.

Likewise, the social contract we've forged over time is being wilfully eroded, attacked by those who see fomenting strife – along racial, cultural and economic lines – as a way to divide and conquer. It's working.

We need look no further than to the U.S. for confirmation, as many of us are caught up in the election campaign. The country is a demonstration of just how far we've strayed from governance in service of the public.

The American system may be beyond redemption, so far down the rabbit hole of moneyed corruption has it gone, but there's no room to gloat in this country. Or pretty much anywhere else, for that matter.

While the presidential battle is more about slinging mud, there are occasional forays into actual policy, such as taxes and

would-be economic fixes. As with such debates here, however, the topics are the subject of short-term thinking, an affliction that's permeated all facets of our society.

Adopting the business model that's taken hold in the last four decades – today's stock price, shareholder value and this quarter's profits above all else – our political system has been shaped by constant lobbying from those who see society through only the lens of finances. It's what's made citizens no more than consumers.

Politicians, of course, have a built-in capacity for short-term thinking: the election cycle. They make promises and float policies designed for immediate impact – spend for votes today. That's problematic in and of itself, as it gives little regard to the idea that actions taken now

will have impacts years, sometimes decades down the road.

That kind of thinking is what got us into today's mess. That the very people who supported tax cuts to corporations even as government largesse filled their coffers are the ones leading the charge for austerity measures – not to themselves, of course – has been lost in the shuffle.

In the course of a couple of generations, we've undone centuries of efforts to create a society based on the common good. Much of the we're-all-in-this-together ideals that came out of the Great Depression and the Second World War, for instance, has been replaced by relentless individualism.

Rapid urbanization whereby we no longer rely on family, friends and the broader community – indeed, we may not even

know our neighbours – makes us forget just how interdependent we really are. A consumer-based society, pushed by marketing, focuses on individual pleasure. This comes at a cost to the collective 'us,' especially when it discusses matters of financing the common good: taxes are seen as taking money away from 'my' enjoyment. Increasingly, we're encouraged to give rein to our natural tendency to look after number one. Couple that with an individual's capacity to seek immediate gratification, and long-term planning for our collective future becomes even more difficult.

There's nothing wrong with looking out for personal interests, but we're in danger of forgetting that most of the middle-class gains of the postwar years stem from socially-driven ideas. In purely economic terms, the collective efforts are the rising tide that lifted all boats – some more so than others, certainly. Today, however, there's an element that seems hell-bent on undoing precisely the conditions that allowed for the great prosperity now under attack.

Thanks to decades of concerted effort, many people have bought into a set of diminished expectations about the role of government and, more troublingly, the possibilities of shaping a better society. We've had democracy reduced to the occasional trip to the polls. We've seen government reduced to managerial functions, where debate is constrained to a few well-worn topics. We've seen the economy reduced to fiscal policy – deregulation's the order of the day as the financial services industry sets the agenda. We've seen citizenship

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Even those stocked up on candy will have a decision to make come Saturday night as trick-or-treat time arrives.

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