

Comox Airport Glides Above Challenges

The roller coaster ride with fuel prices and the global financial meltdown has certainly provided some daunting challenges to the air transportation industry over the past year.

And then the blast of winter that prevailed throughout the busiest travel time of the year was the icing on the cake.

Even with the withdrawal of service to Comox by AC Jazz in September, the Comox Airport had ended the year with just over 304,000 passengers having flown through the terminal in 2008. "This is about a 2% reduction from 2007 where we saw a phenomenal 30% growth over the year prior" states CEO Chuck Fast. "Given the state of the economy and the lack of consumer confidence, our numbers could have been much worse. And looking back over 2008 we had several accomplishments and positive stories to celebrate" he continued.

One of the highlights of the year was reaching the milestone of one million passengers flying through YQQ since opening the doors of the new terminal in 2004. In honour of this achievement, the community was invited to a party that included live music, children's activities, and many great prizes including a fabulous trip for two to Edmonton sponsored by Edmonton Tourism & West Jet.

For the 5th consecutive year Comox Airport has garnered number one spot for Customer Service in Canadian Airports. Airports across the country take part in a customer satisfaction and benchmarking survey conducted by InterVISTAS Consulting Inc. In reaction to the hearing the results Fast says "Having received top marks for the fifth year has been a testament to the emphasis we place on providing consistent, quality experience to visitors. We utilize the passenger feedback as a barometer of what we are doing right and where we need to improve services or facilities. I'd like to publicly thank all of the airport staff and volunteers for their commitment to customer service."

The direct international flights to Mexico have been a tremendous success. Both Sunwing Vacations (Cancun) and Transat Holidays (Puerto Vallarta) have indicated that they are very happy with the number of bookings already in place for this current season.

WestJet continues to grow its service and the announcement of a code-share agreement with South West Airlines will further enhance travel opportunities.

When Fast is asked what 2009 will hold for the airport his response is " I predict perhaps a 10 percent decrease in passenger trafficDespite the current slow down it's important not to lose sight of the future."

In 2008 the Airport Commission took part in a planning exercise resulting in completed strategic and master plans which are available on the CVAC website comoxairport.com. These are essential working documents for future development and for seeking infrastructure funding at the provincial and federal levels. As a result of the planning exercise CVAC contracted the services a Stantec Architecture Ltd, a leading company world wide in airport design, to provide conceptual drawings of an international terminal building.