



Where journeys begin.

Comox Valley Airport News

Issue Four | January 2012

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YQQ Surpasses Industry Trend for Growth in 2011

The Comox Valley Airport served 308,937 passengers in 2011, an increase of 4.2 per cent or 12,370 passengers over the previous year. This new data puts YQQ well above the minimal passenger growth experienced by most airports across North America, as reported by Airports Council International.

“YQQ is experiencing a healthy rate of growth compared to other North American airports that saw passenger numbers increasing by less than one per cent in 2011,” says YQQ CEO Shirley de Silva. “This increase surpasses our own passenger growth goals and helps to support our message to airlines that the Comox Valley Airport is an excellent place in which to do business.”

With an average increase of 1,031 passengers per month, de Silva says YQQ is in an excellent position for continued growth in 2012. She attributes YQQ’s robust passenger numbers to the airport’s strategic marketing efforts and the establishment of Air Transat and Nolitours new direct route to Cancun, along with Flair Air’s new charter to Fort Nelson.

The airport’s busiest month was August, which saw a total of 34,580 passengers – an increase of 992 passengers over the same month in 2010. The busy holiday travel month of December saw a total of 26,711 passengers or an increase of 1,978 passengers for the same time period in the previous year.



YQQ is experiencing a healthy rate of growth compared to other North American airports and saw its passenger numbers increasing by 4.2 per cent in 2011.

Shirley de Silva
CEO, Comox Valley Airport

“Our strategic plan lays out the direction for steady, sustainable passenger growth until 2015, surpassing our pre-recession high,” said de Silva. “As we strategically market our current routes in 2012, we will also continue our efforts to bring additional complementary air service to YQQ.”





Message from the CEO

As we enter into 2012 we are pleased to report a 4.2 per cent increase in our passenger numbers. We attribute this growth to our strategic marketing efforts as well as the establishment of Air Transat and Nolitours new direct route to Cancun and Flair Air's charter to Fort Nelson. This increase exceeds our passenger growth goals and helps to support our message to airlines that the Comox Valley Airport is an excellent place in which to do business.

YQQ has been a busy place over the past 12 months with some very notable milestones to report to our readers. We were pleased to launch our award winning newsletter FLY YQQ in March of last year and our subscriber list continues to grow. We are also producing a regular monthly newsletter for our staff, tenants and volunteers to keep everyone in the terminal informed about YQQ news and events.

Over the next year we will continue to ensure open and transparent communication with our partners, stakeholders, passengers and employees about the airport. We will maintain our efforts to improve the passenger experience and our first order of business for the 2012 fiscal year will be a passenger satisfaction

survey. We are looking forward to seeing the results of our efforts to incorporate passenger feedback through the offering of free WiFi and improved design of our departure lounge. An RFP has also been issued for the redesign of the website in 2012. We intend to utilize the latest technology to keep the site relevant and user-friendly for our passengers.

Last year, we were proud to unveil a dynamic brand model that now serves as the creative platform for all of our marketing and public communications materials. We are pleased to report that we have successfully incorporated our brand into everything that we do at YQQ; including our strategic marketing campaign, the look and feel of our terminal building and the corporate materials with which we conduct our business.

Our strategic marketing efforts will continue into 2012 as we more aggressively pursue those passengers leaking to the mainland. Our marketing program is extremely important because it helps to ensure the success of our current routes, while making our airport more attractive to new carriers.

We continue to support 19 Wing Comox in its efforts to enforce aeronautical safety, to ensure that civilian commercial aircrafts landing at the Comox Valley Airport continue to do so in the safest possible environment.

Of course our number one focus for 2012 continues to be business development. Last year we made 14 presentations to numerous airlines and launched an incentive policy to keep us competitive in an increasingly difficult market. We will continue to work with our partners in the community to grow our business, as we aggressively pursue those routes that are a good fit for YQQ.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shirley de Silva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shirley de Silva
Chief Executive Officer
Comox Valley Airport



YQQ Announces Incentive Program for New Air Service Delivery

The Comox Valley Airport has unveiled the details of a new incentive program intended to encourage airlines to develop new commercial air service at YQQ. This competitive program offers a balance of marketing support and reductions in fees as a new route becomes established.

“We understand that an incentive program is an important tool to strengthen our air service development business cases for airlines,” said YQQ CEO Shirley de Silva. “Incentive programs are growing in popularity and we believe our program is extremely competitive among airports.”



These incentives apply to any carrier that establishes new routes at YQQ, and this most certainly includes our current airline partners.

Shirley de Silva
CEO, Comox Valley Airport

De Silva says incentives including \$28,000 in marketing support, will help to bridge the gap between an airline’s perceived risk and YQQ’s confidence in its market. A 50 per cent reduction in terminal and customs fees is also being

offered, along with a 25 per cent reduction in fees for office and counter space leased by an airline for the first year of operation.

“These incentives apply to any carrier that establishes a new route at YQQ, and this most certainly includes our current airline partners,” said de Silva. “Our air service development program is seeking out routes that are complementary to our current service offering and these new routes can be offered by either an existing carrier or a new carrier.

YQQ also offers all of its tenants a dedicated marketing and public relations program that is aimed at increasing awareness of the airport and stemming leakage of passengers to the mainland.

“We are committed to working with our airlines on a daily basis to ensure YQQ’s routes thrive,” said de Silva. “Our communications program is a huge benefit to doing business at YQQ. It has helped contribute towards excellent relationships with our stakeholders and community partners. The community understands what an economic driver the airport is and is very supportive of establishing new air service here.”

Norwegian Airport Officials Visit YQQ

The Comox Valley Airport Commission was happy to oblige when contacted by representatives of Avinor, the Norwegian Civil Aviation Authority, for a tour and presentation of YQQ. Officials were eager to learn about YQQ's branding program and glean knowledge about building a comprehensive communications program from the ground up.

Avinor is looking to develop a brand model for its regional airports and was curious about the research, development, design and implementation of YQQ's own unique model. Of particular interest, was how the brand integrated with the business development plans and strategic direction of the Comox Valley Airport Commission.

"We appreciated your openness and that you shared your experience and knowledge with us," said Margrethe Snekerbakken, Executive Vice President with Avinor. "We returned to Norway with new knowledge and many inputs. Thank you!"



Did you know that two out of three inhabitants in Norway have access to an airport within sixty minutes travel time? In fact, 99.5 per cent of the population is able to travel to Oslo and back on the same day.

Norway has three airports with a similar business model to YQQ and delegates found our experiences to be similar to their own. The delegation also visited the Greater Moncton International Airport, Ottawa International Airport, the Government of BC and various aviation organizations during their six-day Canadian tour.

Economic Forecasts Cautiously Optimistic for 2012

YQQ CEO Shirley de Silva was among presenters from the building, banking and mortgage sectors that expressed cautious optimism for economic development in the Comox Valley at the Outlook 2012 event.

The sixth annual event, presented by 1stView.ca brought together a series of presentations from de Silva and other industry professionals including the president and CEO of Canadian Western Bank, the CEO of the Vancouver Island Construction Association and a senior market analyst for the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

The presentations focused on trends in the Vancouver Island construction and real estate market and provided economic forecasts into 2012 and beyond.

De Silva told the audience that YQQ is on track for a three-percent increase in passenger traffic this year. She also confirmed there is a possibility of adding a once daily service to the U.S.

"There is huge potential for economic impact with a route to a hub airport in the U.S.," said de Silva. "We've met with various

airlines, but acquiring routes is a lengthy endeavor and a very competitive process."

Greg Baynton, CEO of the Vancouver Island Construction Association, says there is clear signs of progress in Vancouver Island's construction sector, with the Valley ripe for growth as more and more people reach retirement age.

Travis Archibald of CMHC said housing prices in the Valley have not yet rebounded to the pre-recession days, but are now relatively stable. He also estimated new housing starts could increase to 700 a year over the next five years.

Overall, the Canadian economy is faring quite well, said Larry Pollock, CEO of Western Canada Bank. He predicted the stabilization of Canada's GDP and a slight rise in the Canadian dollar.

At the end of the night, attendees were left with a cautiously optimistic view for growth in the Valley over the coming year.



Excited passengers wait to go through security at YQQ.

YQQ Celebrates Departure of First Mexico Bound Passengers

The Comox Valley Airport Commission and WestJet were pleased to send off the first plane full of excited guests bound for Mexico on Saturday, November 5.

WestJet flight 2180 took off for Puerto Vallarta at 12:50 p.m., following a Mexican fiesta event at the airport. Passengers enjoyed authentic Mexican music, festive decorations and traditional Mexican fare served up by On the Fly Cafe prior to their departure. WestJet also distributed “beach themed” prizes to several lucky passengers as they waited to board their flight.

WestJet flights continue every Saturday until April 28, 2012. Direct flights to Cancun with Transat Holidays and Nolitours started up on December 19. YQQ passengers have the option to travel direct to Cancun and Puerto Vallarta every Monday and Tuesday until late into March.



We are looking forward to another successful winter travel season partnering with the Comox Valley Airport.

Tim Croyle
WestJet Vacations



WestJet staffers enjoy the fiesta vibe.

“We are looking forward to another successful winter travel season partnering with the Comox Valley Airport,” said Tim Croyle, Director of WestJet Vacations. “WestJet Vacations is pleased to offer our guests a choice of great value vacation packages with our friendly, caring and reliable service - direct from YQQ.”

“Once again, we are pleased to enter into a partnership with WestJet, Transat Holidays and Nolitours to provide our passengers with direct flights to Mexico,” said Comox Valley Airport CEO, Shirley de Silva. “With friendly, personalized service and direct flights all winter long, we are hopeful that sun-seekers will choose to start their vacation off right with YQQ.”

YQQ is looking forward to another busy winter travel season ahead. Radio ads to promote the flights begin in January in the Comox Valley, Parksville and Nanaimo areas. Last year, more than 10,000 passengers escaped the rain and hopped on board flights to Puerto Vallarta and Cancun with WestJet, Transat Holidays and Nolitours.

YQQ and London Heathrow Share Same Branding Philosophy

In 2008, London's Heathrow Airport committed to implementing a new brand built on an original tagline. Like YQQ, the international airport started out with a brand model built around the customer experience. That model became intricately woven into their marketing program, the visual aspects of the terminal and in the service model for the staff.

"Over the last two years the ethos of 'making every journey better' has become more and more backed into the business – from the lanyards we wear around our necks, to the advertising, the way we talk, behave and treat our customers. As a whole the airport and everyone working here is much more passenger focused," says Heathrow's marketing and insight director, Nick Adderley.

The approach is the same philosophy that YQQ subscribes to. Our brand model can be seen in print advertising, signage and uniforms. But most importantly, it is reflected in the way the airport interacts with its customers. The personalized service here makes every journey unique and this concept is reflected by the handwritten personalized stories seen in our advertisements. It is also a key aspect of our tagline 'Where Journeys Begin'.

"There is a friendly vibe at YQQ that sets it apart from other airports," said Manager of Marketing and Public Communications, Christianne Wile. "Our brand is built around those aspects that make us unique – our local charm and our commitment to an exceptional customer experience."



Volunteers for YQQ's Airport Host Program



Inside London Heathrow's Terminal 2 Building.

And like YQQ, the journey at Heathrow isn't all about grand gestures or expensive building projects. It is about focusing on the basics and making small differences that all add to the passenger experience. Heathrow's passengers were entertained by the Easter Bunny over the holidays, just like YQQ's guests were delighted by the Hot Chocolates famous bunny's appearance at the airport last April.

"It is not necessarily exciting stuff, but it is actually important stuff, and every time we do it a little bit better, we improve the performance of the airport and make the customer experience better, concluded Adderley.



Not only do passengers, airport staff and the airlines understand the value of service they provide, but the volunteers themselves recognize the importance of their role and they take it very seriously.

Lisa Iverson
YQQ Volunteer Coordinator

Heathrow also offers up a team of Volunteers that speak more than 45 languages between them. While YQQ's Volunteer Host Program may be much smaller in scope, there is no question that these dedicated individuals adds to the charm of the terminal building. They also play a key part in personalizing the passenger experience – a role that is greatly valued throughout the airport says YQQ Volunteer Coordinator, Lisa Iverson.

"Not only do passengers, airport staff and the airlines understand the value of service they provide, but the volunteers themselves recognize the importance of their role and they take it very seriously," says Iverson.

Comox Valley Airport Profiled in Globe and Mail

The Globe and Mail's special feature on Canada's Airports sported YQQ's latest print advertisement and the following profile on October 28, 2011:

The Comox Valley Airport (YQQ) on Vancouver Island may not be the largest in Canada, but its approach to brand development is just as cutting edge as some of the biggest airports in the world.

Like London Heathrow, YQQ has developed a strategic brand to ensure consistency in all aspects of its public image. Anchored by the tagline "Where Journeys Begin," the brand espouses "world-class, local-charm."



Anchored by the tagline "Where Journeys Begin," the brand espouses world-class, local-charm.

Globe and Mail



YQQ's latest print ad entitled "Coming Home".

"YQQ is a great place to do business, and our brand model reflects the attributes that set us apart from our competitors: our ease of use, caring personnel and convenience," says CEO Shirley de Silva. "This serves as a template for everything that we do – from our attitude, uniforms, advertising and the look and feel of our terminal building."

Comox Valley Airport Offers Free Wi-Fi for Passengers

The Comox Valley Airport is offering its passengers free Wireless Internet in partnership with BOLDstreet Wireless. Guests in the terminal building now have access to up to two hours of free internet service while they await the departure or arrival of YQQ flights.

"We have received significant feedback requesting free Wi-Fi in the terminal building and we are pleased to respond to this important input from our passengers, said YQQ CEO Shirley de Silva. "The internet is increasingly becoming a key part of travel and we hope this new service will help to improve the overall passenger experience at YQQ."

"BOLDstreet is thrilled to work with YQQ to bring Canada's premier Wi-Fi service to the Comox Valley Airport," said Tom Camps, President of BOLDstreet Wireless. "This important service offering is a clear indication of YQQ's commitment to customer satisfaction."

The new service is up and running seamlessly with BOLDstreet providing 24/7 customer support.

Comox Valley Airport Receives BC Safe Harbour Champion Award

The Comox Valley Airport has been named the 2011 BC Safe Harbour Champion for its leadership in promoting diversity and inclusion. YQQ is the first airport in Canada to become an accredited Safe Harbour facility.

"We are so pleased to recognize YQQ for its leadership and commitment to taking a stand against discrimination in the workplace," said Safe Harbour Provincial Program Coordinator, Lindsay Marsh. "Since becoming a certified Safe Harbour location, YQQ has consistently demonstrated its dedication to serving customers, clients, staff and volunteers with an understanding of their diverse and unique needs. The airport has actively taken steps to further the vision of Safe Harbour and the concept of inclusion within the terminal building and in the community."



There are currently over 1,000 Safe Harbour-certified locations in BC, Alberta, Manitoba, and Newfoundland, coordinated by AMSSA (www.amssa.org), a province-wide association that facilitates collaborative leadership, knowledge exchange and stakeholder engagement to support member agencies that serve immigrants and build culturally inclusive communities.

The Safe Harbour project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia. For more information about Safe Harbour visit: www.safeharbour.ca

The 2011 BC Safe Harbour Champion Award was presented to YQQ on November 1, 2011 at the third annual BC Safe Harbour Champion's Breakfast in Vancouver. Representatives from numerous Safe Harbour-certified locations, as well as community leaders, business representatives, government officials and elected leaders were in attendance at the ceremony.

"The Comox Valley Airport is honoured to accept this award that represents our commitment to promoting the Safe Harbour principles within our airport and the community," said YQQ CEO, Shirley de Silva. "We are proud to offer an inclusive workplace, where employees, customers and passengers know that they will be respected and safe from discrimination."



To Subscribe:

info@comoxairport.com

Submissions and feedback:

Editor:

cwile@comoxairport.com

Phone:

1-250-890-0829

Mailing:

118, 1250 Knight Rd,
Comox, BC V9M 4H2