



Where journeys begin.

Comox Valley Airport News

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Inside

- 2 Message from the CEO
- 3 YQQ Celebrates the Tenth Anniversary of the Referendum That Started it All
- 4 YQQ Welcomes International Students
- 5 WestJet Encore Launches Three New Routes
- 6 Lucky Contest Winner Returns from Mexico Rejuvenated
- 6 New Screening Equipment Will Help Reduce Line-Ups
- 7 Return of the Comox Armed Forces Day and Air Show
- 8 YQQ Security Screener Stands Out
- 8 YQQ's Own Carol Wain Releases Best-Selling How-To Book

YQQ Announces Record Passenger Numbers in 2012

The Comox Valley Airport served more than 327,000 passengers in 2012 – The highest in its history. This new data represents a six per cent increase from 2011 and surpasses the airport's previous record of 310,450 passengers in 2007 prior to the economic downturn.

"We are extremely pleased with our performance in 2012," said YQQ CEO, Fred Bigelow. "We are cautiously optimistic that these statistics represent a full recovery following a severe economic depression that dampened travel trends across the country."

YQQ served 327,827 passengers last year, almost 19,000 more than in 2011. The airport's busiest month was August, which saw a total of 38,074 passengers – an increase of about 3,500 passengers over the same month the previous year.

"We achieved an unprecedented growth of six per cent in 2012; essentially doubling the target outlined in our strategic plan," he explained. "This provides us with great support in our messaging to potential partners that the Comox Valley Airport is an excellent place to do business."

While Bigelow cautioned it would be unrealistic to expect growth to continue at such a high rate in subsequent years, he says that YQQ is focusing its efforts in 2013 on obtaining additional air service for the Comox Valley.

"A very strong business case exists for an additional sunspot service out of YQQ," Bigelow confirmed. "Our focus for 2013 will be on obtaining a new route to complement our current direct service to Puerto Vallarta Mexico through WestJet."

The Comox Valley Airport's strategic plan estimates that YQQ's passenger numbers will continue to grow, reaching about 344,125 by 2015.

"Our plan lays out the direction for steady, sustainable passenger growth. We will continue to strategically market our current routes while we attempt to bring in additional air service to YQQ that will help us to achieve our goals," Bigelow concluded.

COMOX
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YQQ



Message from the CEO

2013 started off on a positive note with the announcement of a six per cent increase in our 2012 passenger numbers at YQQ. These numbers surpass our previous record prior to the economic downturn. We are extremely pleased with these figures and while it would be unrealistic to assume such growth on a regular basis, we will continue to work hard to ensure the continued success of our airport.

This year also marked the tenth anniversary of the municipal referendum vote that made the construction of the Comox Valley Airport terminal building possible. In the 18 years since I became part of this community, I can think of no better example of what we can accomplish when we all band together for the sake of the common good. The return on investment for the Comox Valley has been quite remarkable and we will endeavor to ensure that our airport continues to pay dividends to the community well into the future.

In mid-February WestJet unveiled the much-anticipated destinations to be served by Encore, a new subsidiary aimed at improving regional service into WestJet's main hubs using the Bombardier Q400 aircraft. Starting on June 24,

Encore will service Nanaimo-Calgary, Victoria-Vancouver, and Fort St. John to/from both Vancouver and Calgary. New destinations will be added as WestJet takes delivery of three additional aircraft by the end of this year and a total of 20 aircraft over the next six years.

I had the pleasure of meeting new Encore President Ferio Pugliese when he visited YQQ to meet with WestJet staff following the announcement of Encore's new routes. Ferio and I had a great discussion about the importance of YQQ in the WestJet network. It is clear that we will continue to work closely with WestJet's network planning group to ensure that Comox continues to play a key role in expanding WestJet's services for Vancouver Island residents.

Looking ahead in 2013, we continue to work on obtaining a sunspot charter for 2014. We are confident in our market and our passengers tell us time and time again that they would support the service. Increasing the options for winter sunspot travel out of Comox continues to be a key goal and we will be pitching our case to airlines over the next couple of months.

Our focus on resolving the instrument approach restrictions also continues and much effort is occurring behind the scenes. We are working on a daily basis with our airline partners, 19 Wing and all affected government departments to ensure these restrictions are lifted before the inclement weather sets in next winter.

I thank all of the passengers who began their journey with YQQ in 2012 and we look forward to serving you all again in 2013.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred Bigelow". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Fred Bigelow
Chief Executive Officer
Comox Valley Airport

YQQ Celebrates the Tenth Anniversary of the Referendum That Started it All

February 15, 2013 marked the tenth anniversary of the municipal referendum that made the construction of the Comox Valley Airport terminal building possible.

To mark the special occasion, members of the public, community leaders, former Directors and Officers of the CVAC Board and the "Yes Campaign" Steering Committee, were invited to the airport for cake, coffee and remarks from special guests including the Honourable Don McRae, MLA for the Comox Valley. The event provided an opportunity to reminisce about the referendum and thank all of those who were involved.

"Many Comox Valley residents can recall a time when passengers stood outside in the rain waiting to check in for their flights," said airport CEO Fred Bigelow as he addressed the crowd at the event. "Thanks to the municipal referendum, travelers today enjoy a full service, modern facility that accommodates more than 327,000 passengers per year."

Over 17,000 votes were cast in the referendum and an overwhelming 87.5 per cent of voters were in favour of providing a \$4 million capital grant to the Comox Valley Airport Commission to help construct a new airport terminal. The Commission was then able to leverage the grant, along with its own \$3.3 million investment in the project, to obtain an additional \$4.4 million in funds from the provincial and federal governments to make construction of a new facility possible.

"This is a big milestone in our history and it is important that we take the time to thank all of those who helped build our terminal; including the 'Yes Campaign' Steering Committee, municipal taxpayers and all of our stakeholders and partners who continue to make the airport a community success story," said Comox Valley Airport Commission Chair, Linda Oprica. "YQQ has been extremely fortunate in its achievements, which would not have been possible without our current terminal building."



YQQ CEO Fred Bigelow welcomes guests to the celebration.

"As a tenant of YQQ I am fortunate to experience the benefits of our airport on a daily basis as I observe the positive impact it has on our passengers and the community," said former "Yes Campaign" Steering Committee member Andrea Wagemaker. "It is truly amazing what can be accomplished when we work together as a community. The airport and the people who work here are extremely close to my heart and I couldn't be more excited to share in this milestone with all of those who made it possible."

The Comox Valley Airport terminal building was completed on budget and opened its doors to the public in April of 2004. Since then, annual passenger traffic has grown by 78 per cent.

[Cont. on page 4 >](#)

Cont. from page 3 >

The historical funding breakdown for the construction of the terminal building is as follows:

Type	Price	Purpose
Comox Valley Regional District	\$4 million	for terminal building construction
Government of British Columbia	\$2 million	for terminal building construction
Transport Canada	\$1.9 million	for aircraft apron and taxiway construction
Canadian Airport Authority	\$535,562	for security upgrades
Comox Valley Airport Commission	\$3.3 million	for terminal building construction
Total Project Budget	\$11.7 million	terminal, apron, taxi-way and security

“Each time a plane lands at YQQ it generates employment and labour hours from passenger handling, baggage, cargo, food concessions and car rental agencies,” concluded Linda Oprica. “Our airport generates a significant return on investment in terms of its economic impact on the Comox Valley. We are grateful for the community support that has contributed to the success of YQQ today and we look forward to celebrating continued success with our community in the future.”



MLA Don McRae and his daughter Chloe with Andrea Wagemaker



Chloe does a great job blowing out the candles.

YQQ Welcomes International Students

YQQ and North Island College recently welcomed the first International students arriving to the Comox Valley from Japan to begin the 2013 winter semester at North Island College (NIC).

Waiting host families gathered in the customs area to meet their new houseguests as the students disembarked from the Central Mountain Air flight from Vancouver after a long journey across the Pacific.

Each semester NIC welcomes students to its International Studies Program. A report commissioned by the Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) in 2012, shows

that international students and their visiting friends and relatives are making significant financial expenditures in the Comox Valley (estimated at \$6.8 million in the 2011–2012 school year) and supporting nearly 100 local jobs.

“YQQ is pleased to assist NIC with welcoming these students to the Valley and ensuring their first experience here is a memorable one,” said YQQ Operations Manager, Alex Robertson. “This program fits well with our commitment to the Safe Harbour program and our goal of providing an exceptional experience for our passengers.”



Photo courtesy of Bombardier.ca

WestJet Encore Launches Three New Routes

WestJet has announced that its new Encore regional service will introduce flights for Nanaimo–Calgary, Victoria–Vancouver, and Fort St. John to/from both Vancouver and Calgary starting on June 24.

WestJet Encore will use its first two 78-seat Bombardier Q400 turboprops for the new services. The airline will continue to fly its larger 737 aircraft out of Comox with no change to the current schedule.

"There are no changes planned for service to/from YQQ," WestJet spokesperson Robert Palmer told the Comox Valley Echo. "We believe in both markets (Nanaimo and Comox) and do not believe we will see an adverse impact in either one. In fact, we see growth in both."

WestJet Encore President Ferio Pugliese visited YQQ to meet with WestJet staff and Comox Valley Airport CEO Fred Bigelow following the announcement on February 11.

"We had a good chat. WestJet has done its research and feels the central Vancouver Island market can handle the additional capacity," said Bigelow. "The once daily service out of Nanaimo will have a small impact on some of the passengers that previously came up from the mid-Island area through Comox, but the overall affect on our operation will be marginal."

WestJet Encore will take delivery of its first two Canadian-built, 78-seat Bombardier Q400 turboprop aircraft in June 2013 and add five more by the end of the year. WestJet has firm orders for a total of 20-Q400s and options for an additional 25 over the next six years.

"The introduction of Encore is good for the air service industry in Canada as it will free up more capacity overall," explained Bigelow. "For Vancouver Island passengers this could eventually mean better flight schedules, increased connection opportunities within the WestJet network and more choice in general for those seeking to enter and exit the island via air."

"Strategically, providing access to more Canadians as well as using WestJet Encore to fly new non-stops and enhance our frequency between markets will not only enable incremental growth from new markets but also enhance our overall value for the business market," said Encore President Ferio Pugliese in a press release.

Comox Valley Airport management will work closely with WestJet's network planning group to ensure the Comox continues to play a key role in expanding WestJet's services for Vancouver Island residents.

Lucky Contest Winner Returns from Mexico Rejuvenated

YQQ passenger Gloria Lloyd-Jones was the lucky winner of a free trip for two to Mexico courtesy of YQQ and WestJet Vacations. After tuning into 97.3 the Eagle and having her name drawn at the Fiesta party during the Bob and Bill morning show, Gloria and her best friend of 25 years enjoyed a seven night stay at the incredible, all-inclusive Occidental Grand Nuevo Vallarta - a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence winner. The prize included: flights, hotel, unlimited food and drinks, poolside chaise lounges and towel service, daily and nightly entertainment, tennis court, aquasports, kayaking and more.

"We had a BLAST!! My best friend Joely and I have never been away together without our kids," Gloria told Fly YQQ. "It was an adventure everyday and let our hair down we did. There are many stories to tell and we will never forget our experience. Thank you to everyone at The Eagle, WestJet Vacations and YQQ who made this wonderful trip possible."



Gloria and Joely soaking up the sun in Puerto Vallarta.

New Screening Equipment Will Help Reduce Line-Ups

New security screening equipment was installed in the pre-boarding passenger screening area at YQQ on Valentine's Day.

"The improved scanners will provide screeners with a three dimensional view inside passenger hand luggage, helping to prevent unnecessary inspection of bags," explained Operations Manager, Alex Robertson.

Fewer inspections mean a faster moving security line says Robertson, resulting in an improved passenger experience.



New X-ray machine being installed in pre-board screening.



Photo courtesy of 19 Wing Comox.

Return of the Comox Armed Forces Day and Air Show

19 Wing, Canadian Forces Base Comox has long been an integral part of the Comox Valley. The origin of CFB Comox began in the spring of 1942 when Britain's Royal Air Force started construction of the airfield in order to train wartime aircrews and function as an operational base for coastal patrols. In 1943, the Royal Canadian Air Force took over the base, and since then, Canadian military aircraft have trained and operated in the skies throughout northern Vancouver Island and indeed, throughout British Columbia.

To celebrate the 70 years of Canadian Air Force history in the Comox Valley, members of 19 Wing have been busy planning the 2013 Armed Forces Day (AFD) and Comox Air Show. This event is anticipated to top the last AFD/Air Show held in 2005.

On August 17th, 2013, the Comox Air Show will feature a wide range of Canadian military aircraft, as well as ground displays including vehicles, equipment and members from the Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Army, RCMP and other government departments. The Snowbirds Air Demonstration Squadron and CF-18 Demonstration jet will also fly overhead, highlighting the

skill and professionalism of members of the Canadian Armed Forces. A variety of civilian performers will take to the skies as well. In addition to flying aircraft, there will be a wide range of static display aircraft, including a selection of vintage World War II-era planes.

Of course, Comox-based aircraft like the Buffalo Fixed-Wing Search and Rescue plane, Cormorant Search and Rescue helicopter and Aurora Long Range Patrol aircraft will play a big role in the flying demonstrations throughout the day.

"We will be working closely with our air carriers and partners at 19 Wing Comox to ensure minimal disruptions to commercial air travel during the air show," said Comox Valley Airport CEO Fred Bigelow. "We will be communicating early and often through the media with any instructions for travellers, whether that be a slight change in flight schedules or just arriving a little bit earlier for your flights. Airlines will also be communicating directly with their passengers who are travelling in or out of YQQ that day."

YQQ Security Screener Stands Out

YQQ's own Kevin Ayers received the BC Screening Officer of the Month award in January. Kevin's commitment to outstanding service in his interactions with both passengers and colleagues made him stand out from his peers at all other airports across BC. Way to go Kevin!



Screener Kevin Ayers and Supervisor Ron Ross of G4S.

YQQ's Own Carol Wain Releases Best-Selling How-To Book



Author and CVAC Director Carol Wain.

Comox Valley Airport Commission Director Carol Wain, "2003 Entrepreneur of the Year" and internationally recognized business improvement and marketing specialist, adds another accolade to her achievements – best-selling author. Carol's book Guerrilla Tourism Marketing rose to number one in the categories of tourism, marketing and tourism books on Amazon.ca and number three, 11 and 19 respectively on Amazon.com triggering inclusion in the website's "Hot New Releases".

Primarily focused on marketing and business improvement, with examples from the various segments within the tourism industry, the book has broad appeal to many types of businesses who appreciate the "no fluff, nothing held back" approach to leveraging marketing, technology and relationships to increase profit.

The book, which has received five reviews across three Amazon sites (.ca, .com and .co.uk) can be purchased by following the links at <http://GuerrillaTourismMarketingBook.com>



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