YQQ *Where journeys begin.*

NEWS RELEASE
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The Comox Valley Airport celebrates historic milestone

Ten years ago today, the Comox Valley Airport opened the doors to a brand new terminal building and made the transition to the full service, modern facility that now accommodates hundreds of thousands of passengers per year.

With a lean staff of 10 operating the building and the help of 53 dedicated volunteers, three airlines, two rental car agencies, a gift shop and coffee shop, the airport welcomed in a new era of air travel and economic development for the Comox Valley.

"Our grand opening marked the day when passengers would no longer have to stand in the rain waiting to check-in for their flights. That was the day we left our small, temporary structure behind to become the second largest terminal on Vancouver Island," explained Comox Valley Airport CEO, Fred Bigelow. "In the next decade, we saw continued growth in our passenger numbers and the direct benefit of economic spin-offs that come with a community supported airport expansion."

The F/O C. Cottingham Terminal was officially opened by Lieutenant Governor Iona Campagnolo on April 16, 2004, followed by YQQ's customs facility a few months later, which enabled the first charter flight to Mexico from the Comox Valley Airport in December of that year. In the ten years that followed, annual traffic at the airport grew by 68 per cent with approximately 2.8 million passengers making YQQ part of their journey.

"We are grateful for the community support that made the construction of our terminal building possible and continues to keep our airport thriving to this day," said Frank van Gisbergen, Chair of the Comox Valley Airport Commission. "Each time a plane lands at YQQ, it generates employment and revenue right here at the airport and for tourism and local businesses throughout the North Island."

"The Comox Valley Airport terminal of today was constructed on-time and on-budget," said Bob Mortimer, former Chair of the Comox Valley Airport Commission. "This was an extremely complex project that succeeded because of contributions made by so many committed individuals, including our dedicated CVAC staff, the volunteers who served on the board of directors, 19 Wing Comox, local governments and especially the taxpayers of the Comox Valley."

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The original YQQ terminal building was constructed by the Department of National Defence and opened in 1956. Transport Canada operated the terminal until 1995 when it withdrew financial and/or operational involvement in Canadian airports. The Comox Valley Airport Commission (CVAC) was formed in 1996 and in May 1997, CVAC purchased the terminal from Transport Canada for one dollar.

In January 2001, WestJet announced it would begin offering flights at YQQ and CVAC added temporary portables to the original terminal building to accommodate increased traffic. Lengthy negotiations with DND (through Public Works Canada) for lease of the land began, and at the same time, a business case was being developed for the terminal YQQ passengers use today.

In February 2003, an overwhelming 87.5 per cent of municipal taxpayers voted in favour of providing a $4 million capital grant to the Comox Valley Airport Commission, to help construct the new airport terminal. The Commission was then able to leverage the grant, along with its own investment in the project, to obtain the additional funds from the provincial and federal governments that made construction of a new facility possible.

The building opened just over a year later and was named for Cyril Cottingham, a local pilot who enlisted in the Royal Air Force in 1942. On November 22, 1943, during his 19th mission, he and his crew of six others were shot down over Hasephorst, Germany. He was 25 years old.

"Uncle Cyril grew up in the neighbourhood where the airport was built," said Ron Webber, who nominated his uncle over a decade ago in a terminal building naming contest. "He was an outstanding student born and raised in the Comox Valley and then gave his life in the fight for our freedom. My family could not be more proud that his name and legacy live on at our airport."

The Comox Valley Airport Commission will celebrate the anniversary of the terminal's opening day with a reception to be held in conjunction with its Annual Public Meeting on August 20, 2014. Details will be published in both local papers, on the airport's website (www.comoxairport.com) and promoted using the airport's Twitter handle @FlyYQQ, in the weeks leading up to the event. Members of the public are welcome to join in the celebration to mark this important occasion in the history of the Comox Valley.

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About the Comox Valley Airport

The Comox Valley Airport (YQQ) is the second busiest airport on Vancouver Island. YQQ offers daily non-stop flights to Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver and seasonal service to Puerto Vallarta. It is centrally located on the east coast of Vancouver Island with excellent access to popular tourist destinations. It is served by two major provincial highways, making it a natural hub for travelers seeking to enter or exit Vancouver Island. The Comox Valley Airport Commission (CVAC) operates the civil aviation facilities at YQQ, including the terminal and apron. The airfield and its associated systems are operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force at 19 Wing Comox on a continuous 24-hour basis.

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