

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT 2021

COMOX VALLEY AIRPORT

Runway to Recovery

Photo by Allan Sawchuck

Vision

The Comox Valley Airport is the aviation gateway of the North Island.

Our Mission

Provide safe and efficient air service facilities, and enable the economic development of the Comox Valley.

Message from the Chair

Aside from the world war years of the last century, the past year was the most daunting ever experienced by the global passenger transportation industry. As the pandemic forced people to stay near home, demand for travel and tourism by land, sea and air collapsed; accordingly, providers of services—transport carriers, terminals, the hospitality industry and all other partners in the visitor economy—had to prune their operations to essential services only, to place anti-infection measures into their vehicles and facilities, and focus on their own commercial survival.

Against that sobering backdrop, I am both pleased and relieved to report that the Comox Valley Airport has emerged relatively unscathed. Prudent management and government support have combined to position us in a state of readiness to provide service for a safe recovery.

Because we had an emergency response plan prepared before the pandemic hit, we were able to move fast when it did. The YQQ READY program drew upon our existing protocols from the earlier SARS pandemic. Strict adherence to the World Travel and Tourism Council's Safe Travels certification assured that globally standardized protocols for health and hygiene were in place.

The year saw our passenger numbers plummet by 85%, to 66,787. Though our airline partners—WestJet, Air Canada and Pacific Coastal Airlines—variously cut and halted air service through the year, at no time did the airport lose essential connectivity to the rest of the world.

Our revenues, paralleling passenger traffic, fell to \$1.9 million. Our expenses, which are relatively insensitive to traffic, were \$3.4 million, for a 13% reduction. This we achieved despite the extra costs for enhanced cleaning, new barriers for physical distancing and other disease control steps.

CVAC is grateful to both the Federal Government for the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and to the Provincial Government for an operating grant. Their support totalled some \$1.2 million, significantly reducing our loss to \$0.7 million.

Retaining a motivated and skilled workforce is a fundamental tenet of our organization. CEWS in particular allowed us to maintain full employment, albeit at reduced hours, throughout the year.

The fiscal year ended with the airport in a secure financial position, with a temporary reduction in cash flow, a slight reduction in Net Assets, to \$21,878,670—but, most significantly, with zero debt.

Sadly, in September our Chief Executive Officer, Fred Bigelow, passed away from cancer. Fred was a talented leader who commanded great respect and affection. The Board and staff pass on condolences to his family and loved ones. We will honour his legacy.

The Board is very grateful to Operations Manager Alex Robertson. Alex stepped up to act as CEO through January 2021. The emergency was declared under his watch: he takes the credit for the decisive response while he led the airport team.

Advised by a professional executive search firm, the Board appointed Mike Atkins as CEO effective January 2021. Mike had served as Commander, 19 Wing Comox, prior to taking a role as Commander and Defense Advisor, Canadian Defence Liaison Staff London, UK in 2019. His proven leadership skills, knowledge of aviation and base operations, and tactical experience make him the ideal candidate for the work at hand, while preparing for a sustainable future. The Board warmly welcomes Mike and his family on their return to the Valley.

At year-end, we bade farewell to longstanding director Frank van Gisbergen, who completed his third and final term, having served as board chair for six years. We welcome our newest director, Richard Hardy, a councillor from the K'omoks First Nation, to fill this vacancy. We thank both gentlemen for their commitment to public service on the CVAC board.

The pandemic required suspension of our volunteer Ambassador Program at the terminal. We thank them for their patience and are eager to see their return, as safety protocols allow, with a friendly smile and helping hand for passengers.

On behalf of the board, staff and volunteers of the Comox Valley Airport, I welcome you, as a passenger, back to travel from our airport. Be sure that we are here to serve the Comox Valley and extended communities, efficiently and effectively with an emphasis on safety, supported by a skilled and dedicated workforce.

Martin Crilly
Board Chair
June 24th, 2021



CVAC Chair Martin Crilly

Message from the CEO

As the airport's new Chief Executive Officer, I thank all those that have welcomed me and my family back to the Comox Valley. The support I have received from the acting CEO, Alex Robertson, by the Commission's Board, and by the entire team at the airport has been humbling and very much appreciated. My appointment was necessitated only by the passing of the airport's patriarch, Fred Bigelow. Fred was a friend and mentor to many, including myself, and he is sorely missed by the entire airport family.

For many, this past year has been a continuation of challenges, as the pandemic continued to severely impact our local and global communities. In January, as I settled into my new role, the third wave had started to take hold, returning much of the country to lockdown. With only essential travel permitted, air traffic slowed to a trickle, ending the fiscal year in a state similar to the beginning. However, I will not dwell on the impact that COVID-19 has had on the airport, but instead focus on what the future holds.

With the announced schedule for the lifting of travel restrictions, we anticipate a rapid increase in capacity with the return of all of our domestic service, featuring improved schedules and new routes. We are elated to welcome Air Canada back to the terminal alongside WestJet and Pacific Coastal, who have been the backbone of our reduced service over the last year. The introduction of WestJet Link service to Vancouver main terminal will ensure greater connectivity to the rest of Canada and beyond. Finally, we are proud to announce weekly non-stop service to Toronto, aligned with the reintroduction of domestic leisure travel, demonstrating the commitment WestJet continues to provide our region in support of the CVAC goals of enhanced air service and new destinations.

The irony of emerging from the pandemic with better service than when it began will not be taken for granted. It speaks to the continuation of our prior practices of fiscal restraint, adherence to a strategy, and maintenance of the low-cost advantage our partnership with 19 Wing Comox affords us. This ensures YQQ remains an attractive choice for our hard-hit carriers, and that our community can continue to enjoy the benefits of exceptional connectivity.

This year's accountability report will be an anomaly, lacking the impressive passenger volumes and revenue that we depend upon to prepare for future growth. That said, I am pleased to report that our losses are minimal and will not result in any lasting impact. The resourcefulness and support of our Board, commitment and dedication of our airport staff, along with 19 Wing's ongoing efforts to maintain a world class aerodrome has ensured the continuity of accessible and economical civilian air service to our communities, for the duration of the pandemic, and into the future.

Given the pace of the vaccine roll out, I remain cautiously optimistic about the future of air travel. Governments are announcing reopening plans that will allow us to reconnect with friends and family. While the challenges of the pandemic continue to dictate our day to day operations, our airport is poised to emerge as a front runner, able to fulfill our mandate to drive economic prosperity through the provision of safe and efficient air service, from runway to recovery.



CEO Mike Atkins

In Memorium

The CVAC Board and airport staff were greatly saddened by the passing of Comox Valley Airport Commission CEO, BGen (Ret'd) Frederick George Bigelow last September.

His airport friends and family were comforted by the outpouring of condolences, from the community, military comrades and business partners.

Ed Sims, President of WestJet captured the sentiment well, with a quote from his favourite poem *In Memory of Major Robert Gregory*.



I am honoured to contribute to the many outpourings of great memories and other contributions to commemorate my colleague and friend Fred.

We worked together as CEO and Board Chair for close to five years and I always felt that there was mutual respect and willingness to do a good job for the staff and volunteers at the Airport and ultimately for the people of the Comox Valley.

Fred was very approachable, eager to tout the benefits and conveniences of YQQ, willing to go before councils, Chambers of Commerce and any other local organization to spread the word. His love for biking and running and other outdoor activities along with support and volunteering for several organizations made him a well known and liked person, who lead by example and was an inspiration to many. I thank his family for sharing him with us.

Frank van Gisbergen
Past Board Chair

'soldier, scholar, horseman, he
And all he did done perfectly
As though he had but that one trade alone'

WB Yeats

Goals

- Air Service
- Master Plan
- Finances
- Employees

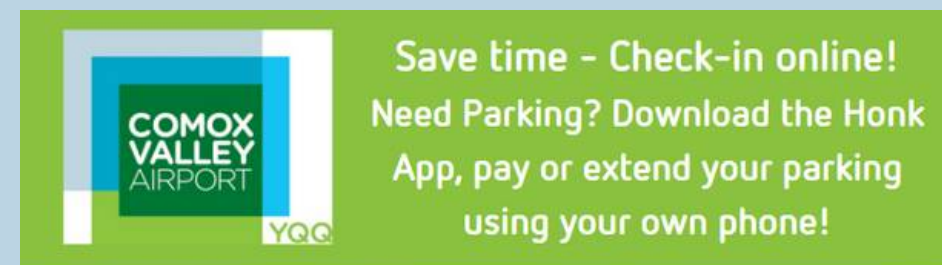
Values

- Safety
- Quality
- Accountability
- Sustainability
- Integrity

Safety

The safety and security of our customers, staff, facilities, and environment took on even greater importance in response to the Global Pandemic.

- **Safe Travels Certification:** World Travel and Tourism Councils globally recognized standard for health and hygiene.
- **The Great BC Shakeout:** Annual earthquake preparation exercise, held every October, practicing "Drop, Cover and Hold on" in the terminal environment.
- **YQQ Ready:** a program of enhanced protocols to endure the health and safety of the public and airport staff.



Arrive early to avoid crowding at security.

Help Keep Our Airport Safe!



Passengers only please

Care Aids, personal attendants and service animals are welcome.

Masks are required in the terminal



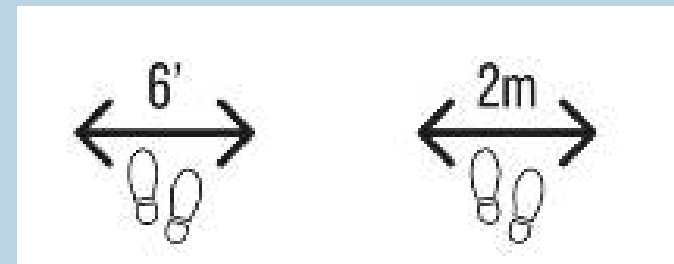
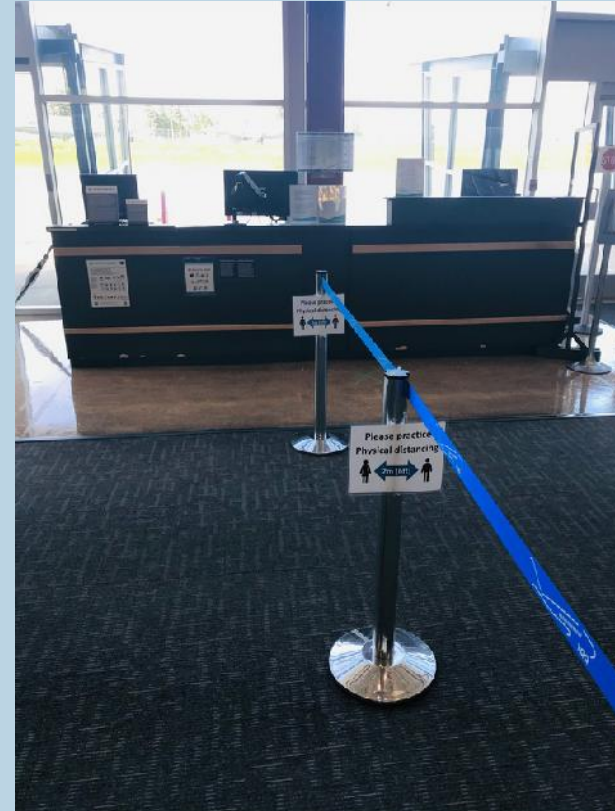
THANK YOU FROM ALL OF US AT 

Quality

We are motivated to exceed expectations by providing quality facilities and services in a customer-sensitive and service-driven manner.



- plexiglass barriers
- floor stickers
- stanchions and signage to assist in maintaining physical distancing



- Parking meters were removed, and an extended passenger loading zone was installed to facilitate touchless parking, and convenient pick up and drop off.



Accountability

We are accountable for our actions and demonstrate integrity in our internal and external relations, utilization of resources and the general conduct of our business.

- **Tenant Relations:** With revenues tied to decimated passenger volumes, efforts to mitigate the losses and ensure continuity of service included reduction and removal of Minimum Annual Guarantees (MAG), rent freezes, and contract amendments on a case by case basis.
- The Comox Valley Airport expanded their membership to become a Corporate Sponsor of the [Comox Valley Chamber](#). CVAC also sponsored the memberships of our airline partners, to ensure their long standing affiliations did not lapse.
- **Memberships:** Campbell River, Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Port Alberni, Tofino/Long Beach and Ucluelet Chambers & tourism organizations.
- Vancouver Island Economic Alliance (VIEA), British Columbia Aviation Council, Canadian Airports Council and Airport Council International - North America.
- The airport will continue to work closely with these stakeholders and industry associations to chart the path to recovery.

Sustainability

- Comprehensive evaluation of all expenses to defer non-imperative expenditures leading to reduced operating costs
- Applications for grants, wage subsidies, and other pandemic mitigation efforts resulted in nearly \$1.2 million in non-repayable assistance.
- LED retrofit of all interior fixtures, for future savings and lower carbon emissions.
- Comprehensive maintenance of terminal assets to extend usage and utilize the temporary reduction in passenger and airline traffic

Integrity

Donations to local community organizations:

- Comox Valley Foundation
- Canadian Cancer
- Cumberland Forest
- United Riders of Cumberland
- Comox Air Force Museum
- Coldest Night
- L'Arche

The holiday hamper program supported several large families. Thank you to CVAC's own Tanya Liebich for coordinating collection and delivery.

CVAC sponsored a North Island College - Sustainable Tourism Student for a paid co-op position to allow her to complete the requirements of her diploma.



CVAC Administration Staff Lori Parker, Erin Neely and Terah Riesach pause for a photo, Comox Coldest Night.

There is probably no more important time than now to build and maintain consumer trust.



Communication of pandemic policies and procedures, in person, on line, and through internal messaging, ensured the staff and public were kept informed with updates for safe travel.

The BC Centre for Disease Control Flight Exposures identified several flights with possible exposures arriving and departing from YQQ. In each instance, staff and terminal tenants were notified as a precaution, and to encourage strict adherence to ongoing safety protocols.

Rick Hanson Accessibility Certification

The Comox Valley Airport received its Rick Hanson Foundation: Accessibility Certification in December 2020.

The report outlined areas of strength in exterior accessibility and interior circulation services in addition to wayfinding and signage. The airport will use the assessment to target improvements in the current terminal and to guide future expansion plans.

Improvement areas currently under review:

- Additional accessibility parking spots
- Highlighting and contrasting colours in exterior areas for the visually impaired
- Installation of barriers for interior protection
- Additional sanitary facility upgrades



New cement ramps were added to improve accessibility to the sidewalks, and better access to the smoking shelters.

Nieuport 11 - Story Boards



MP Rachel Blaney visited to view the boards and welcome back new CEO Mike Atkins to the valley.

A grant from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs was awarded in early 2020, in support of the Nieuport 11 project, which funded the installation of new Story Boards.

Given the need for physical distancing, the stories were incorporated into plexiglass dividers, to allow safe viewing from both sides.

Take Out Window

CVAC installed a new window to provide a take away option while maintaining a passengers only terminal protocol

To help the Cafe mitigate the decline in passenger volume, a new product line "Pie on the Fly" was introduced.

The locally produced *Island Good* Pies are a hit!



On The Fly Cafe won the Comox Valley Chamber's Resiliency Award, 2020



Cultivating
Creative
Diversity



Art at the Airport

- The Airport proudly sponsors two annual art exhibits featuring works by local artists.
- The exhibits were a visual delight for the limited essential travelers in the terminal, and featured "virtually" on the Airport's website and social media to provide wider public access.

ART Studio
Gallery
WRX



YQQ AMBASSADORS

YQQ's Ambassador program was suspended for the duration of the year.

CVAC volunteers will be back as soon as the time is right.

CVAC Chair Martin Crilly checking in with the Ambassadors



- We have maintained contact and are happy to report that the roster has been maintained, with forty-four members slated to return.
- It will be a year to remember, with ten of our Ambassadors celebrating 20 years of service to our aviation community.
- Our volunteers have been sorely missed and we can hardly wait for their return!



Capital Expendures

- Cost savings were an immediate priority when revenues declined.
- Purchases to ensure all Public Health considerations were prioritized.
- A temporary car wash shelter was fabricated on site to assist the rental agencies with increased cleaning protocols.
- Apron upgrades for equipment staging were facilitated by reduced flight volumes.



YQQ is a trusted business partner, driven to support the success of regional stakeholders.

Year in Review

Air Service to 127,633 passengers in 2020, a 69% decline from 2019

Fiscal Year 20/21 passenger total: 66,581, a 83% decline from FY 19/20

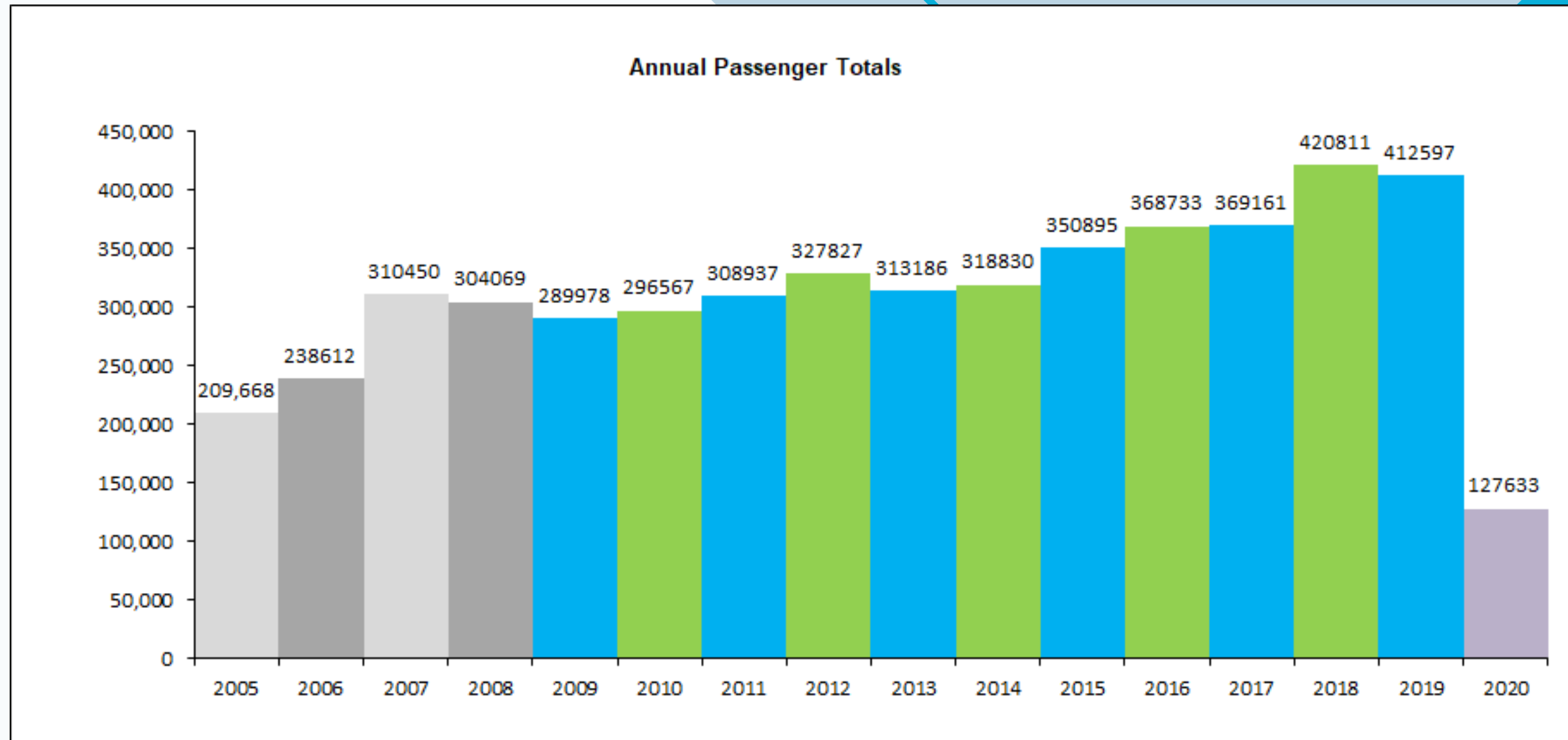
YQQ Ready Program and Safe Travels accreditation to assure public safety

Welcomed Menzies Aviation, passenger service provider for WestJet at YQQ

Significant increase in charter and GA



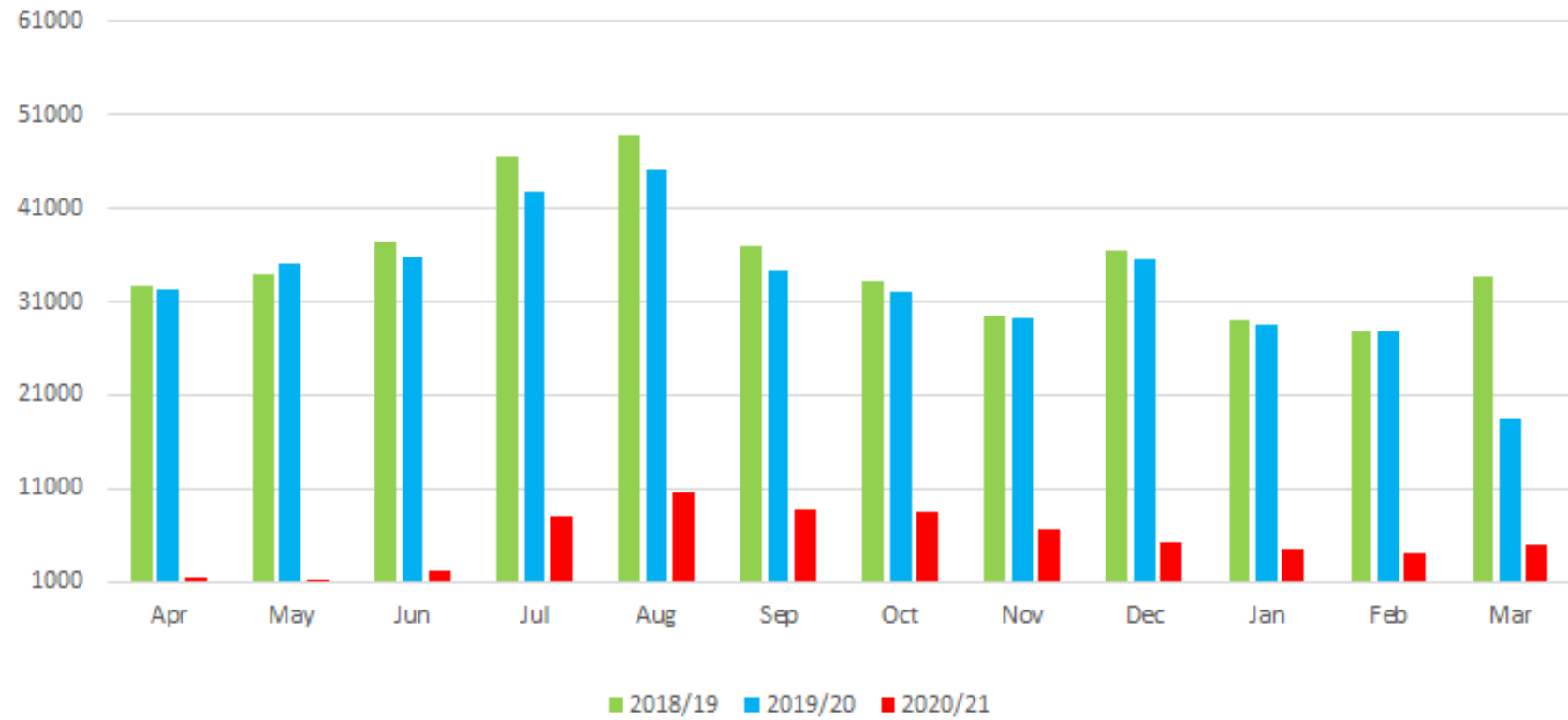
The annual passenger numbers for 2020 declined to 127,633.



The entire Fiscal Year was impacted by the pandemic, as borders remained closed and domestic public health agencies restricted all non-essential travel.

Total passengers in FY 20/21 ▼ 66,581

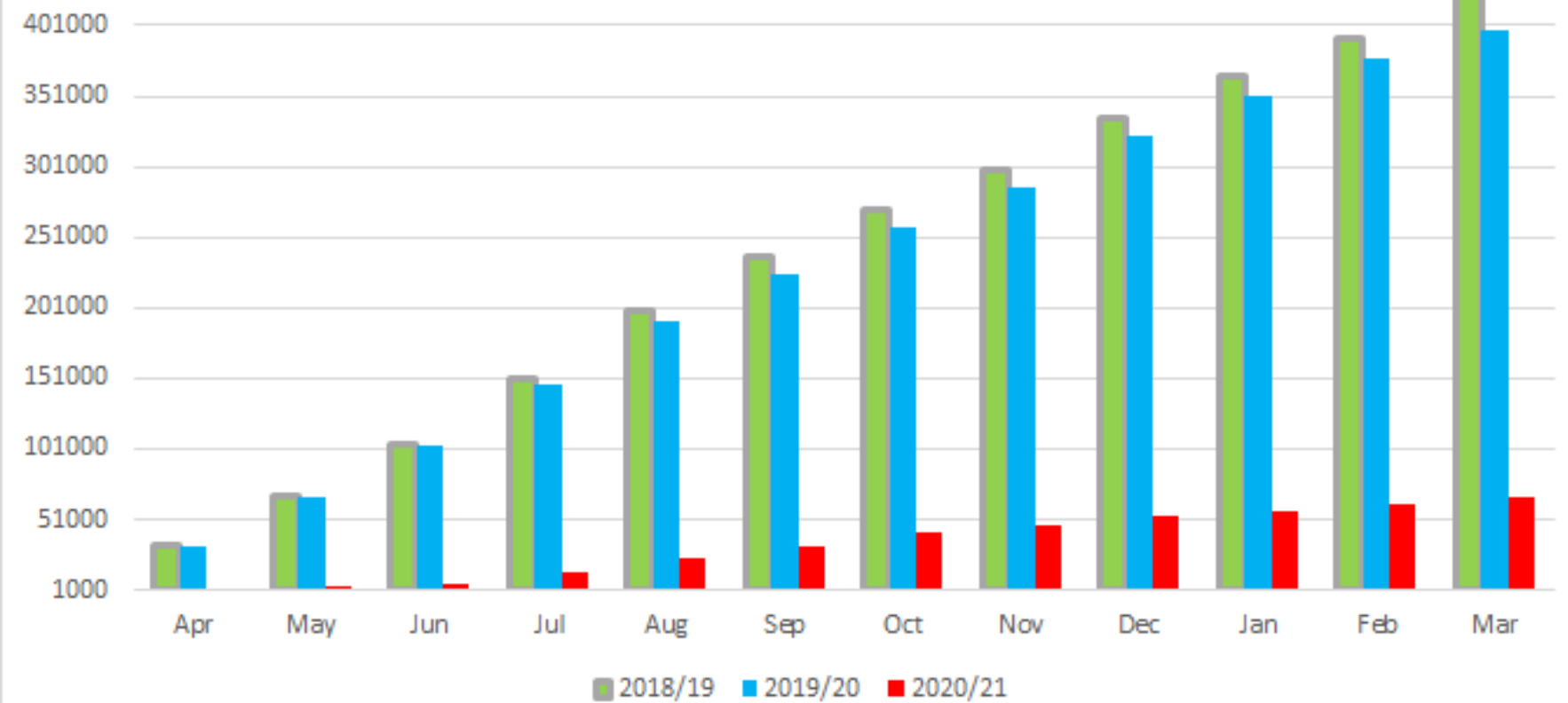
Passenger Totals By Month



- WestJet maintain limited service for essential travel, via the Calgary hub.
- Air Canada and Pacific Coastal Airlines temporarily suspended service in April.
- Pacific Coastal Airlines returned service to Vancouver in June, utilizing a stop in Campbell River inbound.
- Air Canada service remained suspended for the entire fiscal year.

The summer months saw a notable increase in travel due to additional capacity supplied by WestJet and Pacific Coastal Airlines and an increase in Charter service, primarily driven by essential workers traveling to sites.

Annual Passenger Growth



Financial Summary

This year saw revenues decline 66%, resulting in a deficit

Revenue	2019/20	2020/21
Total Revenue	\$ 5,546,915	\$ 1,886,839
Total Expenses	\$ 3,846,361	\$ 3,390,253
Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy		\$ 776,686
Surplus (Deficit)	\$ 1,012,667	\$ (-726,728)

Assets	2019/20	2020/21
Operating Fund	\$ 3,421,671	\$ 1,196,794
Capital Assets	\$ 19,183,727	\$ 20,681,876
Net Assets	\$ 22,605,398	\$ 21,878,670

The Operating fund was increased at the start of the year, to protect liquidity for the duration of the pandemic. See Audited Financial Statements for detailed information.

Accountability Framework

- Certificate of Continuance
- Bylaws
- Strategic Plan
- Accountability Report
- Financial Audit

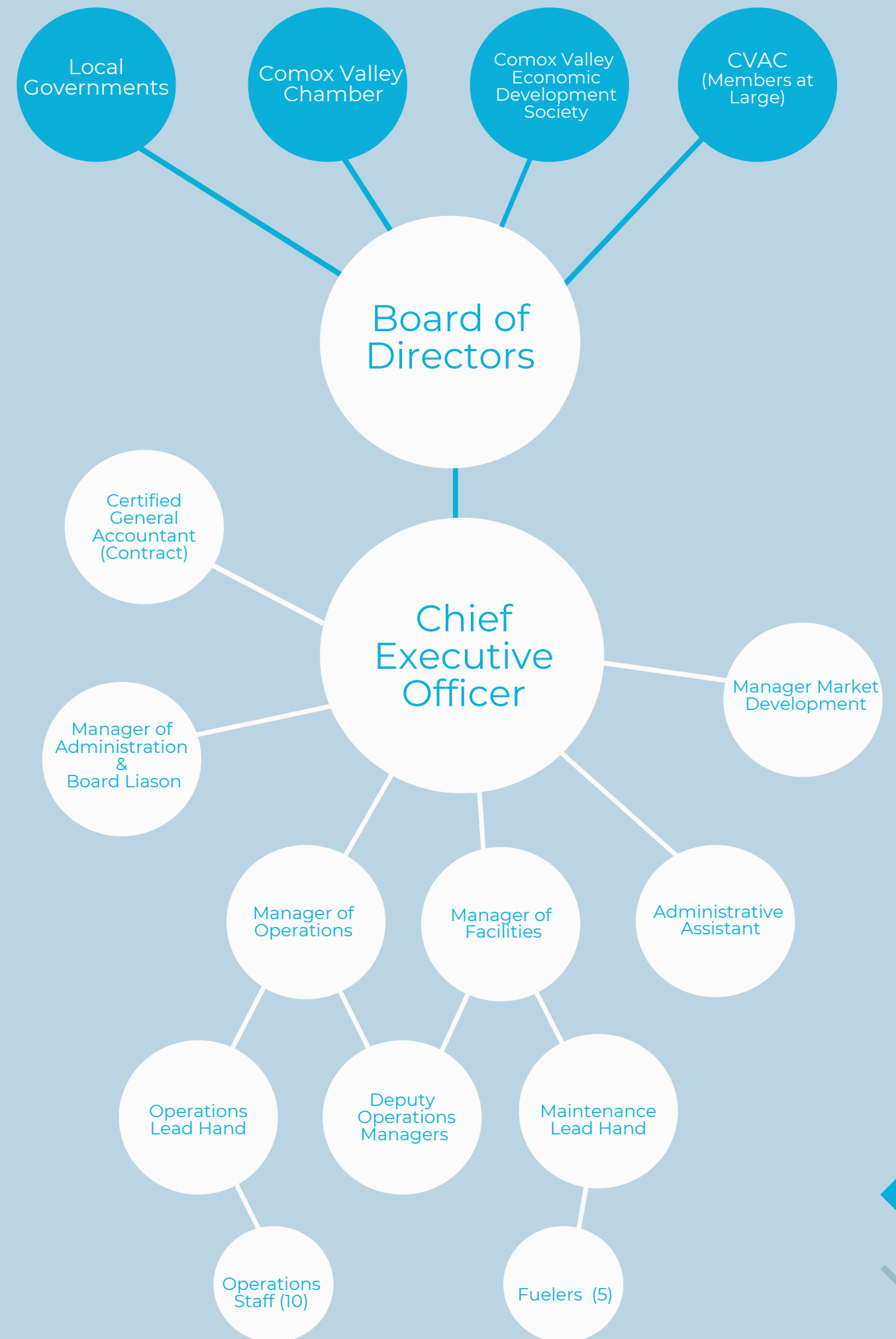
Governance

The Comox Valley Airport Commission (CVAC)

is the governing authority for the operation of the Comox Valley Airport (YQQ). CVAC is a federally incorporated, non-profit entity that was established through letters patent in 1996. It successfully transitioned to the Canada Not-For-Profit Corporations Act (NFP Act) in 2014.

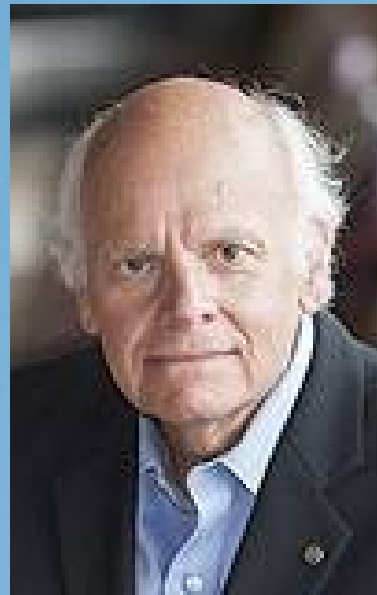
CVAC operates civilian aviation facilities at the Comox Valley Airport. YQQ is located on Vancouver Island in the Town of Comox at 19 Wing Comox. CVAC's facilities are located on land that is leased from the Department of National Defence (DND).

DND maintains responsibility for YQQ's airfield and associated systems, which are provided for the use of civil aviation at the discretion of DND in exchange for landing fees.





Martin Crilly
Chair



Richard Clarke
Vice-Chair



Susan Toresdahl



Joe Schommer
Secretary



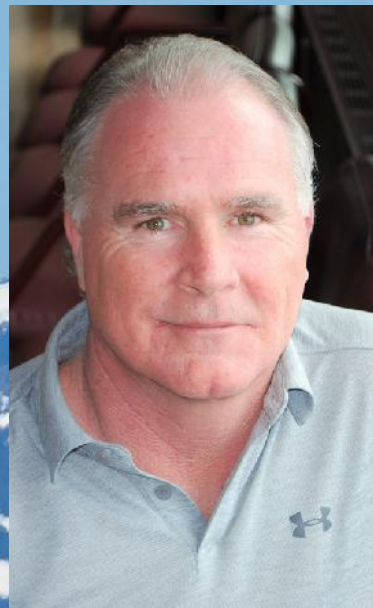
Board of Directors



Andy Frost



Nancy Arsenault



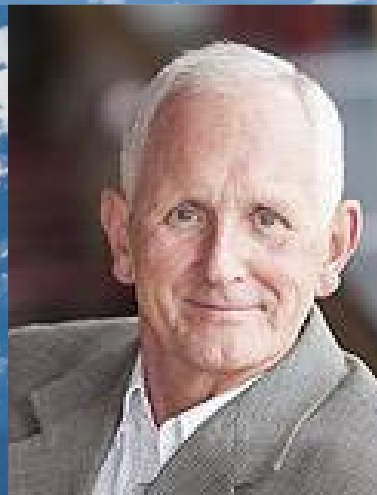
Bill Anglin



Wendy Lewis
Treasurer



Fred Bigelow
Past CEO



Frank Van Gisbergen
Past Chair



Mike Atkins
CEO



Alex Robertson
Acting CEO 2020

			Board Meetings	Executive	Audit	Finance	Governance	CEO Search
	Nominator	Elected	Director	7	1	2	4	4
Local Govt	2016	Martin Crilly	7	1	1	3	4	Chair
Local Govt	2013	Richard Clarke	7	1	1	3		
Local Govt	2019	Wendy Lewis	7	1	1	3		
Local Govt	2014	Joe Schommer	5	1	1	1	4	
Local Govt	2014	Andy Frost	7			3		
CVAC	2019	Nancy Arsenault	7				4	*
CVAC	2012	Susan Toresdahl	7		1	1	3	*
CVEDs	2012	Frank VanGisbergen	7		1	3		*
CV Chamber	2020	Bill Anglin	5*				3	
	2019	Alex Robertson	7	1	1	4	4	
	2021	Mike Atkins	2*					

*appointed mid-term



Goals

2021/22



RETURN OF FLIGHT SERVICES

WestJet
Air Canada
Pacific Coastal Airlines

REVISED STRATEGIC PLAN


Addressing lessons learned
Plan for a sustainable
Future



Who are these masked men?
Operations management team members
Francis Laplante, Alex Robertson, Ash Mohtadi, Ray Negenman
CEO Mike Atkins above.

Routes and Frequency Summer 2021

WESTJET 

- 2x Daily Service to Calgary YYC
- Daily Service Edmonton YEG
- 2x Daily Service Vancouver YVR
- 1x Saturday, non-stop Toronto 

 **AIR CANADA**

- 3x weekly Service Vancouver YVR
- Frequency and days pending demand

Pacific Coastal
AIRLINES®

- 2-3x Daily Service Vancouver YVR

YQQ will enter the summer season with increased capacity on all three carriers

Contact and information

Comox Valley Airport Commission
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250-890-0829

Audited Financial Statements,
Accountability Reports, and
Comox Valley Airport Commission Bylaws
are available under publications on the website.