

COMOX VALLEY AIRPORT

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Navigating New Heights

COMOX  
VALLEY  
AIRPORT

YQQ







The Comox Valley Airport Commission respectfully acknowledges that the land we gather on is on the Unceded Traditional Territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

PHOTO: Experience Comox Valley  
Photographer: Jordyn Giesbrecht





# Message from the Board Chair

Time flies when you're having fun! The entire team here at YQQ does indeed have fun and is proud to serve all our passengers, crews and airline partners every day of the year.

But time does fly and as hard as it may be to believe, this year marks the 20th year of operation of the F/O C. Cottingham Terminal. It also marks the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and as our terminal name reflects, the connection between the RCAF, and our organization run deep and true. We certainly appreciate and recognize all the support that we receive from 19 Wing Comox in helping us provide the services here at YQQ. We could not do it without them.

Due to the determination and foresight of a group of dedicated community members more than twenty years ago, they embarked on a journey that took us from an old and tired terminal building located on 19 Wing to what is a truly special facility. It was designed to support and expand the air connection possibilities between the Comox Valley and the world. Over those years we have seen continued growth in the numbers of passengers and the expansion of routes and destinations. As an organization we have worked hard to continue to enhance the amenities and infrastructure to improve our passengers' journeys. We also experienced a pandemic that totally disrupted travel and air travel even more significantly, but we are rebounding, and the forecast is for even greater growth. Somehow through it all, the little terminal that could has continued to provide the bon voyage or the welcome home that our passengers have come to expect.

As we enter the next decade, we continue to see further opportunities to meet our community's needs. We are reaching our peak limits in terms of passenger flow and aircraft through our facility and have begun the process to fully explore the upcoming demands of air travel in the Comox Valley. We want to ensure that we are prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the next twenty years.

Currently we are developing a Master Plan that looks forward to meeting the expectations of our passengers and partners over the coming years. Passenger growth, aircraft utilization and size, along with route development and the travelling public's desire for enhanced experiences will all be part of the plan for the future.

We continue to explore ways to become even more environmentally friendly, sustainable and responsible to the delicate balance of nature and our impact upon it. Financially we are on solid foundations and well capitalized to start the process of building for our future.

The entire team, from our staff to our airport business partners remain ready to provide the outmost travelling experience to each of our passengers. We are looking forward to being here to wish you farewell or welcome you home for the next twenty years and beyond!

**CVAC Chair Bill Anglin**





# Message from the CEO

Our performance and operations have continued to progress in 2024, virtually matching pre-pandemic passenger volumes amid some *new normal* industry trends

This community loves to travel — that has never been more apparent. Capacity constraints continue to be prevalent, however, affecting every aspect of the aviation industry. Air carriers have avoided major labour stoppages, but they continue to experience pilot shortages that show little signs of improving in the short term. This has resulted in reduced availability for smaller planes, those typically ideal for small regional airports like ours, as crews are more often assigned to jets and other large aircraft. The trend towards fewer, larger aircraft is common for hubs and regional airports alike.

During the summer this worked mostly to our benefit, as direct routes between Alberta were upgauged to 174-seat 737s from 78-seat Q400s. We were able to realize increased service to Calgary — a hub opening up travel to and from dozens of locations services directly. In tandem with daily service via three air carriers to-and-from Vancouver, passengers have many opportunities to travel seamlessly via the Comox Valley Airport.

Our traveler volume reflects this situation clearly, particularly in August's figure of 49,930 passengers through YQQ. This is not only a 36% increase from August 2022 but is also the busiest month in our airport's history. October was also our highest on record at 33,271 passengers, immediately before our seasonal PVR flights restarted with 737s twice weekly — utilized by 103% more travelers this year. In total, our fiscal 2024 traffic of 385,651 is a 19% increase over fiscal 2023, and 97% of pre-pandemic volume. This was accomplished at only 87% of total seat capacity as compared with 2019.

As inflation has cooled and passenger volumes have increased, our financial position has further solidified as revenue surpassed expenses this year by over \$3 million. This excess revenue will enable us to expand our Apron to accommodate the larger aircraft safely and efficiently, in addition to pre-funding the terminal expansion that our updated Master Plan indicates will be required within the next five years.

We surveyed outbound passengers in August and February to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of our passengers. Overall, they indicated satisfaction with their travel experience and of the airport and would overwhelmingly recommend us to others. Continuing to enhance in-terminal services for an increasing passenger base will be the focus, as we continue this process toward future expansion.

As Comox Valley Airport continues its path to carbon zero, we partnered with Hakai Energy Solutions under the British Columbia Air Access Program to install solar panels on our terminal roof. These 266 panels @ 41" x 87" each are projected to reduce the terminal's draw on the power grid by up to 15% annually. We also launched a composting program targeting food waste and paper towels at restrooms, diverting 5.5 cubic meters from the landfill monthly, and replaced fossil fuel-emitted ground maintenance tools with battery-powered equipment.

We proudly continued to support community initiatives where we can make a difference, including the Sharing the Christmas Spirit hamper program, Coldest Night of the Year hosted by Comox Valley Transition Society and Dawn to Dawn, Angel Flight, You Are Not Alone, and Cops for Cancer — Tour de Rock — and many more.

On behalf of the entire team at the Comox Valley Airport, we are honoured to provide exemplary service as you start or finish your aviation journey through the best small airport in Canada. You can start here, and fly anywhere.

**CVAC CEO Mike Atkins**



# 19 Wing – CFB Comox



The Comox Valley Airport Commission (CVAC) operates the civilian aviation terminal located on land that is leased from the Department of National Defense (DND). DND maintains responsibility for the airfield and associated systems – IATA code YQQ, which are provided for the use of civil aviation at the discretion of DND in exchange for landing fees.

The shared use of the capital-intensive aerodrome provides the region with cost efficient civilian air service, maximizing the utility of the federally funded infrastructure while providing a low-cost advantage that appeals to increasingly cost-conscious air carriers.



CVAC proudly sponsored the May 18th Comox Air Show, with nearly 20,000 attendees.



# Team



Board member David Drummond and CVAC CEO Mike Atkins



Angie from YQQ Operations at the terminal workshop



Maintenance/Fuel team member Jeremy ensures aircraft are taken care of during their airport stay.

Marketing Manager Grant McNeil and Operations Manager Alex Robertson attend 19 Wing Air Show sponsor event at Courtenay Air Park



Larry from YQQ Operations oversees passengers on the ramp during offload



Maintenance/Fuel team member Dave is at the controls for some repairs.

At the heart of our organization is our people. Dedicated and multi-talented, the YQQ team provides passengers and tenants with a safe and enjoyable experience. CVAC proudly continues to be a BC Living Wage Employer.



# YQQ Ambassadors



Essential to our customer experience, we're lucky to have a large and experienced roster of volunteers. Usually the first line of service, they are pleased to greet with a welcoming smile, and help passengers along the way.



YQQ Managers and Board hosted the annual volunteer appreciation golf tournament and luncheon in recognition of the Ambassador team.



# Partners



Vehicle rentals are offered on site by three providers, providing coverage across all scheduled flights.

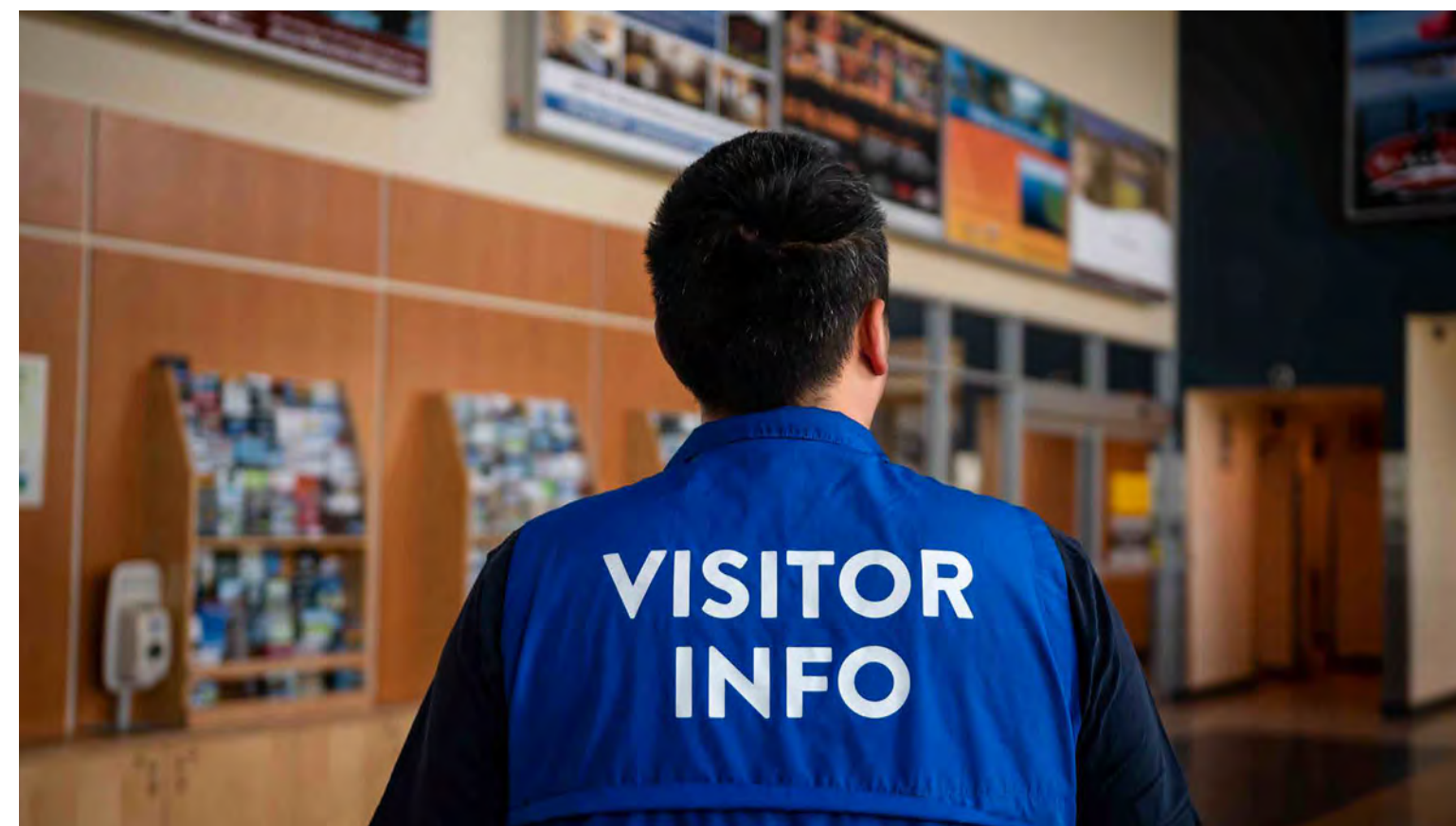


Kealy Donaldson launched Compass Gallery + Gifts, taking ownership in 2023. The store offers unique local art, books, and jewelry and is a local favourite.

The Comox Airport is a community of companies proud to provide our passengers with friendly and reliable service.



On The Fly Café has two locations in the terminal, both before and after security. Owners Raechel and Lyle Smith always have something fresh on offer.



Experience Comox Valley and the Visitor Information Centre provide maps and guidance for YQQ travellers.



**Paladin Airport  
Security Services**

Paladin Airport Security Services took over for AUS as the CATSA service provider, retaining the staff and local managers.





Amid increasing passenger volumes and revenues, our sights are on the future needs of travellers and our aviation partners. To that end, CVAC has undertaken a Master Plan update, aiming to:

- Provide a defensible and comprehensive framework to guide future development;
- Engage with stakeholders to identify perceived opportunities, deficiencies, and requirements;
- Document the Airport’s role within the socioeconomic context of Comox Valley and the broader catchment area;
- Prepare activity forecasts to estimate future demand in terms of enplaned/deplaned passenger volumes and movements;
- Describe and analyze constraints impacting development;
- Evaluate current infrastructure and provide recommendations for rehabilitation and/or expansion;
- Document historical and future financial performance and identify potential revenue generation strategies that will increase profitability; and
- Identify environmental considerations that will enable the Airport to reduce carbon emissions and move towards net zero operations.

CVAC prioritized engagement with travellers, community members, and stakeholders as part of the Master Plan, consistent with its established value of being adaptable and responsive to the changing needs of its passengers, community, and industry. An engagement program was designed by HM Aero with CVAC to ensure that feedback of value to the Master Plan could be gathered. Input from the catchment area’s residents, businesses, and air travellers was facilitated through online surveying in Fall 2023, advertised by CVAC and its partners to maximize awareness. Detailed interviews were also completed with a total of 29 stakeholder organizations.

This analysis is being done anticipating annual average passenger growth between 2.4 – 3.4%, and in conjunction with our four **Strategic Objectives**:

- **Optimal** airport facilities and customer experiences,
- **Meeting demands** through responsible growth,
- **Reinforcing relationships** with governments, First Nations and stakeholders
- **Attract and retain** a talented and motivated team.

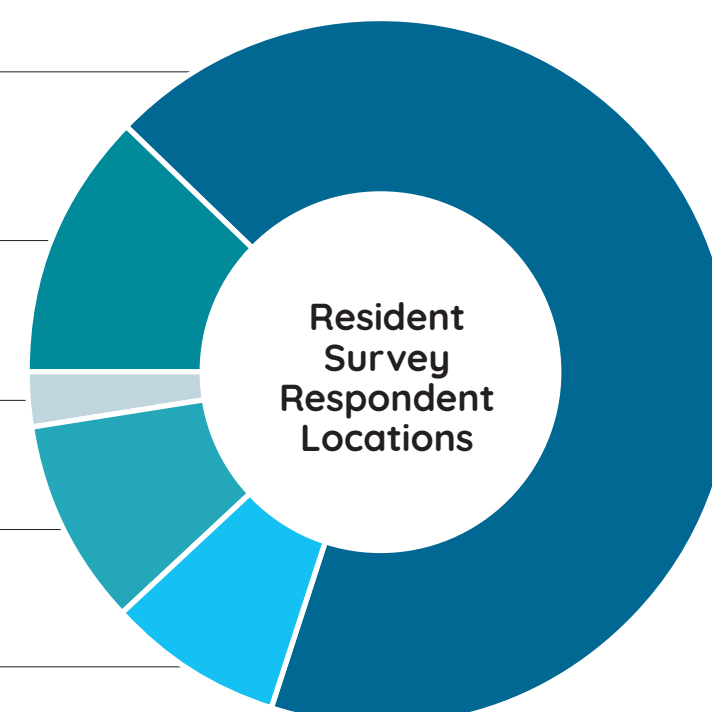
844 | Comox Valley Regional District

154 | Other

31 | Regional District of Port Alberni

117 | Strathcona Regional District

102 | Regional District of Nanaimo



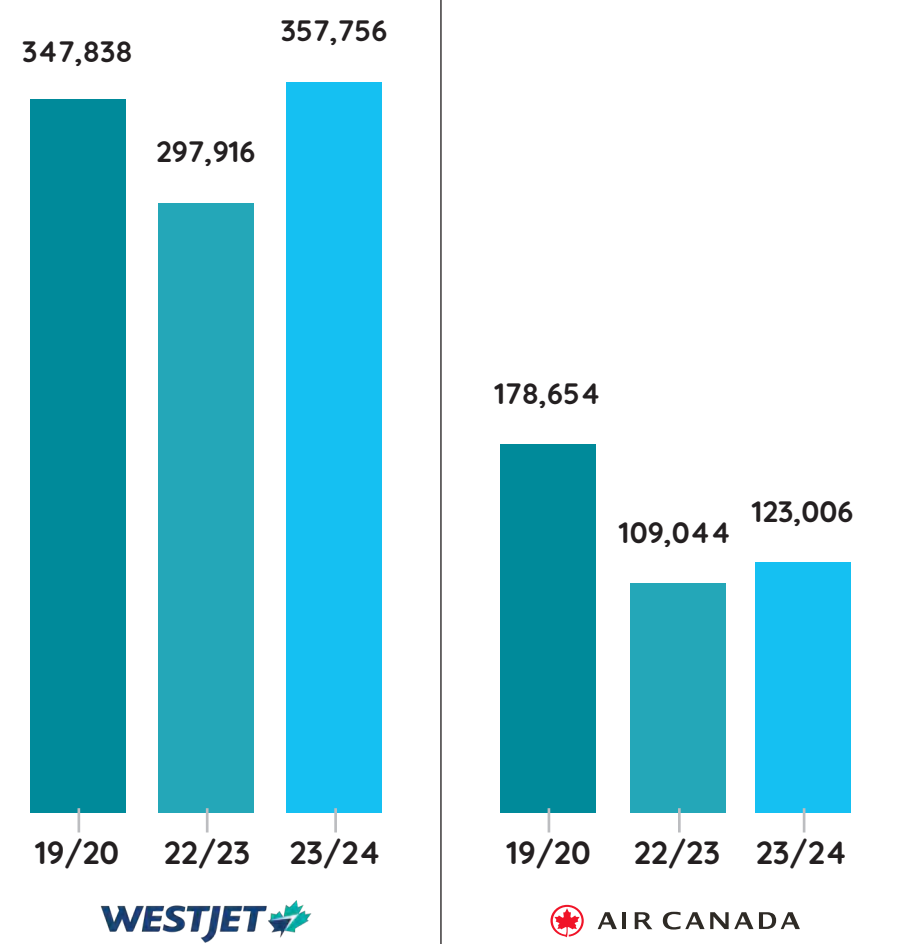


# Air Service Development

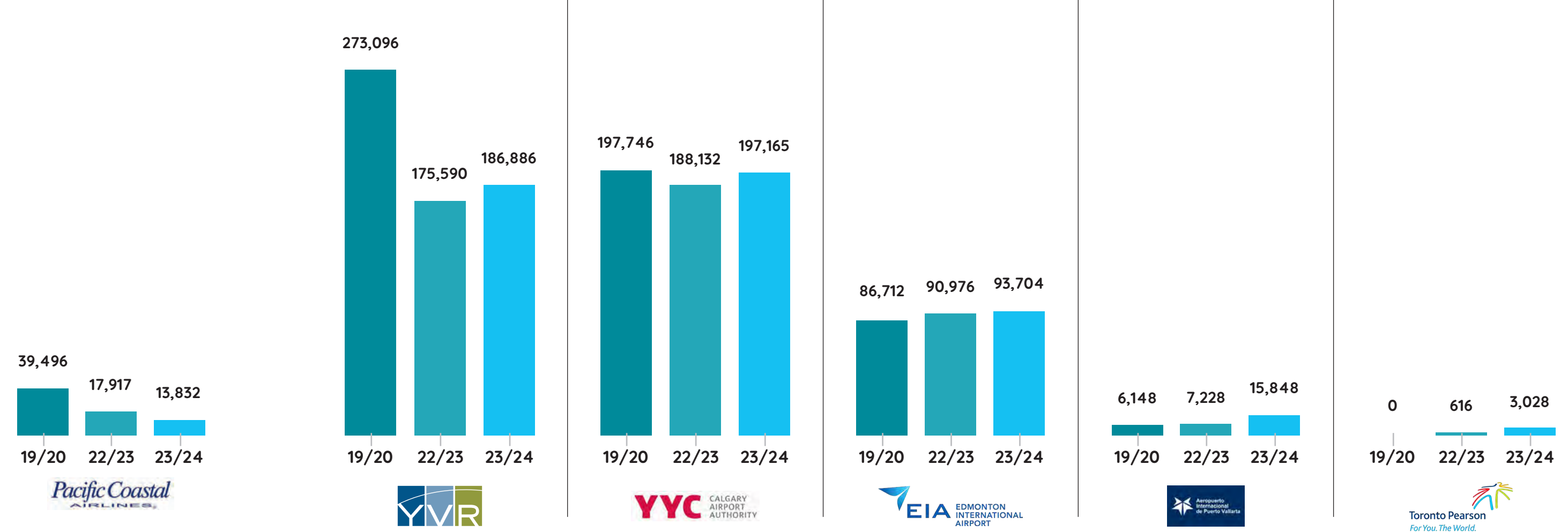
YQQ saw steady capacity increases on major routes, continuing the post-pandemic trend.

Industry-wide challenges, especially pilot shortages and aircraft order backlogs, have limited growth for all air carriers though. Aircraft are trending larger, and for regional airports that typically results in fewer flights overall, even as capacity recovers. We have been more insulated from this than our peers, with moderate increases in available seat miles for our Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton routes. Our seasonal route to Puerto Vallarta surpassed expectations with a 119% increase this year, and the short summer route to Toronto returned in 2023 and remained for its duration – an increase of over 2,400 seats. In February, Pacific Coastal Airlines announced the upcoming debut of direct service to Kelowna, flying 6 days a week starting June 2024 – our first new destination in three years.

CVAC Marketing Manager Grant McNeil and CEO Mike Atkins visited WestJet Headquarters in Calgary for meetings in February 2024



YQQ Total Seat Capacity, Both Directions, by Airline



YQQ Total Seat Capacity, Both Directions, by Market



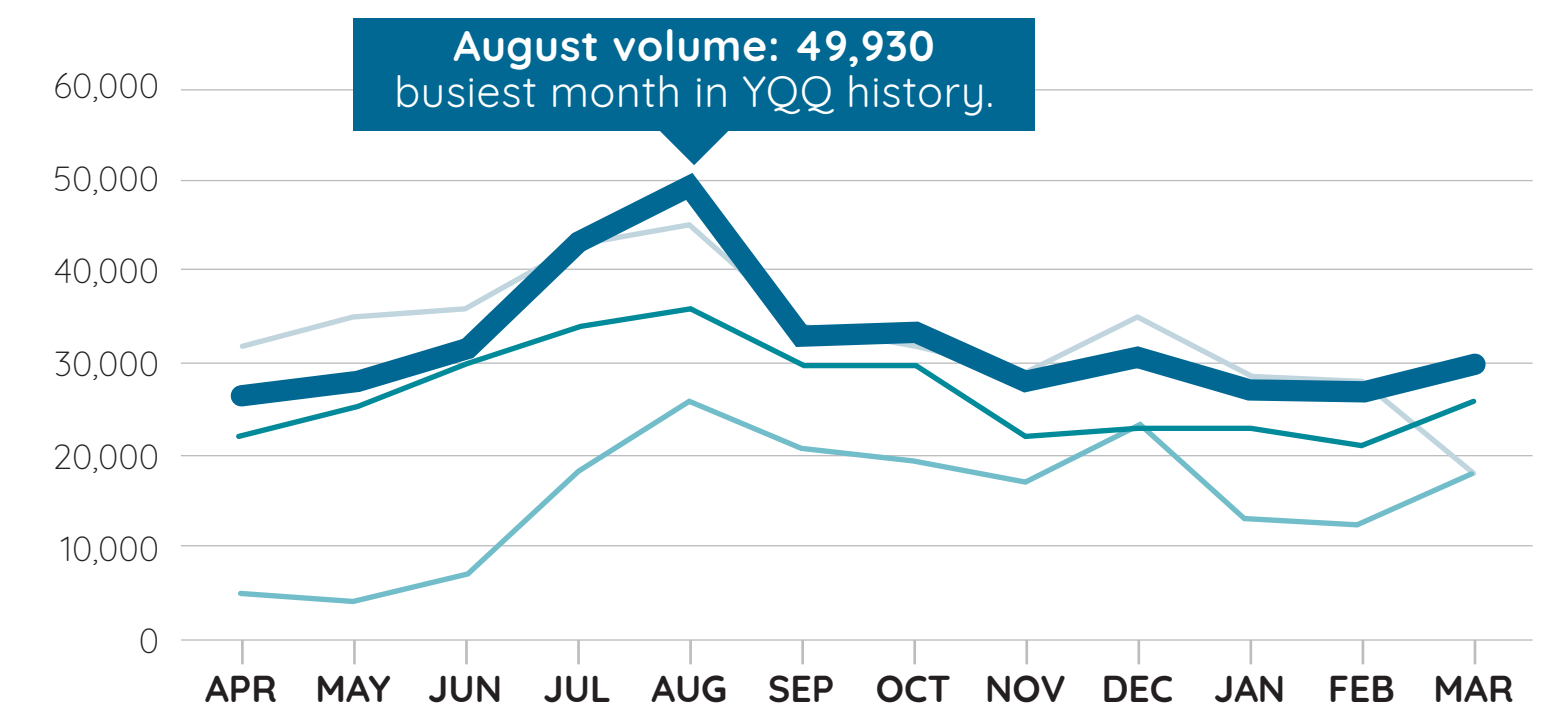


**385,651**  
Passengers

**19%** increase over fiscal 2023

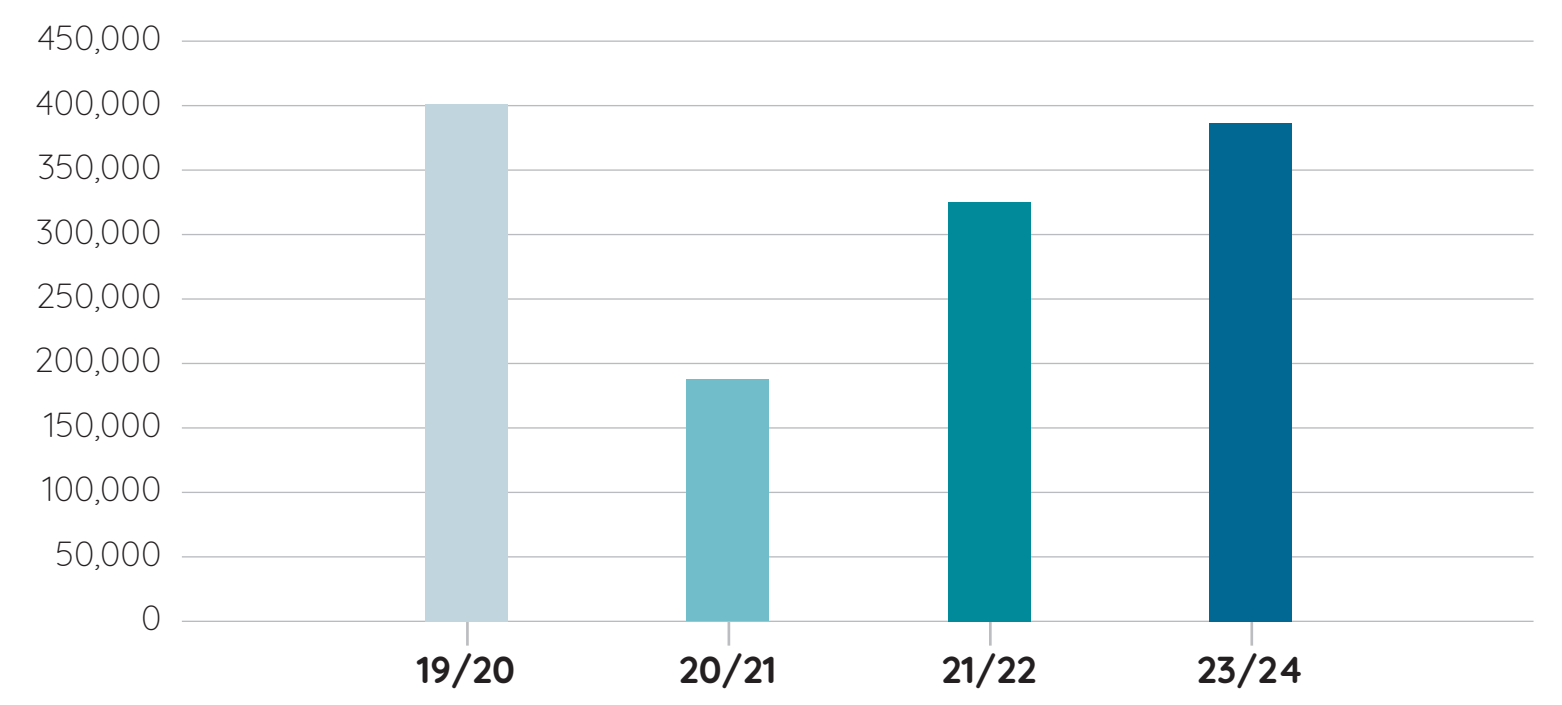
**97%** of pre-pandemic volume

# Passenger Numbers



YQQ Passenger Totals by Month  
Fiscal 2020 to 2024

● 19/20 ● 21/22 ● 22/23 ● 23/24



YQQ Total Passengers  
Fiscal 2020 to 2024



# Financials



As passenger numbers have continued to rebound, so too have key revenue categories. Fiscal 2024 saw both aeronautical and non-aeronautical revenues increase by over 20%, as passenger volume rose 19%. This consistency, and the resulting \$1.5 million surplus, help provide some flexibility as we eye the next steps in the growth of services available at YQQ.

Revenue	2022/23	2023/24
Total Rev	\$ 5,243,502	\$ 6,320,534
Total Exp	\$ 4,041,931	\$ 4,772,874
Surplus (Deficit)	\$ 1,201,571	\$ 1,547,660

Assets	2022/23	2023/24
Operating Fund	\$ 1,038,577	\$ 753,702
Capital Fund	\$ 22,292,648	\$ 26,490,349
Net Assets	\$ 23,331,225	\$ 27,244,051

See <https://www.comoxairport.com/publications> for Audited Financial Statements



# Charitable Giving

CVAC proudly supports charities with a focus on our local community – especially those that benefit children, speak to the roots of aviation, promote travel and tourism to the region, or enhance awareness of local arts and culture.

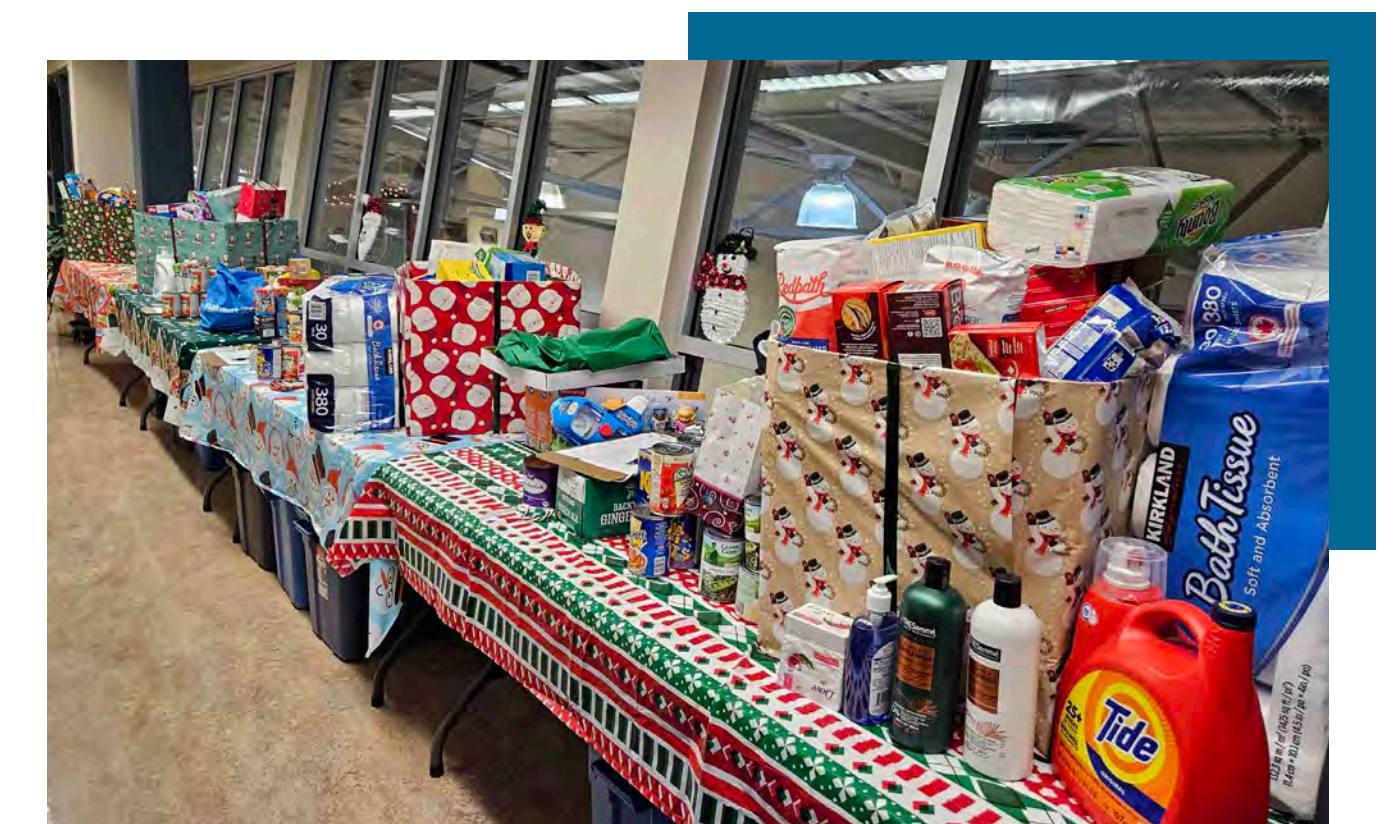
The *Sharing the Christmas Spirit* program is a focus in the terminal through the holiday season. CVAC staff, volunteers, Board and tenants sponsor several families and collect items for donation over several weeks, until they are packed and delivered as hampers ahead of Christmas.

Donations were made to groups such as Angel Flight, Teen Flight Campbell River, Blue Sea Foundation, Canadian Cancer Society, Comox Valley Food Bank, You Are Not Alone and more.

CVAC sponsored community events such as the K'omoks Festival, Black Creek Fall Fair, Grand Parade, Downtown Comox Summer Fest and Vancouver Island MusicFest and more.



Fuel/Maintenance  
Lead Hand Tanya with  
some packed hampers,  
ready for delivery.





## Say Puerto Vallarta like a local.

Non-stop flights from Comox, 2x a week.

**Book now**

Schedule subject to change.

With twice weekly service all season, promoting the direct route to Puerto Vallarta was a priority for Fall/Winter.

### Start here, Fly Anywhere

YQQ offers quick flights to Vancouver, connecting you with destinations beyond.

### Direct To Kelowna

New route starting June 25th.

Our awareness campaign seeks to find new audiences across our digital platforms, focusing on the various connectivity options through YYC and YVR hubs.

### Experience Stampede

Don't forget your cowboy boots! The Calgary Stampede is a convenient direct flight away with YQQ.

With steady daily service to Calgary, we've used a variety of messaging variations in the area – including outdoor activities in Banff, and sports and entertainment in the city.

The February announcement of new direct destination Kelowna was supported by radio, print, and digital messaging everywhere CVAC advertises.



# Climate Action



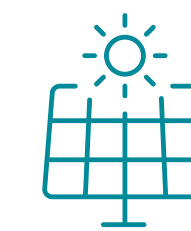
Deputy Operations Manager Francis Laplante and Facilities Manager Ash Mohtadi oversee the Green Committee as we follow the Path to Carbon Zero. We became certified at Level I of the Airport Carbon Accreditation program, and seek to achieve Level II by Fall 2024.

Our collaboration with Hakai Energy Solutions, through the British Columbia Air Access Program, involved installing solar panels on our terminal roof. These 266 panels, each measuring 41” x 87”, are expected to decrease the terminal’s reliance on the power grid by approximately 15% annually. Additionally, we initiated a composting program aimed at diverting food waste and restroom paper towels from the landfill, resulting in a monthly reduction of 5.5 cubic meters. Furthermore, we replaced fossil fuel-emitting ground maintenance tools with battery-powered alternatives.

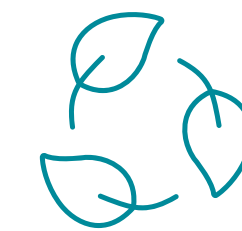
We have purchased 150 tonnes worth of carbon credits based on our support to the Great Bear Forest carbon project. This area of the BC North and Central coasts is home to the largest intact coastal temperate rainforest remaining in the world. Without the offset funds, the protected areas would not have been established and harvest levels would not have been reduced. The 150 tonne credit represents the offset of the annual carbon emissions produced by the airport, enabling us to become carbon neutral.



**Level I achieved**  
Level II by Fall 2024



**266 solar panels** help decrease the terminal’s reliance on the power grid by approximately 15% annually



**Composting program** helps reduce waste sent to landfills by 5.5 cubic meters monthly



**150 tonne carbon credit** to offset annual carbon emissions produced



# Public Arts and Culture Program



ARTIST: Lynn Farwell

**COMING & GOING**

ARTWRX STUDIO/GALLERY IS VERY PLEASED TO PARTNER WITH THE COMOX VALLEY AIRPORT TO CREATE AN ANNUAL PUBLIC EXHIBIT OF THEIR WORK.

*Featuring the work of:*

Sharon Lalonde	Mary Gorman
Maggie Ziegler	Jean Cockburn
Anouk Hartwell	Larissa McLean
Shea Kotilla	Lynn Farwell
Nicolette Valikoski	Elaine Smith

*On now until  
October 15, 2024*

ARTWRX Studio Gallery

COMOX VALLEY AIRPORT YQQ

CV/ARTS + YQQ  
PUBLIC ARTS AND CULTURE PROGRAM

**& POLARITIES  
JUNCTION**

We proudly partner with local artists for our Public Arts and Culture Program. This provides a large, accessible space to display art in our terminal, increasing reach and profile, and helping our terminal look and feel its best.

Our Spring-Summer display features over 40 pieces from ArtWrX Studio + Gallery's 10 artists, and our Fall-Winter partner Comox Valley Arts provided 34 pieces from 29 artists for their Polarities and Junctions exhibit.



The Comox Valley Airport Commission’s Board of Directors is broadly representative of the Comox Valley community and is comprised of nine Directors, nominated as follows:



**Bill Anglin**, Chair  
Ex-officio all committees



**Nancy Arsenault**  
Governance



**Bruce Bell**  
Finance



**Martin Crilly**, Vice-Chair  
Audit, Finance



**David Drummond**  
Audit, Governance



**Wendy Lewis**, Treasurer  
Finance



**John Madden**  
Audit, Finance



**Maxine Montgomery**  
Governance



**Miriam Myers**, Secretary  
Governance



**Mike Atkins**, CEO  
Ex-officio all committees

- Five members are nominated by local government (City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and Comox Valley Regional District);
- One member is nominated by the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce;
- Three members are appointed by the Board

### Meeting Attendance

Director	Appointment	Position	Board Meetings/ 7	Audit Committee/4	Finance Committee/6	Governance Committee/5
Bill Anglin	2020	Chair	7	4	6	
Nancy Arsenault	2019	Director	5			5
Bruce Bell	2023	Director	6	2	5	
Martin Crilly	2016	Vice-Chair	7	4	6	5
David Drummond	2023	Director	7	2		5
Wendy Lewis	2019	Treasurer	6	2	6	
John Madden	2023	Director	7	4	6	
Maxine Montgomery	2023	Director	7	2	3	5
Miriam Myers	2021	Secretary	7	2	5	5

see <https://www.comoxairport.com/board-members-and-bios> for more information



## CONTACT

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[www.comoxairport.com](http://www.comoxairport.com)

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