

Red Deer Advocate

Airport business ties include over 200 companies, 4 cities

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A study that suggests strong business ties between Red Deer and Fort McMurray, Regina and Saskatoon could strengthen the case for air connections between those cities.

The Red Deer Airport Authority has released the findings of a recent study that looked at the direct business links between Red Deer and Fort McMurray, Regina and Saskatoon.

These include the fact that more than 200 businesses have some connection and relationship between Central Alberta and one or more of the other three cities.

There are 76 head offices in Central Alberta that support or are likely to support some presence in Fort McMurray, Saskatoon or Regina, the study found, and 56 production facilities here have a relationship or a probable relationship with one or more of the three.

Manufacturing and oilfield services were deemed to be the dominant industries connecting the four cities.

“We had a sense that the links are strong; now we know who they are, how many links exist and from what industry sectors,” said Airport Authority CEO RJ Steenstra, in a release.

“These links are fundamental to the economic well-being of the region.”

The release noted that Alberta and Saskatchewan are forecast by many to lead the country in economic growth, and that this supports the case for direct scheduled business-related air travel between Red Deer, Fort McMurray and Saskatchewan.

Specifically, it said, the need to move scarce labour between the four cities raises the importance of efficient air links.

“Aviation is critical to growing the Central Alberta economy, supporting jobs, enabling investment and facilitating trade,” said Steenstra.

Northwestern Air Lease Ltd. has been offering twice-weekly flights between Red Deer and Fort McMurray since Oct. 1. It also flies between Red Deer and Kelowna, B.C. twice a week, and has applied to Transport Canada for permission to extend this route to Abbotsford, B.C., and also to offer passenger service from Red Deer to Fort St. John, B.C., via Dawson Creek, B.C.

The Red Deer Airport Authority manages the Red Deer Airport.