

# Red Deer Advocate

## Airport lands on top of aircraft movement list



Photo by ASHLI BARRETT/Advocate Staff AIRPORT FLIGHTS--business- An Air Canada Express passenger flight lands at the Red Deer Regional Airport on Monday afternoon.

ASHLI BARRETT

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If you enjoy watching airplanes take off and land, the Red Deer Airport is one of the best places in the country to gaze skyward.

Last year, the airport at Springbrook ranked first among 51 Nav Canada flight service centres when it came to aircraft movements.

That was an improvement over its number 2 placement in 2012 and number 3 position in 2011.

Finishing second for 2013 was the airport at Sudbury, Ont., followed by its counterpart at Grande Prairie. In fourth place was the airport at North Bay, Ont., which slipped from the number 1 spot it held in 2012.

The numbers were issued by Statistics Canada on Friday. 'Its report also contains a separate listing of the 42 domestic airports with Nav Canada control towers — larger aviation facilities — with Toronto Pearson International Airport the busiest, Vancouver International second and Calgary International third.

Among the smaller airports with flight service centres, none could match the 49,100 aircraft movements that Red Deer logged in 2013.

Sudbury was well back at 41,326.

"We are very pleased with the result," Red Deer Airport Authority CEO RJ Steenstra said in a release.

"We have a very vibrant and active airport that continues to grow, and that is good news for the citizens of Central Alberta."

The airport's flight tally was actually down from 2012, when there were 50,854 aircraft movements. The figure in 2011 was 44,276, and in 2010 it was 39,907.

Red Deer's 2013 total consisted of 24,799 local flights and 24,301 itinerant flights (those to or from another airport).

The local flight count, which was second highest among the 51 Nav Canada flight service centre airports, was down sharply from the 2012 number of 27,524. An increase in itinerant flights, which rose from 23,330, helped counter this decline.

Red Deer Airport's total of itinerant aircraft movements was ninth highest among its aviation counterparts. It was made up of 16,087 flights by piston-powered aircraft, 5,841 by turboprops, 1,532 by helicopters, 832 by jets and nine by gliders.

The 2013 itinerant total was helped by the fact that Northwestern Air reintroduced scheduled passenger air service in Red Deer in April 2012, and Air Canada also joined the market in September 2013.

The Statistics Canada report noted that total aircraft takeoffs and landings at Canadian airports have decreased annually for five consecutive years, including a 1.8 per cent slide from 2012 to 2013.

Steenstra predicted that aircraft movements at the Red Deer Airport will remain steady, and that this activity will continue to contribute to the regional economy.

"Our ultimate goal is for YQF (the airport's code) to be the aviation gateway to Central Alberta and a key part of the transportation network in and out of the area," he said.

"This airport provide essential infrastructure to support regional social and economic growth, with impacts that go far beyond the direct impact of the airport's operation."

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