



City council updated on Red Deer Regional Airport

By [Mark Weber - Red Deer Express](#)

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Red Deer Regional Airport is on the right track with a prosperous 2013 to look back on and a promising road ahead, officials told City council this week.

“It’s been a very successful 2014 for the airport,” said the airport’s CEO RJ Steenstra, adding that there was a 649% increase in the first quarter of this year over the first quarter in 2013.

“We expect that that will continue as we move forward into the busy months here,” he said. “We expect those numbers to continue, and we look forward to seeing the results from 2014.

“It’s really quite remarkable that in two years this has been achieved at the airport.”

Council was last updated by airport officials last fall.

Since then, Air Canada has launched service, and Northwestern Air continues to grow in terms of services offered from the airport, said Steenstra. “They continue to build direct service from here to Kelowna five days a week and to Fort McMurray four days a week,” he said.

“The airline’s long-term view is that Red Deer will or should be a mini-hub for them, and we are already seeing that happen where they are connecting their Kelowna flight to their Fort McMurray flight, and seeing transit passengers come off one and go onto the next,” he said.

“Of course, Air Canada launched in September of 2013 with one stop connections through Calgary to anywhere in Canada, the U.S. and world-wide. The service is three times a day, seven days a week.” Several jobs have been created locally because of that expansion as well, he pointed out.

Looking ahead, the airport’s area structure plan will help to set the stage for future growth in terms of land development.

“We are certainly seeing dramatic interest in land development for both aviation and non-aviation type businesses,” he said.

Looking ahead, Steenstra said the goal is to build on the strong baseline that was created in 2013.

“We will continue to focus on community engagement and awareness and education. The community has to continue to use what we have, or we have the potential of losing what we have,” he said, adding that officials are also working hard to complete their master plan project which outlines growth plans for the next 20 years of development.

“And we will continue to work with our airline partners for their continued success, as well as putting business cases in front of other airline partners looking to expand in the Canadian market,” he said.

Steenstra said that in spite of the growth, there have been and continue to be challenges which include everything from parking congestion to aging infrastructure.

“We do need to find ways to invest in infrastructure to better capture the opportunities that are in front of us today,” he said. “One component of that, of course, is the master plan which began in March of 2014 in earnest,” he said.

“Like the City, we have to be thinking 10 years out when it comes to infrastructure needs. What the master plan will do is chart our growth and development plans to 2034 with business and market forecasts as guidance. It will demonstrate how we can accommodate passenger forecasted growth in Central Alberta and Red Deer, and the continued demand for travel while still remaining good neighbours.”

A public meeting is set for June 10 for residents and stakeholders to discuss growth issues surrounding the Red Deer Regional Airport, and more details regarding that meeting will be forthcoming shortly, he said.

Meanwhile, staff are relishing the season of robust growth, he said.

“We are building local and national credibility. We have an engaged community, we have strong land development interest, “ he said. “Airports are economic enablers, they are tools of commerce, they are a reflection of our community, they keep people in business connected and they are business magnets in and of themselves.

“They are also a big part of the growth of any city they are located in.”

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