

British Columbia airport under threat of closing: Save Osoyoos Airport

"Since 2011, Osoyoos Town Council, the Mayor and town staff have been meeting regularly with several members of the business community (who later formed the Osoyoos Airport Development Society) to discuss the development and expansion of the Osoyoos Airport (CBB9) presently 2,575 feet paved.

The improvement plans for the airport were broken into four phases. Phase One and Two were completed by 2006 with the paving of the runway and Phase Three – re-construction of the intersection on Highway 3 and installation of services – was completed shortly thereafter. This represented an investment of over \$500,000 of provincial and local dollars. Phase Four has yet to be completed and includes examining all aspects of improvements that would be required to upgrade the airport to a Code 2B runway, while at the same time adding to our industrial land base.

Two reports have been jointly funded between members of the Osoyoos Airport Development Society, the Osoyoos Indian Band and the Town of Osoyoos. These reports include the Osoyoos Airport Upgrading Plan prepared by Associated Engineering that was released in June 2013 and an Osoyoos Airport Economic Impact Assessment that was released in January 2014. The next step is to create the business plan that will support these initiatives.

There has unfortunately been a recent motion passed by Town Council to repurpose the airport lands for industrial use. Their reasoning is that the airport is underutilized and does not serve as an economic driver in any meaningful way.

We do agree that there has been limited aircraft activity with the airport, but that is not due to the lack of interest by the aviation community. It is due to the lack of security and safety for aircraft currently not provided at the airport. There is no perimeter fencing, no tie-downs, and limited space on the tiny apron. This is exactly why we want to continue to move this project forward.

The Osoyoos Airport is a unique site as there is room to expand and the lots adjacent to the manoeuvring areas are freehold, which is very appealing to potential investors. Almost all other municipal airports are on leased land, which makes it almost impossible for individuals to have access to traditional financing.

Since Osoyoos is designated as one of the 14 resort municipalities in British Columbia, it is extremely important to make air travel into the community a priority – not only for tourism or business, but also for medical emergencies. In the town of Nelson, council fought to preserve their airstrip, as they knew they would never be able to create another one. If you ask any civic official in Whistler what the number one item on their wish list is, they will tell you it's an airport.

The Osoyoos Airport could also help the community capitalize on its strengths (great weather, endless recreation etc.) by facilitating the movement of commuters directly to and from their place of work in resource communities as well as our leisure and business guests.

We need the aviation community to speak up and be heard. More information as well as how to join the Osoyoos Airport Development Society is at the Save Osoyoos Airport Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/saveosoyoosairport>