

# B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

NOVEMBER 5, 2014

1:00PM

SMITHERS

<b>ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION</b>	Ron Blackburn, Smithers Regional Airport Roger Smith, Public Works, Town of Smithers
<b>MOTI REPRESENTATIVES</b>	Scott Maxwell, Acting Regional Director, Northern Region, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Carl Lutz, District Manager, Transportation, Bulkley-Stikine District, MoTI
<b>NOTE TAKER</b>	Selina Bull, Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd.
<b>KEY THEMES (3-6)</b>	
1) <b>Airports:</b> Participants urged the Ministry to take a more active interest in the running and funding of airports in the northwest. The participant from Smithers Airport indicated a concern with the terminal capacity of the Smithers Airport.	
2) <b>Collaboration with Partners:</b> Both participants expressed a strong interest in developing more partnerships with the Ministry and other transportation authorities (e.g. other airports) to exploit economies of scale and the expertise of other organizations.	
<b>CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport stressed that the airport's capacity is a hurdle to future economic growth in the region. He noted at the current passenger levels, the airport is already beyond capacity.</li> <li>Both participants indicated that an opportunity for growth would be in the development of partnerships with other organizations in order to take advantage of economies of scale.</li> <li>The representative from Smithers Airport noted that Smithers is the mining hub of the north, and so offers opportunities for the growth of the mining industry.</li> </ul>	
<b>MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES</b>	
1) <b>Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A participant from Smithers Airport noted that the congestion at the Smithers Airport is a problem. It is taxing for staff and stressful for passengers coming through.</li> <li>A participant from Smithers Airport indicated that the fly-in fly-out model strategy for labour supply in northern industries takes pressure off the highway system.</li> <li>A participant from Smithers Airport noted that truck traffic has increased as the resource sector has grown and that the roads are being damaged and rutted out by this kind of traffic. The participant indicated that building in a better grade of asphalt or a higher grade of base on the highways might be worthwhile.</li> </ul>	
2) <b>Growing the Economy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A participant from Smithers Airport noted that if there is money available, strengthening and improving airports in the north, like Smithers, Dease Lake, and Bob Quinn, would strengthen the economy. Improving airports in this region would specifically benefit the mining industry.</li> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport indicated that, through conversations with pipeline proponents, a labour shortage is going to be the greatest challenge for the growth of this sector, and that the fly-in fly-out is the only solution to that problem.</li> <li>The representative from Smithers Airport noted that the growth seen in Terrace (including its airport) due to the big projects in Kitimat is explosive and speculative. He stressed that such growth is difficult to manage.</li> <li>A participant from Smithers Airport noted that in order to foster competition of air service (i.e. to encourage West Jet to begin service to Smithers), firstly, there needs to be a greater passenger base, which might be created by the development of a mine, pipeline, or other organic growth in the area. Secondly, there needs to be a larger terminal to accommodate more flights.</li> </ul>	
3) <b>Connecting and Strengthening Communities</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport expressed a strong interest in partnering with other airports in the northwest, like Dease Lake. The participant noted that unlike highways, airports need to connect to a specific terminus on the other end. The participant indicated that, as the resource sector grows, Dease Lake and Bob Quinn airports will become more important and thus will be good partners for the Smithers Airport.</li> <li>The representative from Smithers Airport indicated a need for the local government to recognize the importance of Smithers Airport and to fund it appropriately.</li> </ul>	
4) <b>Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carl Lutz inquired whether the Smithers Airport could be a good candidate for the Build Canada Fund. The participant from Smithers Airport noted that Council's approval for the airport's application to the fund has been put on hold in order to let the new council pick which projects fit their model.</li> <li>A participant from Smithers Airport noted that the Airport has been in conversation with Executive Flight Centres, a company which does chartered flights. The participant noted that if the economy booms in the northwest, this company wants to be ready to work with Smithers Airport. The participant added that, technically, they are not allowed to run charters out of the main terminal building but that they do not have a choice.</li> <li>A participant from Smithers Airport expressed a strong interest in partnering with MoTI either for an expertise partnership or</li> </ul>	

<p>to connect groups. He noted as an example, if the KSM line goes ahead, the company will be looking to land at Bob Quinn Airport or to build their own landing strip; Smithers Airport would like the opportunity to work with them to be on the other end.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A participant from Smithers Airport noted that the 5 First Nations in surrounding areas utilize air travel as well and that the Airport has to cater to them too.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS</b></p>	
<p><u>Smithers Airport:</u></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport noted that the number one priority is to expand the airport. The participant indicated that the terminal building, including the holding room needs to be double in size to ensure that the flow of traffic in the airport is more efficient.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smithers Airport indicated that a priority would be to improve the road link between Smithers and the Airport. The participant indicated that this road needs upgrades to improve it and minimize safety concerns, especially at the crossings of Kathlyn Creek and Chicken Creek. The participant noted that during construction, there should be an alternate route in order to keep two lanes of traffic flowing.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smithers Airport noted that another major priority is to encourage partnerships by developing good communications between different initiatives.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport indicated that it is important for local services, including the local government, to utilize the Smithers airport.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Public Works at the Town of Smithers indicated that he was there mostly to listen.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport noted that the airport needs to expand just to keep up with current passenger levels. So far this year the airport has served 80 000 passengers, and will probably see around 90 000 by the end of the year. When multiple flights come in it is taxing for staff.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The representative from Smithers Airport noted that a little extra thought into planning any upgrades to the road link between Smithers and the airport would go a long way. People are often already stressed or nervous when they are en route to the airport, so anything to ease their trip helps smooth out the whole experience.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport noted that the only federal funding came from ACAP; the remainder of funds comes from user fees. The participant indicated that if this were a business, it would not be holding its own.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The representative from Smithers Airport noted that the price difference between flights to Terrace and flights to Smithers (because of increased competition from WestJet in Terrace) is hurting the Smithers Airport. The Airport has approached airlines to price match to Terrace but the prices are still much higher in Smithers. On approaching Air Canada to do a "fly-local campaign, the Airport noted that Air Canada was happy to oblige, but wanted the airport to provide everything for such a campaign. It would be far too expensive for the airport to take on alone.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport noted that there is an airport expansion plan that is ready to go, should the Airport find the funds. It would include expanding the holding room to 120 seats, meaning that the airport could accommodate a 737 or two 70-person aircraft at once.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport indicated that the majority of charter flights originate in the United States, although some come from elsewhere.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport noted that they have acquired a new navigation system. However, the participant indicated that most of the existing aircraft do not have the required software for this system.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport noted that it was good that airlines hold passengers to the 45-minute check-in cutoff because it eases the flow in the airport and keeps it at a manageable pace.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scott Maxwell inquired what was used for snow removal; the representative from Smithers Airport noted that they use urea and pure nitrogen.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Smithers Airport indicated that the MedEvac flights have increased by a lot in recent years. The participant added that they have to have sweepers on call 24/7 for that, and it is difficult to have enough organizational depth for that.</li> </ul>	