

B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

NOVEMBER 28, 2014

1:30PM

PRINCE GEORGE
(CONFERENCE CALL)

ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION	John Gibson, President/CEO Prince George Airport Authority
MOTI REPRESENTATIVES	Scott Maxwell, Acting Regional Director, Northern Region, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI)
NOTE TAKER	Selina Bull, Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd.
KEY THEMES (3-6)	
1)	Airport: The Prince George Airport Authority stressed that the funding model for airports was not working well. This participant noted that smaller National Airports System (NAS) airports, like Prince George, need additional funding or need to be able to access capital funds like the Build Canada fund and the Airport Capital Assistance Program (ACAP).
2)	Airport: The Prince George Airport Authority emphasized that it is critical for northern B.C.'s transportation infrastructure to be able to support economic development in the region.
3)	Airport: Prince George Airport Authority noted a need for support from the province in funding the development of cargo facilities at the airport, which would support economic development in the region and would play an important part in the overarching multimodal transportation strategy.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prince George Airport Authority noted that their top challenge was the airport funding system. This participant indicated that infrastructure funding regulations cut out National Airports System airports. While NAS airports were initially conceived to be self-sustaining, the Prince George Airport is too small to be able to do so. The Prince George Airport Authority noted that there was an opportunity for the province to support Prince George in the position that NAS airports should not be obliged to be self-funding. Prince George Airport Authority pointed out that there was an opportunity for the province to encourage the federal government to put at least as much money into its assets as it takes out, since the federal government collects rent on the airport lands.
MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES	
1)	Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prince George Airport Authority indicated that the airport has approximately \$50-60 million worth of rehabilitation projects that are needed, not including any expansion to support the growth. This participant pointed out that the runway is severely deteriorated and the vehicles (including emergency response) are over 30 years old.
2)	Growing the Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prince George Airport Authority stressed that the government must ensure that the province's infrastructure is able to support the economic development in northern BC. This participant noted that highways, roads, bridges, and even small airstrips are critical to supporting this growth. Prince George Airport Authority indicated that airports ranging from tiny airstrips to those like YXS will be important for servicing a major section of LNG development. The Prince George Airport Authority noted that a major concern to industry is the Pine Pass. This section of highway needs to be widened in order to ensure that trucking companies do not have to divert to Alberta to service Northern BC. Prince George Airport Authority pointed out that the development of cargo facilities at the airport would be important for economic growth in the region.
3)	Connecting and Strengthening Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prince George Airport Authority indicated that the taxiway to the water-bomber base is integral to the BC Forest plan but that it needs rehabilitation. The airport will have to fund this project and noted that at some point it will simply run out of money.
4)	Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prince George Airport Authority stressed that the way the federal government view NAS airports does not make sense. The airport would be able to get money from programs like ACAP or the Building Canada Fund if it were not designated as a NAS airport. This participant further noted that the federal government officially owns the lands but does not invest in its own buildings. Prince George Airport Authority pointed out that this does not make sense because NAS airports, in theory, eventually have to be given back to the federal government in good condition. Prince George Airport Authority expressed frustration at dealing with federal bureaucracy.
TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The top priority for the Prince George Airport Authority was for the province to support the position that smaller NAS airports should not be required to be self-sustaining and thus to ensure that this kind of airport can apply for infrastructure

assistance funds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prince George Airport Authority noted that it was critical to ensure that Northern BC's infrastructure including roads, highways, bridges, and airports can support economic development in the region. The Prince George Airport Authority indicated a particular concern with the capacity (width) of the Pine Pass.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prince George Airport Authority indicated that a prime concern was the need for funding from the province for the development of cargo facilities.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prince George Airport Authority noted that there was a strong voice from BC on the Canadian Airports Council.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prince George Airport Authority pointed out that, through the divestiture of airports from the federal government, the airports became a part of the National Airports System. NAS airports are nonprofits, with a non-share capital base, they operate on federal land, and have board members nominated by the province, the federal government, and the Chamber of Commerce, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prince George Airport Authority indicated that the Northern Development Initiative Trust deserved credit for funding small airports in the north.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scott Maxwell inquired as to which other 4 NAS airports had fewer than 600 000 passengers like YXS. The Prince George Airport Authority noted that those airports were Gander, Charlottetown, Fredericton, and St. John.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prince George Airport Authority noted that the federal government does not reinvest money from rents back into the air system, and that this is an issue about federal policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prince George Airport Authority indicated that if it was able to apply for ACAP funding, the money would go a long way to supporting the equipment and expansion projects that are needed, like \$1 million to cover a new emergency response vehicle, and about \$2-2.5 million for runway rehabilitation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prince George Airport Authority noted that it was classified as a NAS airport because that was what the community wanted. This participant pointed out that the airport is where it is now because of its size.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Prince George Airport Authority indicated that it probably would have been better off if were not a NAS airport, i.e. if the federal government had given the airport to the city of Prince George. However, this participant noted that cities often do not want to do that, as they are usually aware of the capital infrastructure requirements for airports.