



## Alberta Aviation Museum Association

11410 Kingsway Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5G 0X4

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### **For Immediate Release**

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Since taking over as Executive Director of the Alberta Aviation Museum and Edmonton Aviation Heritage Society I have had the great pleasure to lead a team that has made unbelievable strides moving forward, bringing tremendous benefits to Edmonton as a community.

We started as a small community-based museum and now host the third largest aircraft collection in Canada.

We have more than doubled attendance since 2005, welcoming about one-third of all our visitors from out-of-region.

And along the way we have become both a north-side convention centre, attracting many mid-sized conventions, and a centre for several cultural events.

We created some of the most advanced aviation education programming of any aviation museum, with more than 30 modules of curriculum-based classes that now serves thousands of students per year from across Western Canada.

We are well-past ready to step into interactive video conferencing and Advanced Education programs.

Our flight simulator programming is among the most advanced and sophisticated of any similar institution. This includes industry partnership on the commercial level procedural trainer with Buffalo Airways of "Ice Pilots" fame, a program announced just yesterday - and another Canadian first for an Aviation Museum.

We are at the centre of many new initiatives such as *Race Week Edmonton* and advocating for the creation of an Edmonton Museums complex on the Edmonton City Centre Airport Lands.

And we have supported and assisted many charitable and similar organizations over the last number of years.

Further demonstrating our commitment to Edmonton, special projects such as the "*Spirit of Edmonton Bi Plane*" Centennial Flights in 2009 and the "*Spirit of Edmonton Bi Plane*" British Commonwealth Air Training Plan Alberta Tour in 2010 have achieved positive national and even international media coverage for the City of Edmonton and region. As well, the many events such as *Airfest* and special visiting aircraft have attracted thousands to the area from across the Western Region.

But recently **the momentum and ability to carry-on these great Edmonton success stories is being severely impaired.**



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Despite these remarkable successes and our team's ongoing efforts, and despite the obvious benefits the museum and facility bring to the community/province, **we continue to be disregarded by the majority of Corporate Edmonton/Alberta**, realizing minimal support from this quarter.

Although we have enjoyed the support of Edmonton City Council as a whole, **financial assistance** promised us in the 2011 city budget (to deal with short falls due to the changes at the City Centre airport and allow us to begin to adapt) **has been cut-back and we have yet to receive any of the dollars.**

These same changes to the City Centre Airport threaten the ongoing operations of the Museum and facility.

While we have planned and prepared contingencies as a result of the airport closure, these planned changes will require significant additional space. The decisions on these space needs are tied to the CCR Master Plan which is 18-24 months from completion, and all-the-while we lose momentum and the ability to adapt.

The tremendous effort of the full time staff at the Museum/Facility is a major component of our success, particularly with a significant loss of volunteers after the airport closure decision. Working for well below market wage and putting-in countless hours of unpaid personal time is now taking a toll on their ability to maintain the needed pace.

On a personal note, the cost of the hundreds of hours of work per month to make the Museum/Facility a success has taken a very high toll on me personally, financially and on my family. One cannot continue to maintain 225-300 hours per month continuously without adverse effects. The reward has been the success of the facility, certainly not financial.

Finally, personal attacks from some extreme supporters of the City Centre Airport looking for a scapegoat have painted me personally as being in favour of airport closure.

This too has taken a great toll and the personal cost during the airport debate has also been very high.

The fact is, I have always been a strident supporter of the airport, appearing both in Edmonton City Council advocating and encouraging ways to retain the airport, as well as attending meetings with individual councilors.

Furthermore, the record shows my position as a strong airport advocate in mainstream and social media during the debate.



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The challenge ahead for the Alberta Aviation Museum/facility is now greater than when I began as a volunteer with the facility in the early 1990's, or when I became the Executive Director in 2006.

**We cannot afford to lose momentum** or fail to take advantage of any opportunities presented.

We also **cannot continue to operate on a shoe string budget with a skeleton staff** while achieving results gaining National recognition and massive benefit to the community.

**It is simply not sustainable.**

Personally, I don't know if I have the resources to face this challenge physically or mentally let alone face the adversity that comes with the challenge.

**As a result I will be taking an indefinite leave of absence effective August 1<sup>st</sup> to recover physically, mentally and to make up for lost time with my family.  
I will then decide if I will be able to return to my position.**

In the meantime the people of Edmonton, Corporate Edmonton, The City of Edmonton and the Province of Alberta need to decide if they want an Aviation Museum and a facility that brings tremendous recognition and benefits to the community/province.

If that is the goal then it is time to decide how to assist. The Museum and Society cannot continue to do it alone.

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