

Yukon Flying - The Search For Aviation Solutions

Background: This summary of Yukon aviation activities began in 2005 and turned into a 'blog' that is continued below. (Those first 62 pages are still available.) The intent is an accurate summary of events affecting aviation in the Yukon. IF - you find errors of fact or unfair treatment please let me know.

January 10, 2018

NATIONALLY - CBC Media this morning speak of a pilot shortage that is getting more serious. Some commercial flights were apparently cancelled coming out of Calgary yesterday as a result.

January 11, 2018

IN YUKON: CBC News this morning features Joe Sparling, CEO of **Air North**, and Glenn Priestly, Executive Director of the **Northern Air Transportation Association**, both interviewed about concerns that The NWT Government tripled (3x) the fees at Yellowknife Airport, and also added an "*Airport an Improvement Fee*" six months ago and, since then, they have measured reduced air travel from Yellowknife. The Yellowknife Airport was "privatized" by the NWT Government last year.

The NWT Government claims that ; "*...the \$10,000,000.00 they raise from these increases will be used to make the airport more attractive to users...*".

Mr. Sparling, and then Mr Priestly, say only reduced passenger costs will increase airport use.

The Yukon Government / Minister Mostyn has stated there would be no similar fees implemented here.

February 12, 2018

A few media articles last month about the decline of aviation in the NWT but locally it's quiet following YTG promise there would be no new fees. I received the results from YTG of my **Access To Information** request for copies of anything relevant to me at the airport or in aviation, this may take a long while to sort.

The Yukon Airports Act is posted on this web-site. Assent being assumed, we are waiting for the appearance of Regulations pursuant to the Act.

Here is an interesting observation, the Maintenance staff at CYXY finally have a shiny new plow and sweeper that they desperately needed. Those of us who spend their fall on the farm during harvest will instantly recognize that hardware. It makes perfect sensepower...visibility...maneuverable...maybe even GPS tracking?

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March 5, 2018 Fuel and Snow Alert !

I flew out to Cousins to do circuits last week but it was still not plowed so if you're going out there beware. Today I flew out to Braeburn. There was about 5" of snow which the big tires handled OK, even with my forward CofG when empty, but be aware. It was plowed a week or so back according to Steve Watson.

Big news in Canadian aviation is that all 100 LL made in Edmonton is 'off-spec for conductivity' and has been recalled. Several fuelling facilities in Western Canada closed temporarily despite the only impact being to those aircraft using "Inductive" type level gauges, and there are other ways to manage fuel as we all know. Fortunately in Yukon we should not be affected.

March 14, 2018

I flew out to do some spring training, Cousins is unplowed still, but hopefully they will do it in time to dry for the spring training rush soon. I did some failure drills in the West Practice Area but always feel uncomfortable doing approaches on farmers fields there.

March 30, 2018

I flew out to check Cousins but it has not been plowed. I was told Squanga has not been plowed. I flew down to Carcross and there were enough bare patches to land and walk into town for lunch. Braeburn was not plowed last time I was there, with recent snow it is likely not usable (call Steve Watson at Braeburn Lodge and check).

April 12, 2018

Tom and I flew out to look for the balloon Lee Johnson and the kids launched on the weekend. It was NOTAM'd and that was a good thing because it carried a go-pro, a SPOT beacon, a recorder and a load of LEGO men up to 108,000 feet before starting back down. It landed near 37 Mile Lake, going by the last transmitted coordinates. We didn't find it, but the kids did eventually within a few hundred meters of its last transmissions.

Cousins was not plowed when we went by (I don't think it has been plowed all winter). I hope they don't close it, it might be needed soon, the rumour mill suggests the main runway (14R /32L) has finally started to break apart. It was to have been replaced by 2015 according to the last Strategic Plan (20/20). YTG will have their work cut out when it does, since they shortened the parallel runway a few years back and I don't think the big jets can use it.

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April 19, 2018 - 14R / 32L NOTAM Closed for “Non-Scheduled Aircraft”

The following NOTAM was issued by YTG;

180067 CYXY WHITEHORSE/ERIK NIELSEN INTL
CYXY RWY 14R/32L NOT AVBL FOR NON-SKED ACFT DURING DAYLIGHT VMC
1803211622 TIL 1806301800

No explanation has been given. Rather than speculate about the reasons we will wait some form of communication to the flying public. Looks like it has been in effect for a while and will remain in effect until the end of June so they are sure to tell us why. The shorter parallel runway appears unaffected.

April 24, 2018

An email from the Airport Manager, Robert Manlig, gives us a little more information about the reason for the NOTAM;

...Work is scheduled on 14R/32L for summer 2018. We are planning for this work to commence in May 2018, dependent on weather and temperatures. Work will be completed at night between scheduled flights. We will ensure you are informed when we have further information on the work that will be completed this summer.

It is important to note that due to aging infrastructure our team of engineers and program areas are looking at the scope and impact of work that needs to take place on the 14R/32L over the next five to ten years. Once plans have been coordinated we will further communicate and discuss next steps with you.

No description of the extent of the problem, and we can't really fault them for wanting some engineering expertise and financial estimates before announcing this too loudly

26 April, 2018 Hon. Mr. Mostyn spoke in the Legislature (from Hansard);

He announced that he had just met with 168 members of the Northern Air Transport Association and promised them;

- We are investing more than \$30 million in our airports this year including.*
- a new boarding ramp at the Whitehorse International Airport*
- fixing our baggage handling equipment at the Whitehorse International Airport*
- more than \$2 million starting the paving of the Dawson City Airport runway;*
- \$7 million on a new airports maintenance facility up in Dawson City*
- We are doing millions of dollars' worth of work at the Whitehorse International Airport to put in new lighting and make sure the runways are maintained to a proper standard*

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- *we are maintaining our rural airports as well.*

and;

- *a “great engagement website”, which is a new initiative that we put out here so that people know what is going on.*

He concluded by saying; “...When I spoke to them this afternoon — 168 delegates at the convention centre — and told them these things, I was met with thunderous applause and no questions.”

All great news for aviation.

I surmise that Cousins is not one of the rural runways he refers to. He made no reference to the situation in Whitehorse reflected by the NOTAM, vis-a-vie the main runway impending collapse or about his plan to deal with it.

I am looking on-line for the “great engagement website” to find out what their plans are. As soon as I find it I will post the link here.

I see barriers have been set up along the taxi-ways in front of the terminal to prevent us from falling into the cracks opening up there so use caution. Also lets do our part and be alert for broken pieces of concrete, asphalt or tar and report them.

April 30, 2018

The information provided above are quotes I have taken directly from Hansard, I was not personally at the NATA meeting. I was contacted today by a local air-operator who was present, and he wanted to clarify that the reason there were no questions asked by NATA members was that Minister Mostyn prefaced his presentation with the statement that he would not entertain any questions!

I make this correction at request and for accuracy.

Cousins airstrip was usable today.

May 2, 2018 - “YTG Engagement Website”

After searching all conceivable combinations I found the following web site that must be the one Minister Mostyn is referring to on April 26;

[www.https://engageyukon.ca/](https://engageyukon.ca/)

There was only one aviation related link, which is marked “CLOSED” but I copied it as .pdf and added it to the documents listed on the Politics page.

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May 25, 2018

The 'Aviation Committee' of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce met in Dawson City a week and a bit back, and the rumour goes, filled the new ADM at Aviation with insights. Mr McConnell will have an interesting task ahead.

YTG is still silent to Leases and the deteriorating runways at CYXY. I was contacted by the media yesterday to give my views on the runway condition. I can pretty accurately explain how we got here, but not what can be done now. The NOTAM now reads;

RWY 14R/32L NOT AVBL FOR SINGLE ENGINE LIGHT VFR ACFT DURING DAYLIGHT VMC

This likely won't affect the COPA FOR KIDS event is tomorrow at CYXY. COPA 106, AGM is tonight.

I see a 'Phase One' Environmental Assessment is underway to allow North 60 to sell the building currently housing Rodan Aviation and Capital Helicopters, plus the storage facility used by a local Expediting company to a "non-aviation" entity. The sale of airport property to non-aviation interests has been common everywhere in North America and has been the root cause of much of those airport difficulties. I doubt the Yukon is exempt of these influences.

May 31, 2018

I think we all received an e mail from the YT Government inviting us to a meeting with the new ADM on the 18th for 'Ground-side' and the 20th for 'Air-side' operational updates by the now ADM, Paul McConnell. Thats good!

The local COPA flight held their AGM (no changes there) and the COPA For Kids event went off well on Saturday, nearly 80 kids enjoyed flights with the local pilots group. At the same time the 'Yukon Transportation Museum' cosponsored a BBQ with the 'Boys and Girls Club'. It was a full house! It's not everyday a real piano is placed outside beside a Beech Stagger wing so you can eat, soak up aviation ambiance, and listen to Honkey-Tonk and Jazz in the same setting. Thanks to John Faulkner for the airplane, and 'Professor' Grant Simpson for the music.

I have been doing check-outs for lots of 'Cub Drivers' this week. Cousins has been busier than ever with all the training and 'currency' flights. There is no windsock, it left early last winter, but YTG left it unplowed all winter anyway so that didn't matter until now.

At CYXY the ramp has a lot of low barriers surrounding areas where they are cutting out some broken cement, keep alert taxiing through there! TRK Helicopters has leased the site of the old TC Weather Station and set up there beside Canadian Helicopters.

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June 29, 2018

A large number of pilots and aircraft were around Dawson City for the longest day of the year. Many of us met at the Reynolds Ranch at the North Klondike for a good chat and BBQ. The CYDA airport is showing signs of starting of new facility construction and paving.

This week we were notified that the new ADM and the Director at YTG were conducting a meeting at the Airport Boardroom to review new developments and plans. Unfortunately I was working at Alpine Aviation, and everyone I have asked was similarly too busy. I have contacted the secretary at YTG who promised the minutes/report from that meeting by Friday but so far they haven't arrived.

YTG Premier Sandy Silver today announced that aviation and mining would be exempt from a Carbon Tax, but then went on to describe an annual system of applications and refunds that likely won't be universal, or efficient. It will likely only benefit the big guys in this business.

July 7, 2018

No sign of the minutes from the meeting in June that we were promised, the word from one person who did attend was nothing remarkable was brought up, it was sort of meet-and-greet. We'll wait a bit longer and ask.

YTG has placed PAPI lights at both ends of the runway in order to facilitate keeping it open while they resurface. That solution is a short-term bandaid according to at least two different YTG employees, it won't address the sub-surface problems. The equipment has already assembled near the South gate to start.

The industry seems to be active, most hardware is out flying, most hangers are bare. A good sign. Everyone is busy except the Fire-tankers....another good sign.

July 20, 2018

The minutes promised from the ADM's meeting have never showed up.

The re-paving project is underway, there are constant NOTAM amendments and procedural changes while an asphalt band-aid is placed on 14/32. STAY ALERT !

It is important to remember that this will NOT fix the CYXY runway but may hide the problem for 3 or 4 more years. Eventually we will face this issue again.

No word about the progress of Dawson City runway repaving nor about the new Airport Terminal and Maintenance Shops being built there. Stay tuned.

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August 30, 2018

14 / 32 has been re-surfaced. It looks good aesthetically.

I flew to Braeburn the other day, YTG has continually shortened it and narrowed it by relocating the cones until now it is nearly impossible to dodge all the gopher holes. Some of those holes are definitely large enough to swallow a 6" tire if you are not careful. They need to use what-ever technique they used in CYXY to reduce the gophers before the runway is completely unusable.

BE ALERT AT BRAEBURN !

I see YTG is trying to act on their promise to create an Aviation Advisory Committee. I see some discussion because the original promise seems to have changed; where it was to be Yukon-wide, now that is not clear, and it seems rather than having Aviation interests represented it appears that a cross-section of interests is proposed. Hopefully that is not deliberate?

In many good and comprehensive studies (done by the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, among others) competing interests, more valuable land-uses, municipal interests and unjustified regulations drove airports away, and aviation into the ground. When I see these same issues arise here I know the benefit of all those studies and the knowledge learned from those experiences all across Canada is being ignored.

In the Yukon especially WE CANNOT AFFORD TO GO DOWN THE SAME ROAD! All Yukon airports need to remain dedicated to aviation.

On a different note, Kudos to Doug Davidge for his great work. Doug has an interest in Yukon history and is the one that assisted Dr. Doug Craig in the assessment of the B-36A crash years ago (find this on our HISTORY page). Doug is also the one whose persistence resulted in the discovery and mapping of the hull of the Steamboat "Goddard" in Lake Laberge.

Now, using the same side-scan, ROV underwater vehicle, and SCUBA technology, Doug has successfully located the wreck of the Bristol Freighter lost in Baker Lake (East of Teslin River). His considerable effort and modesty shouldn't go unrecognized.

October 5, 2018

"Aviation stakeholders" have been notified of a meeting with the ADM at the CYXY airport board-room on October 23. That is during office hours and mid-week which might affect attendance. This time the agenda is promised to include both air-side and ground-side issues. Since I never received the minutes I was promised from the last meeting I have no context for guessing how this meeting will go or any issues will be dealt with. One issue will likely be use of airport property. Here is a quote from an email about this situation that I located;

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“You would not seriously entertain a request to run an 'Air B-and-B' enterprise from the Whitehorse Hospital, but YTG has no issue with letting trucking companies or other non-aviation business compete with aviation companies for limited space at the airports! A short walk around the Whitehorse airport encounters tenants like; Marsh Lake Tents and Events, Laberge Environmental, Smalls Expediting, etc. You know better than I of course but I think that, for Yukon-owned Aviation Companies, their overhead increases needlessly because they have been placed into direct competition with Trucking companies and other non-aviation free enterprise. I would say their profit margins are smaller too...”

Another topic for this meeting will likely be the formation of the Aviation Advisory Committee. The whole history of this entity is available in this document (above and pre-January10, 2018), going back the past several years. Suffice to say this Committee was created at least two HPW Ministers back, but never functioned properly, possibly because of interference from within the Department. This time we all have hope it will function, even if they persist in including non-aviation interests.

I was up in Dawson City and confirm there is activity there on the promised paving of that runway. It's too late to evaluate the logic used in the decision this Government has a Premier from that very community and the promise has been made and construction started.

I was out at Braeburn last week again. The grass and gopher holes suggest this runway was not graded all summer. It was not graded all last winter either.

Here in Whitehorse the main runway (14R / 32L) has been resurfaced and it looks like we are back to business as usual. They have also patched in front of the firehall. A new access road has been built in between Alkan Air and 01-19, hopefully to allow access to new lots. The rumour mill is that construction of this road and the fencing cost in the neighbourhood of a million dollars. Those kinds of projects (sewer, water, roads, sand sheds) drive the Government operating costs sky-high (pun?) and I am sure someone with the bureaucracy is going to target leases to recover the cost.

YTG is advertising for a new permanent Government position to “Manage Airport Leases”. They will offer the successful candidate \$ 85,000.00 per year. With all associated Government benefits that will cost taxpayers over \$100,000.00 each year. And then they will need office space, a vehicle, and a budget, so that \$100,000.00 figure will be much higher in reality.

Fuel facilities at Mayo and Dawson City have been sold by private interests. There were a few glitches in fuel availability, but they appear to be operating now. The past season has been very busy, unofficial industry sources report a 25% increase over last year.

November 4, 2018 - No News is Good News ?

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YTG Aviation met with the public here in Whitehorse on Oct. 23. I was not able to attend, again, but rely on the description of some who did. The minutes from the last meeting was supplied by email, which I received.

Leases are still an outstanding issue. Apparently the City of Whitehorse needs to approve the plan YTG has. That raises some anxiety of course, elsewhere in Canada and US where municipalities were given control of airports, the impact was always negative to aviation. (In Edmonton municipal interests actually destroyed the airport.) There is always a higher tax return to municipalities from non-aviation land-use. Study after study and example after example have shown this.

Elsewhere in the Yukon all the commercial operators I know are in recovery mode following a busy summer season. A good sign! Private and recreational aviation seems to have declined a bit, if my perception is correct the price of gas, insurance and maintenance may be responsible for some of that, and maybe the relatively poor weather mid-summer.

I saw very limited airstrip maintenance elsewhere in the Yukon (except Dawson of course). I sense a 'wait-and-see if they complain' initiative in place at YTG Highways. Hope I'm wrong! I heard that YTG placed cameras on some airstrips in order to monitor our use.