

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

Lake Simcoe Regional Airport's expansion means Barrie can compete at a global level

By Melanie Franner



Thanks in large part to the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, the Lake Simcoe Regional Airport (LSRA) is slated for an extensive overhaul that will enable the local airport to compete at a global level and to act as a major reliever airport alternative to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The total budget for the improvements is \$15.32 million, an amount that is being shared equally among the federal, provincial, and municipal governments. The municipal funding comes primarily from the City of Barrie, with a contribution from the Township of Oro-Medonte.

"We need to expand," explains Mike Drumm, airport manager for the LSRA. "There is a growing demand for our services. Specifically, the airport is out of serviced land. We want to attract more tenants and employment."

A path to growth

Today, there are approximately 27,000 annual movements or flights

taking off/landing from the LSRA. Although this number probably won't change significantly once the improvements have been made, says Drumm, what will change will be the types of flights using the airport.

"Right now, we get a mix of flights, ranging from commercial to cargo, charter, military, and executive or corporate jets," explains Drumm. "Over the last couple of years, there has been a general trend to increased commercial and corporate flights. What we'll probably see is more flights coming from international destinations as opposed to more local smaller flights."

The fact that the LSRA is already being serviced by the Canada Border Service Agency and maintains a Commercial Port-of-Entry status will definitely help accommodate a growing number of international passengers and freight. Add to that the fact that the LSRA is located in one of the fastest growing regions of Ontario – close to the GTA and central Ontario

cottage country – and one can see how the future for the LSRA will undoubtedly be bright.

"The municipalities welcome the improvements to the LSRA," states Drumm. "The airport is a conduit. Every municipality or county wants to be able to compete beyond its own borders. Transportation is one way to accomplish this and air is one of the most important modes of transportation available."

Starting small

Construction on the original LSRA took place in two phases: the first began in the spring of 1990 and involved a 3,500-foot runway and a small apron to the north of the field; and the second phase started in November 1991 and involved extending the runway to 5,000 feet and adding a large apron to the south, as well as a modern terminal building. At the time of the initial construction, the LSRA was the result of a vision that stretched back to the early 1970s.

But, there's no doubt that the area has changed significantly since then. Today, the LSRA directly services a population base of over 200,000 people. And, according to the provincial growth plan, that number is slated for significant increases in the year ahead.

As such, the new LSRA funding will be used to facilitate a variety of projects designed to both improve the airport and foster growth for the region. It will entail:

- The extension of the existing runway to 6,000 feet in order to handle

larger aircrafts

- Expansion of the commercial aviation hanger development area that involves development of a new partial parallel taxiway, access road and complete services;
- The construction of the northeast commercial area taxiway phase one
- Pavement improvements, including new asphalt for the original paved areas of the airport, as well as the runway itself (which will both improve and strengthen the surface quality)
- The installation of about six kilometers of airport security/wildlife control fence
- Expansion of the Air Terminal Building from 690 square metres to 978 square metres, as well as expansion of Air Terminal Building parking lot;
- The construction of a new, four-bay maintenance building for the indoor storage of equipment
- Expansion of the aircraft tie-down area to replace the current grass tie-down services, which prove difficult to use in the winter
- Development of a commercial area to the southwest, including 10 fully serviced lots measuring 60 metres x 90 metres, the building of an access road and extension of electrical power, gas, water and sewer systems, as well as add-ons to the existing water and sewer treatment systems
- The installation of a larger back-up generator to handle the terminal building and airside lighting (as well as the sewer and water systems)
- The upgrading of the above-ground fuel aviation system.

On the ground

David James, senior project engineer for the City of Barrie, is overseeing the improvements to the LSRA. James was also involved in the original LSRA construction.



“At the time of the original construction we developed five hanger lots,” he explains. “Of that five, four are currently developed and the fifth lot is sold. This airport expansion can be directly attributed to the region’s growth.”

Ted Handy and Associates Inc. was also engaged in the project to provide project management services for a number of projects including the maintenance building, the terminal

building expansion and renovation, the terminal area services building, and the terminal area solar power system.

The various development projects have been divided into six separate tenders. Already, three tenders have been awarded, two more are out for bidding and the last one will be out for bidding in April. Barrie-based Reinders Southpark & Associates Ltd. has been awarded the construction of

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“We want to develop the LSRA as a Centre of Excellence for maintenance, repair, assembly, manufacturing and related services for the aerospace industry. We believe that the improvements underway at the LSRA can contribute to increased trade, efficient movement of goods and people and economic growth.”

the maintenance building; Stouffville-based Locpave Construction Ltd. has been awarded the aviation fuel system upgrade; and Mount Forest-based Dewar Services has been awarded the installation of the larger generator.

The remaining projects have been separated into three tenders. Work on development in the southwest commercial area (which includes the hanger lots, sewer and water systems) will be tendered in April. The tender on the terminal building improvements has already gone out, as has the tender on the remaining projects, which include the runway

extension, taxiways, and pavement rehabilitation.

Work on all of the LSRA improvement projects will be underway this summer.

Up, up and away

The Infrastructure Stimulus Fund requires that a substantial part of the project be completed by March 31, 2011. With this timeline in place, it won't take long for the LSRA to reach its new potential as a gateway to increased commerce and employment for the area.

“The vision of the LSRA is to build

stronger, more robust, wider-based services and a world-class facility,” concludes LSRA's Drumm. “We want to develop the LSRA as a Centre of Excellence for maintenance, repair, assembly, manufacturing and related services for the aerospace industry. We believe that the improvements underway at the LSRA can contribute to increased trade, efficient movement of goods and people, and economic growth by encouraging business development at the airport. This, in turn, will open new opportunities to create gateways and cross border avenues.” †



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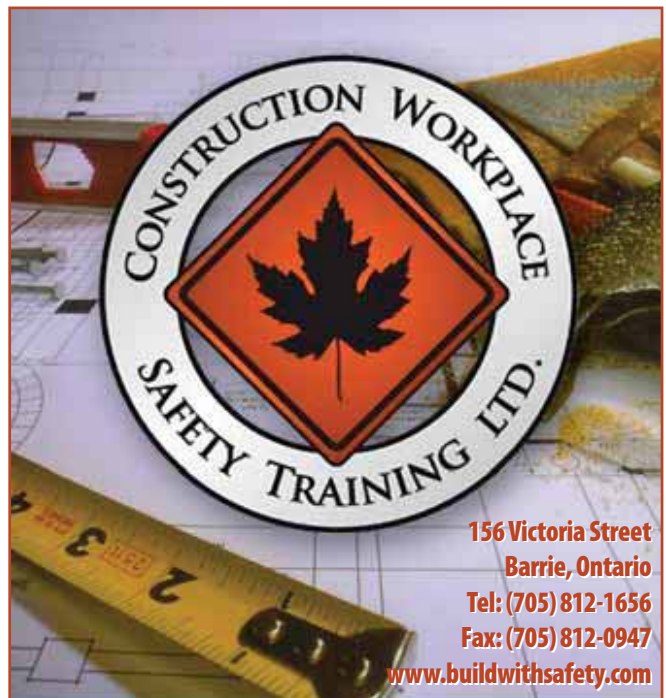
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