

MUNICIPAL AIRPORT EXPANSION PROJECT TAKING BRANDON TO NEW HEIGHTS

CARM members leading the way on renovation of transportation hub

By Candice G. Ball

The expansion of the Brandon Municipal Airport will be a major economic driver for the Westman area of Manitoba. Not only will the expanded airport result in more direct jobs, but it will also make Brandon a major provincial hub for business activities.

All three levels of government support the opportunities this project will bring to the region and have invested in this infrastructure. Approved under the New Building Canada Fund's Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Component-National and Regional Projects program, the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba will each contribute up to \$2,906,200 towards the project. The City of Brandon will foot the remainder of the costs and has budgeted \$8,793,600 for the project.

"The City of Brandon is pleased to be working with our provincial and federal counterparts to lead this much-needed terminal redevelopment at the Brandon Municipal Airport," says Coenraad Fourie, the manager of Development & Transportation with the City of Brandon. "These improvements will finally bring Brandon into the modern era of passenger air travel and will also be absolutely integral to the continued economic growth of Brandon and the entire southwestern Manitoba region."

The scope of the passenger terminal redevelopment project entails renovating and expanding the existing terminal to three times its original size. That expanded facility will improve passenger flow, allowing for a better experience for travellers and airport personnel.

It will also be able to accommodate future growth – and just in time. The Conference Board of Canada forecasts that Manitoba will be one of the top-performing provinces over the next two years.

The Brandon Municipal Airport started to experience growing pains when WestJet began offering scheduled flights in 2013. Although some minor cosmetic renovations took place that year to offer WestJet customers a better experience in the airport, it was evident that the existing facility was ill equipped to accommodate the landing of a Q400 aircraft or to service the increased flow of visitors.

The project got off the ground when the City of Brandon commissioned Prairie Architects Inc. and Airbiz Aviation Strategies Ltd. to conduct a feasibility study. Both firms had a history with the airport as they worked on the 2008 redevelopment study of the airport. The most recent concept designs for the redevelopment were finalized in the spring of 2014.

Highlights of the redevelopment plan include the ability to accommodate a 737 aircraft, a spacious boarding lounge with state-of-the-art washroom facilities, a concession area and a seating area that will comfortably accommodate 104 people.

With an additional security queuing area and improved baggage capacities, the redeveloped facility will enhance safety and security for passengers and airport personnel. The project will also boost the airport's technological infrastructure with the installation of fibre optic cable allowing for fast and reliable broadband connectivity.



Top: All footings for the addition and a portion of the piles installed

Right: On Nov. 23, 2015, federal and provincial funding partners and other special guests joined Mayor of Brandon Rick Chrest to celebrate the start of the Brandon Municipal Airport Expansion/Redevelopment Project. L-R: Damien Fenez, Prairie Architects Inc.; Brandon-Souris MP Larry Maguire; Drew Caldwell, former provincial Minister of Municipal Government; MaryAnn Mihychuk, federal minister of Employment, Workforce and Labour; Brandon Mayor Rick Chrest; Zac Penner, T.L. Penner Construction Inc.



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– Zac Penner, General Manager, T.L. Penner Construction Inc.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CITY OF BRANDON

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– Erik Bowman, Construction and Operations Manager, Powell Construction



A 3D model of the completed terminal building

After some refinement to the design that addressed details about the electrical, HVAC and plumbing needs, the tender package went out in summer 2015. Virden, Man.’s own T.L. Penner Construction Inc. was awarded the contract.

“It’s definitely a project that we are proud to be a part of given its high profile and the impact it will have on the Westman region,” says general manager Zac Penner.

As the general contractor, T.L. Penner Construction oversees the project and handles the heavy construction. The rest of the work has been subcontracted out to trades, some of which are members of Construction Association of Rural Manitoba (CARM). Brandon Heating & Plumbing, Jamieson-Judd Electrical, and Powell Construction all have major roles in the renovation and redevelopment. The team is able to draw on the strength of the longstanding relationships they have developed working on other projects.

Construction began in the fall of 2015 and with the mild weather, the project got off to a good start and the team was able to work throughout the winter.

Powell Construction constructed the foundation for the new addition. The main foundation has a large number of 12-foot columns with a suspended slab on top of a three-foot grade beam. It was a challenging job but it went very well.

“Both T.L. Penner and the City of Brandon were amazing to deal with on the construction and safety for the project,” says Erik Bowman, the construction and operations manager with Powell. “We feel very privileged to be part of this project.”

The exterior walls are structural steel metal frames with steel-stud infill. Another salient feature is the extensive glazing.

“It will look nice and it’s a very well-designed facility,” says Penner. “It is being built to last for many years to come.”

Fourie agrees the project has gone exceptionally well so far, with the first phase slated for completion in September 2016 and the remaining construction for January 2017.

“The project is on time and on budget,” he says.

However, the recent announcement of WestJet’s direct flight out of Brandon to Toronto that starts on June 28, 2016, will mean the team has to ensure that construction doesn’t interfere with the newly scheduled flights.

Penner acknowledges that working directly adjacent to an active airfield has presented some challenges.

“We have special protocol onsite when it comes to making sure there’s no debris or tarps blowing across the airfield,” he says.

“That’s just something that cannot happen. We have taken great measures to contain our work areas and put safety first.”

Even though the team is not seeking LEED certification, waste material will not be going to a landfill.

“It’s very standard now, especially on the government-funded projects we’re working on,” says Penner. “Up to 80 per cent of the waste is diverted from the landfill.”

The project is moving along at a steady pace and most trades work a 40-hour work week, but once the interior work on doors, painting and finishings begins, Penner says it will turn into a seven-day work week as they move towards completing the expansion. ■

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