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NEWS RELEASE

Regional coalition enjoys success in maintaining Nav Canada services in the Cariboo Chilcotin

Cariboo Chilcotin - A coalition of local governments and the Cariboo Chilcotin business community has been notified that NAV CANADA has decided not to proceed with further consideration of downgrading service levels at local airports until at least the fall of 2010.

The coalition is comprised of the Cariboo Regional District and its four member municipalities: the District of 100 Mile House; the District of Wells; the City of Quesnel; and the City of Williams Lake. These local governments were joined in their efforts by the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association (CCCTA) as well as the Chambers of Commerce within the Cariboo.

A release issued last Thursday by NAV CANADA indicated the decision to postpone the study was based upon a number of temporary factors, which was exactly the case the coalition made in its report. NAV CANADA has proposed curtailed service levels for both the Quesnel and Williams Lake Airports. Many aviators were concerned this would have detrimental impacts on safety levels. There was also a great deal of concern from local government leaders and the business community that the changes would have a negative impact on the region's economic recovery.

"While we appreciate Nav Canada's decision to curtail any further consideration at this time, we require greater certainty to aid our efforts in renewing our economy," said CRD Chair, Al Richmond. "We ask NAV CANADA to agree to a five-year period in which no further service downgrades will be considered. That will provide the certainty required for businesses to make investment decisions that will assist in seeing the economy of our region recover and flourish."

"On behalf of all the region's mayors, I believe we've shown that by working collectively we have a stronger voice and are stronger as a region," said Quesnel Mayor Mary Sjostrom. "Our airports are critical infrastructure that provide a host of services to the entire region. We'll continue to lobby collectively for a positive, permanent solution."

"Our submission to NAV CANADA focused on how the global recession had deteriorated a regional economy already reeling from the forest industry crisis," added Sjostrom. "The theme throughout this document highlights that basing change on recent airport statistics would result in misleading information and misinformed decisions."

"We are relieved by this decision, as a downgrading of service levels would have provided another challenge to our travel sector that we just don't need," stated CCCTA Board Past Chair Pat Corbett. "We thank the CRD and the municipalities for their leadership in dealing with this issue."

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