

Air transportation is becoming increasingly important as a factor in both social and economic development in Saskatchewan. Regional/municipal airports are important to surrounding communities for air ambulance services, agriculture services, postal delivery, mining operation and fire protection. Lack of funding is forcing airports to reduce their services and thereby their ability to attract new investment and revenues available for infrastructure improvements. The Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) supports the objectives of the Community Airport Partnership (CAP) Program and believes the continuation of the CAP program after March 2010 is essential to sustain Saskatchewan's thriving economy and link the province to national and international markets.

Over the past decade, small airports across Canada have experienced a sharp drop in service, leading to decreased revenues available for infrastructure improvements. Low traffic volumes and service levels constrain the ability for small airports to achieve cost recovery of operations.

In 2002, the Department of Highways and Transportation (now the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure) commissioned a review of regional airports in Saskatchewan. The main objective of the report was to review and assess the issues facing small airports with special reference to Southern Saskatchewan. The report identified that the aging and deteriorating infrastructure of many regional airports in Southern Saskatchewan and the lack of programs to support capital projects.

As result of this report, the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure created the Community Airport Partnership Program to provide capital contributions to rehabilitate and upgrade the network of regional airports in Southern Saskatchewan. The CAP Program is intended to be an ongoing program subject to available funding. The current program is based on the 2009-2010 fiscal year with a budget of \$500,000. It is slated to end March 2010.

It is SUMA's position that the responsibility for an effective air transportation network lies primarily with the federal and provincial governments. However, municipalities also have responsibility in the operation and maintenance of regional airports as a service for local citizens and businesses.

SUMA agrees with the current objectives of the CAP Program. Furthermore, SUMA is encouraged to see that many airports in Southern Saskatchewan have received program assistance. Aging and deteriorating infrastructure of many regional airports will continue to be an issue after March 2010, and a long-term strategic regional airport plan is needed to ensure Saskatchewan's thriving economy continues to have access to national and international markets.

Strategy:

- SUMA will urge the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure to continue the Community Airport Partnership Program after March 2010.
- SUMA will urge the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure to work with other stakeholders on developing a long-term, stable, multi-year funding formula on capital infrastructure for regional airports in Saskatchewan.