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Vanessa Moreau · CBC News · Posted: May 19, 2023 4:23 PM ADT | Last Updated: May 19

**Air Canada to add flights to Montreal and Toronto from Saint John**

Air Canada is adding two new regular flights out of Saint John at least for this summer — one to Toronto and the other to Montreal.

The return of the daily Montreal flight, which will double the Saint John service to Montreal, happens June 18, said Lori Carle, manager of marketing, public and corporate relations for the Saint John Airport,

The additional daily flight to Toronto, making a total of three flights to that city, starts July 1, she said.

"The Saint John Airport was cut drastically, as everybody else was, last summer. ... The want to get back into travel just exceeded the capacity for the airlines to manage because of crew shortages and that type of thing.

"So of course everybody's been hoping to get some of these back."

David Duplisea, the CEO of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce, agreed the flights are much needed to expand flight connection options for people who need to fly out of the city.

Duplisea says the availability of flights to and from Saint John Airport is critical for economic development.

"It's critical for economic development here," he said.

He said regular flights are important to attract new businesses to Saint John and for the supply chain for existing businesses.

"Coming from Saint John, obviously the Montreal and Toronto connections are critical because that's how you get anywhere else," Duplisea said. "So we have to

have those flights, and they have to be situated so that people can get in and out on the same day. So we're delighted to see this happen."

He added that he hopes people will take advantage of the flights so that Air Canada will keep them. Air Canada officials met with the chamber following last year's cuts, and he believes the airline is listening.

"We're just encouraging everyone to continue to use the Saint John Airport. Continue to book those flights and the demand will help to encourage Air Canada to to maintain those flights as we move into the fall as well."

Lori Carle, manager of marketing, public and corporate relations at the Saint John Airport, says it is too soon to say if the additional flights will be kept after the busy travel season. (Submitted by Lori Carle)

The times of the additional flights have not been set yet.

Carle said it's impossible to know how permanent the new flights are, since they were added at least in part to handle the busier travel season.

"We're going to do all we can to try to encourage Air Canada to keep those flights here in Saint John," she said.

"There really is a need and people want to travel from their own airport. It makes a big difference as well for things like conventions, conferences and our economic development as a region."

Carle said landing fees do make a difference to their bottom line. She said they have been discussing alternative revenue streams such as land development in case of another downturn, but the airport is in good financial health.

"Revenue was hit hard over the last few years with the pandemic, with no flights going or few flights going," she said.

"There's very, there are very few streams of revenue for airports. You know, it's parking, it's some of the amenities within the terminal itself, but landing fees do make up a big part of our budget to be able to maintain all of the facilities at an airport."

Budget airline Flair returns to Saint John with increased service

Air Canada picking favourites with its N.B. service, Saint John chamber says

According to a spokesperson for the Fredericton Airport, Air Canada added larger planes to their its Toronto route on May 1, increasing flight capacity, and a third flight to Toronto will be added on Aug. 1.

A spokesperson for the Greater Moncton International Airport said Air Canada increased flights from twice a day to three times a day to Toronto in May and into June.