

## Town of Qualicum Beach

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**\*Subject to Change as New Information Becomes Available**

# FAQ: Qualicum Beach Airport

## Background

The Qualicum Beach Airport (XQU) was built by volunteers of the Qualicum Beach Rotary Club, beginning in 1954. In 1957, the Province transferred 160 acres of Crown land to the Town of Qualicum Beach for airport purposes. The Qualicum Beach Airport now serves not only Qualicum Beach, but Parksville and the surrounding area as an essential transportation gateway that is both accessible and convenient.

In 2021, there were 28 medevac landings at our Airport, with many other training sessions for emergency services that facilitated efforts for firefighters, the military, and BC Ambulance. Locally, BC Ambulance medevac training is dependent on the Qualicum Beach Airport; a service that provides a valuable support service to the Town and the surrounding region.

## FAQ Airport – General

**Q** *Does the Town of Qualicum Beach own and manage the Qualicum Beach Airport?*

**A** The Town has tenure over the Crown land by way of lease in perpetuity, provided that the land is used for the specified purpose (airport and ancillary uses).

The Town is responsible for the operations of the Qualicum Beach Airport under [Bylaw No. 457.05, 1998](#). This Bylaw is currently under review, and a proposed draft will be presented for Council consideration in the next few months.

**Q** *Why doesn't the Airport make a profit to cover its operating costs?*

**A** Airport operating costs are paid for with a mix of taxation dollars and Airport revenues. One of the revenue sources for the Airport comes from sub-leasing space. Town Bylaw 457.12 sets the lease rates for the Airport for the next five years. When the Bylaw was last updated in October 2021, staff at that time reviewed lease rates from surrounding and comparable airports and found the Qualicum Beach Airport's lease rates to be in line with others.

The Airport is a service provided and maintained by the Town that is similar to the road network; recreational amenities; and community buildings. Because these services are considered to be essential to the community's quality of life and to be of community wide benefit, they are included in the Town's annual operating budget.

Interestingly, the Airport is not permitted to generate a profit as the Airport is governed by a Provincial Crown Grant and property leases at the Airport are considered *sub-leases*. The terms of the Grant are very specific, and section 8.3.2 contains the following guidelines:

*“The amount of revenue permitted to be generated from sub-leases should not be greater than that required to maintain and operate the facility”.*

**Q** ***Does the Town receive subsidies or grants to cover the Airport’s operating costs?***

**A** No, the Town does not receive subsidies or grants to cover the Airport’s operating costs.

The Town is working towards raising more money from leases at the Airport to assist with bridging the gap between revenues and operating costs; several new hangars and leases are planned for the next 18-24 months.

**Q** ***Does the Town receive subsidies or grants to cover the Airport’s capital project costs?***

**A** The Federal government provides funding through the Airports Capital Assistance Program (ACAP) and the Provincial government provides funding through the British Columbia Air Access Program (BCAAP). In the past, the Qualicum Beach Airport has received grants from both the ACAP and BCAAP programs to assist with capital construction costs at the Airport. The Town will continue to apply for grant funding as capital projects are required and funding opportunities are identified.

### **FAQ Airport – Air Traffic**

**Q** ***What are the normal operation hours of the Airport?***

**A** While the operating hours of the Airport are from 6:00am to 10:00pm local time, emergency medical flights and flights with prior permission can use the Airport outside of those hours.

**Q** ***Has there been a recent increase in planes and jet planes to/from the Qualicum Beach Airport?***

**A** During the past several years, flight training has increased significantly in Canada resulting in numerous training aircraft from the Lower Mainland using Qualicum Beach as a training destination.

As Covid-19 travel restrictions are lifted, airports across Canada, have seen an increase in travel, especially to desirable tourist destinations like Qualicum Beach. In addition to scheduled flights, our Airport serves both private and corporate aircraft including helicopters plus occasional military aircraft. Smaller jet powered aircraft, while relatively infrequent due to the Airport’s short runway, do land at Qualicum Beach. The Qualicum Beach Airport has a Transport Canada certification that limits the size of commercial passenger aircraft that can utilize the field.

**Q** *How does the Town manage aircraft noise and associated complaints?*

**A** In September, 2014, the Town applied to Transport Canada for a Noise Abatement Procedure (NAP) in accordance with the Canadian Aviation Regulations. This allows Transport Canada to take enforcement action against any violations. In total, it took about two years to complete the approval process. The Procedure prohibits departing flights from turning north over Qualicum Woods and the adjoining farmland (no north turns below 1,000' are permitted). Aircraft operating above 1,000' fall under the authority of Transport Canada ([Canadian Aviation Regulations \(CARs\) 602.14-602.16](#)) and the Town has no jurisdiction.

In July 2018, the Town submitted an amendment to the Noise Abatement Procedure that would require aircraft to climb to 1500 feet before turning north as a further attempt to mitigate noise on adjacent residential areas. The Town was advised these existing procedures could not be amended but rather a new submission was required.

After further consideration it was determined that a climb to a higher altitude would not significantly reduce the noise footprint of aircraft departing Qualicum Beach. In April 2021, the Town submitted another request to Transport Canada for a new Noise Abatement Procedure to require aircraft to turn at 500' to the south; another approach to mitigate air traffic noise on adjacent residential areas. Transport Canada's response asked that the Town do further consultation. Transport Canada also noted that while smaller aircrafts are able to make this turn, larger ones such as a Dash 8 or smaller jets cannot. Given the extensive time commitment to amend the Noise Abatement Procedure; the limited administration capacity of staff; the lack of air traffic control; and the inability of some aircraft to negotiate a turn at low altitude, further changes to the current Noise Abatement Procedures were not undertaken. Additionally, the majority of local pilots, including scheduled carriers, voluntarily turn towards the south shortly after takeoff.

It is worth noting that during poor weather condition at Qualicum Beach, and enroute or at Vancouver International, aircraft will operate under instrument flight rules which are exempt from the NAPs and require aircraft to depart straight out from the runway.

Currently at the Qualicum Beach Airport, all noise complaints are forwarded to the Airport Manager and every complaint is investigated. While more complex airports (those with air traffic control) have a Noise Committee to investigate noise complaints, the Qualicum Beach Airport is not required to.

### **FAQ Airport – Helicopter Training**

**Q** *Do helicopter companies have to seek approval from the Town for helicopter training?*

**A** In 2021, the Town of Qualicum Beach submitted a request to Transport Canada to add a "prior approval" requirement in the Canada Flight Supplement for turbine helicopter training.

Transport Canada directed the Town to consult with the local helicopter operators to ensure that this restriction would not be a significant disruption to their operations.

This consultation was done, and Transport Canada accepted the Town's submission in late 2021. Currently, continuous circuits of turbine helicopters are prohibited unless approved in advance by the Airport Manager. This represents another effort for noise mitigation.

**Q** ***How does the Town decide which requests to approve?***

**A** The Town understands the mandated requirement of helicopter training for firefighters, the military, BC Air Ambulance, and other emergency responders that our community relies on. Other nearby aerodromes are utilized for this training; however, the certified Qualicum Beach Airport provides the highest level of safety. The Town also recognizes the noise disruption that helicopter training can cause to local residents. The Town is working with the helicopter companies on implementing and following the new approval process, and to create a balance to meet the needs of all.

**Q** ***Which helicopter companies conduct training at the Qualicum Beach Airport?***

**A** Currently, these companies conduct training:

- Ascent Helicopters Ltd.
- Kestrel Helicopters Ltd.
- Rotor Maxx Support, Ltd.
- Ministry of Forests (various contractors)

**Q** ***How often does helicopter training occur?***

**A** Helicopter training can occur at any time and is impacted by helicopter pilot turnover, the need to train new pilots, and government certification requirements. When there is a higher risk of forest fires, the Qualicum Beach Airport will see more helicopter training in the early and mid-summer. The schedule is difficult to predict and many training requirements are last minute. An example was last year's snow fall that caused a major power outage at Gold River requiring Ascent Helicopters to quickly certify crews to assist BC Hydro. When possible, the Town is requesting advance notice of the training sessions and are notifying residents through the Helicopter Updates [email list](#) and on the Town's [Facebook Page](#).

**Q** ***How are residents notified about helicopter training?***

**A** Helicopter training notifications are sent to all residents who have signed-up to receive notifications and are shared on the Town's [Facebook Page](#). To register to receive these notifications, please [sign-up here](#) and select Helicopter Updates.

## FAQ - Airport Upgrades

**Q** *What recent upgrades were completed at the Airport?*

**A** 2019/2020 - The Town received a grant from BC Air Access Program for Terminal Expansion/Rehabilitation & Long-Term Parking Improvements in the amount of \$698,896 or 60% of the total project cost.

2022/2023 – The Qualicum Beach Airport received a grant from the BC Air Access Program to aid in replacing the JET A fuel system which failed at the end of last year. The grant was for 75% of the project, up to a maximum of \$159,000. Due to the large number of turbine equipped aircraft (mostly helicopters) utilizing the Airport, this is considered a critical replacement item. The work is expected to be completed prior to the end of 2022.

2022/2023 - The Qualicum Beach Airport's current lighting system was installed in 1996 and had reached its end of life. The Town applied for Airport Capital Assistance Program funding and received a grant of approximately \$1.4 million to cover 100% of the upgrade costs. In July 2022, the construction plan was approved by Transport Canada and the upgrade work began shortly afterwards. The work is expected to be completed by March 2023.

## FAQ - Airport Committee

**Q** *What is the role of the Qualicum Beach Airport Users Committee?*

**A** The Qualicum Beach Airport Users Committee is a Committee made up of Airport business/user representatives; two Members at Large; one Council representative; and two Qualicum Beach staff members. Membership is confirmed by Council resolution.

In a cooperative spirit, this group meets at a minimum of every six (6) months to discuss and consult on Airport related matters that may include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- a. The Town of Qualicum Beach Airport plans, operations, activities, facilities and services to ensure maximum coordination and both safe and consistent service standards;
- b. The Town of Qualicum Beach Airport's short, medium and long term plans to develop and improve the Airport with a view on providing an efficient and well maintained Airport facility and service for the residents of and visitors to the Qualicum Beach area;
- c. Airport related matters as referred to the Committee by the Council of the Town of Qualicum Beach.

**Q** *How are Committee Members selected?*

**A** Committee Members are appointed by Council and serve a fixed term. For more information, visit: <https://www.qualicumbeach.com/boards-and-committees>  
<https://qualicumbeach.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/1995/?preview=5966>

**Q** *What changes have been made to the Qualicum Beach Airport Users Committee?*

**A** Currently, the Airport Committee Members include the Airport manager, the deputy Airport manager, a Council liaison, and two Members at large. The second Member at large was added in 2022. Members at large who have extensive experience in the aviation field are sought, as much of the Committee's work is related to Airport operations and policy.

**Q** *How can residents communicate with the Qualicum Beach Airport Users Committee?*

**A** Residents are invited to attend Airport Committee meetings as observers; they will not have an opportunity to address the Members at these meetings. Instead, residents should provide input to Council on Airport related matters through correspondence or by application to appear as a delegation at a Council meeting. Council may choose to refer a matter presented by a resident to the Airport Committee for consideration and/or recommendation. This process is in line with other Council advisory bodies who are charged with making recommendations to Council.