

2024

YQT

ANNUAL REPORT

THUNDER BAY



# ABOUT THIS REPORT

As we present this Annual Report, we emphasize the importance of transparency, accountability, and community engagement in the work we do at Thunder Bay International Airports Authority (TBIAA). This report is a vital tool for keeping the public informed about our operations, progress, and challenges throughout the year.

TBIAA is more than a transportation hub—we are a crucial part of the community, the economy, and the environment. This report demonstrates our commitment to our values: integrity, collaboration, accountability, respect, and excellence (I-CARE). Through insights into our financial performance, operational achievements, and future goals, we aim to foster trust and collaboration with our passengers, partners, and the broader community.

We respectfully acknowledge that the Thunder Bay International Airport is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, which include the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatomi nations, collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy. Specifically, we recognize the Fort William First Nation as original signatories to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. We honour the history, contributions, and enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples of the First Nations and Métis on this land. Their deep connection to this territory enriches our shared heritage, culture, spirituality, and economy. We pay our respects to the Elders, past, present, and future, who have stewarded this land for generations. In the spirit of reconciliation, we commit to fostering relationships built on mutual trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

Photo Credit: Eric Kondor (Instagram: YQTspotter)

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# LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

As we reflect on the past year, we are both proud of our many accomplishments and mindful of the challenges that have shaped our growth. This year has been a time of transformation, marked by the introduction of exciting new leadership and the launch of a bold strategic vision for the future.

This year, we welcomed Graham Ingham as our new President and CEO. With his extensive experience, innovative mindset, and deep commitment to our mission, we are confident in his ability to lead us into the next phase of growth and success. His vision closely aligns with our organizational values, and we are excited about the direction he will guide us in the years to come.

Equally exciting, I am proud to announce that our bold new three-year strategic business plan is officially underway. Developed with input from across our organization, this plan is a comprehensive roadmap designed to propel our growth and maximize our impact. It zeroes in on five critical areas that are pivotal to our success: business development, where we will pursue new opportunities to expand and innovate; operational excellence, ensuring we deliver unparalleled efficiency and quality; community leadership, strengthening our role as a positive force in the communities we serve; environmental sustainability, committing to responsible practices that protect our planet for future generations; and investing in our people, empowering our team to achieve their fullest potential. These focused efforts will not only allow us to respond to emerging opportunities but also establish us as a leader in our industry, poised for sustained success and meaningful influence.

As we embark on this transformative journey, fueled by our bold new strategic business plan, we remain resolutely committed to our core values—integrity, collaboration, accountability, respect, and excellence. These principles are the foundation of everything we do and will drive every decision, action, and initiative as we execute our vision. By staying true to these values, we will exceed the expectations of our stakeholders, create profound and lasting impact, and set new standards of excellence that define our success for years to come.

None of these achievements would be possible without the dedication of our employees, the support of our partners, and the trust of our community. We thank each of you for your continued commitment to our mission. It is your efforts that make our progress possible, and we look forward to what we can accomplish together in the years ahead.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend our gratitude to our outgoing leadership, whose contributions have helped shape our organization's strong foundation. We also recognize the hard work and dedication of our leadership team, whose expertise was crucial in developing the strategic business plan and ensuring its successful implementation.

We are entering a period of great promise, and we are excited to share this journey with all of you. We look forward to achieving new milestones and continuing to build a brighter future for our organization and the communities we serve.

Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication.



GARY  
WOODBECK

# STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN (2025-2027)

We are pleased to share the strategic direction that will guide the Thunder Bay International Airport Authority over the coming years. At its core, our plan is driven by a singular, clear vision:

“Through determination, innovation, and respectful collaboration with Indigenous communities, the Thunder Bay Airport will be the premier airport in northern Ontario, growing strategically and powering our region’s economic development.”

To achieve this, we have identified five key focus areas:

1

## DRIVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Expanding our air service routes, growing non-aeronautical revenue streams through retail and real estate opportunities, and deepening partnerships with Indigenous communities to ensure growth is both sustainable and inclusive.

2

## ENSURING OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Modernizing infrastructure to meet growing demands while prioritizing safety and efficiency. By implementing predictive maintenance and robust risk management, we will safeguard the quality and reliability of our operations.

3

## CHAMPIONING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Setting measurable goals to reduce carbon emissions, improve waste diversion, and integrate sustainability across all aspects of our operations will demonstrate our commitment to protecting the environment for future generations.

4

## FOSTERING COMMUNITY & INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS

We are committed to building strong, long-term collaborations with Indigenous communities and stakeholders to create shared economic and social value, strengthening our reputation as a trusted regional partner.

5

## INVESTING IN OUR WORKFORCE

Our employees are the foundation of our success. By equipping them with the skills, training, and resources they need, and fostering a diverse, inclusive, and supportive work environment, we will ensure our team is prepared for the challenges of a dynamic aviation industry.

# LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT/CEO



Graham Ingham,  
President & CEO

The past year has been a period of remarkable growth and strategic advancement for the Thunder Bay Airport. We achieved significant financial and operational milestones and laid the groundwork for future success through deliberate investments and strategic planning.

Our total revenue increased by 3.9%, reaching \$14,250,000, while passenger service volume grew by 2%, totaling 728,077 passengers. This positive trend reflects our commitment to expanding service offerings and enhancing the customer experience.

Key developments in our network this year included WestJet’s decision to increase flight frequency to Calgary (YYC), expanding from 3x weekly to 5x weekly. Additionally, Porter Airlines launched a new 3x weekly service to Toronto Pearson (YYZ) using the E-195 jet, both providing greater flexibility and connectivity for our passengers.

Porter Airlines now operates 49 flights per week to three major destinations: Toronto Pearson (YYZ), Toronto Island (YTZ), and Ottawa (YOW). This expansion has allowed us to serve over 264,000 passengers annually, highlighting the growing demand for our services and our ability to meet market needs.

In addition to our operational growth, we completed a comprehensive customer satisfaction survey, providing valuable insights to guide future improvements in service quality. This survey represents a critical milestone in our ongoing commitment to delivering exceptional customer experiences. By directly engaging with our passengers and gathering their feedback, we have been able to gain a deeper understanding of their needs, preferences, and pain points.

To support our expanding operations and future objectives, we have further expanded our organizational chart, reinforcing our capacity to manage growth effectively and deliver on our strategic initiatives.

Furthermore, we have finalized a new three-year strategic business plan, outlining our vision for sustainable growth and operational excellence. This plan will serve as a roadmap for our future, ensuring we continue to adapt to market demands, strengthen our competitive position, and enhance the overall customer experience. It underscores our commitment to innovation, operational efficiency, and long-term value creation for all stakeholders.

As we move forward, we remain confident that the steps taken this year will position us for sustained growth and operational excellence. Our commitment to service quality, strategic expansion, and financial prudence will continue to drive our success.

On behalf of our leadership team, I would like to thank our employees, partners, and stakeholders for their dedication and support. Together, we are shaping a stronger, more resilient company that is poised for continued success in the years to come.

# OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

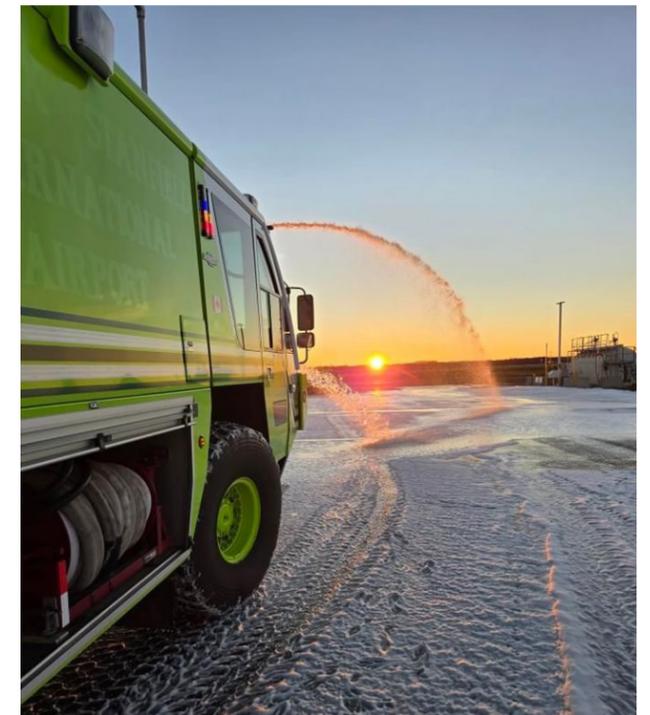
## Enhanced Airside Operations Capacity and Efficiency

In 2024, Thunder Bay International Airport Authority (TBIAA) increased its Operations staffing levels by 40%, responding to the growing demands of Thunder Bay Airport's (YQT) airside operations. To support long-term sustainability and improve employee work-life balance, TBIAA conducted a comprehensive shiftwork assessment in full consultation with its staff. This collaborative process included structured feedback sessions, leading to the optimization of shift schedules to balance operational needs and employee well-being.



## Emergency Preparedness Under the New Incident Management System (IMS)

In 2024, the airport successfully conducted a full-scale emergency live exercise under the newly adopted Incident Management System (IMS) framework, within the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). This exercise validated the airport's emergency response capabilities, strengthened inter-agency coordination, and reinforced the readiness of airport personnel and partners.



## Integration of ArcGIS for Infrastructure and Airspace Management

TBIAA implemented ArcGIS as a digital platform to enhance the management of critical airfield infrastructure and protected aeronautical surfaces. This tool will provide real-time visibility and spatial analysis capabilities, improving both operational planning and regulatory compliance with Transport Canada standards.



## Revamped Learning Management System (LMS)

The launch of TBIAA's redesigned Learning Management System in 2024 modernized the delivery and management of employee training. The new system integrates ICAO-compliant content into the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) training program and enables seamless deployment of internal training materials to all departments, stakeholders, and tenants. This initiative reinforces a culture of continuous learning and compliance across the organization.

## ARFF Capability Enhancement

A key addition to TBIAA's operational readiness in 2024 was the procurement of a replacement ARFF vehicle, which serves as a third-line response unit. This enhancement ensures redundancy and strengthens our ability to meet the service level requirements set out under Canadian Aviation Regulations (CARs), further elevating our emergency response capabilities.

## Youth Engagement and Community Partnerships

In 2024, TBIAA deepened its partnership with the 70 Elsie MacGill Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron, providing valuable opportunities for aviation career exploration within an operational airport environment. The airport also proudly supported and coordinated the annual Battle of Britain parade, demonstrating its commitment to youth development and community engagement.



Photo Credit: Eric Kondor (Instagram: YQTspotter)



Photo Credit: Eric Kondor (Instagram: YQTspotter)

### Host Airport – CHINTHEX 2024 Search and Rescue Exercise

In 2024 we served as the host location for CHINTHEX 2024, a multi-agency Search and Rescue (SAR) exercise coordinated by the 435 Transport and Rescue Squadron in Winnipeg. The exercise, which involved collaboration with local CASARA volunteers and both Canadian and U.S. military units operating from YQT, showcased the airport’s capacity to support joint military-civil operations and demonstrated its critical role in regional and national emergency preparedness.

### Policy Management Modernization

In 2024, TBIAAI successfully deployed a new policy management system, improving document control, version tracking, and staff access to up-to-date operational policies and procedures across the organization.

### Digital Airfield Compliance Monitoring via RPAS

In 2024, TBIAA utilized Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) to conduct high-resolution imagery missions of the airport’s asphalt surfaces and runway markings. This proactive initiative supports compliance monitoring and digital record-keeping, ensuring adherence to the standards set forth in TP312 5th Edition and promoting continued airfield safety.

### Wildlife Hazard Risk Assessment

A comprehensive wildlife study conducted at YQT in 2024 provided valuable data on the species and frequency of wildlife activity on and around airport property. This information informs TBIAA’s ongoing Wildlife Management Plan, ensuring a science-based approach to mitigating wildlife hazards and maintaining airside safety.

# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: YEAR IN REVIEW



Photo Credit: Eric Kondor (Instagram: YQTspotter)

2024 marked significant strides in the growth and development of Thunder Bay International Airport, with several key milestones achieved across various facets of the business.

## Customer Satisfaction Survey

In 2024, TBIAAI achieved a customer satisfaction score of reflecting a steady improvement **76%** in service quality and operational performance. This result is the culmination of our ongoing efforts to enhance the customer experience, including improvements in airport amenities, staff interactions, and overall service offerings. We remain committed to continuous feedback and innovation to drive customer satisfaction in the years ahead.

## WestJet Expansion

WestJet significantly increased its service to and from Thunder Bay by expanding its Calgary route to five times weekly. This enhancement improves connectivity for both business and leisure travelers, offering more flexibility and convenience for passengers flying between Thunder Bay and Calgary. The expansion is a testament to the airport's growing demand and solidifies YQT as a key regional hub.

## Porter Airlines Introduces Embraer Service, Extends Summer Schedules

In December, Porter Airlines launched a new route with their Embraer aircraft, servicing Thunder Bay 3x weekly to YYZ providing a more comfortable and efficient travel experience for passengers.

## Flair Airlines Resumes Service

Flair Airlines resumed seasonal service from Thunder Bay in April 2024, continuing its operations through to October. This service supports the local travel market, offering competitive options for passengers seeking affordable flights to YYZ. Flair's return further diversifies the range of carriers available to YQT passengers, contributing to increased market choice and accessibility.

## Land Service Development

Beyond air service, we remained focused on land service development, laying the groundwork for meaningful growth in 2025. As we look ahead, we are committed to further strengthening our air service network while advancing new opportunities land-side to support the airport's long-term sustainability and success.

Positioning ourselves at the forefront of the region's economic and travel landscape

In 2024, TBIAA undertook a comprehensive organizational restructuring aimed at strengthening leadership and operational effectiveness across the organization. The changes made in this area are foundational to supporting the airport's continued growth, streamlining operations, and fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

# PEOPLE & CULTURE



As part of the restructuring effort, TBIAA added several new positions designed to address operational and administrative inefficiencies within the organization. These hires included internal advancements and new external hires, reinforcing the team with a blend of institutional knowledge and fresh perspectives. The newly established roles are aimed at improving cross-departmental collaboration, optimizing workflows, and ensuring greater responsiveness to the airport's operational needs.

## Director-Level Senior Leadership Team Established

A new Director-level senior leadership team was established in 2024 to support and guide the various departmental development goals. This leadership structure ensures a more focused approach to addressing operational challenges and driving strategic initiatives forward. With dedicated leadership overseeing each functional area, TBIAA is better positioned to meet the evolving demands of the airport and its stakeholders.

## Employee Culture

A key component of TBIAA's organizational evolution in 2024 was a renewed focus on the airport's employment culture. Understanding that a positive and supportive work environment is critical to employee satisfaction and retention, the airport embarked on an initiative to gather comprehensive feedback from staff across all levels.

## Completion of Organization-Wide Culture Survey

To better understand the employee perspective on key areas such as benefits and compensation, leadership effectiveness, employee recognition, and health and safety, TBIAA conducted a thorough organization-wide Culture Survey. The results provided valuable insights into the strengths of the current workplace environment and identified areas for improvement.

Using this feedback, TBIAA implemented a variety of changes designed to improve employee engagement and satisfaction. These included adjustments to team structures, refinements to workplace processes, and enhancements to the overall work environment, ensuring that employees feel valued, supported, and empowered.

## Launch of the Annual Employee Satisfaction Survey

Building on the success of the Culture Survey, TBIAA launched an Annual Employee Satisfaction Survey to track ongoing progress and development in key areas. This new initiative will provide a continuous feedback loop, allowing the airport to assess the effectiveness of changes made and identify further opportunities for growth and improvement. This survey is a key tool in fostering an organizational culture of transparency and responsiveness, ensuring that the voices of all employees are heard and acted upon.

# FACILITIES & ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

In 2024, TBIAA made significant strides in both enhancing airport facilities and advancing its environmental sustainability efforts. These initiatives support the airport's ongoing commitment to operational excellence, safety, and a reduced environmental footprint, while also meeting the evolving needs of passengers, tenants, and stakeholders.

## Infrastructure Projects

In line with our commitment to improving the passenger experience and ensuring efficient airport operations, several infrastructure projects were successfully completed in 2024.

### 1 New Washrooms Built in International Arrivals Pavilion

The construction of new, modern washrooms in the International Arrivals Pavilion marks a significant improvement in passenger amenities. This project ensures that travelers arriving at YQT have access to clean, efficient, and accessible facilities, contributing to an enhanced customer experience and improved operational flow.

### 2 HVAC and Heating System Modernized for Improved Efficiency

TBIAA invested in the modernization of the HVAC and heating systems throughout the airport. This upgrade not only enhances comfort levels for passengers and employees but also improves energy efficiency, contributing to both operational cost savings and the airport's environmental sustainability goals. The new system is designed to reduce energy consumption and minimize the airport's carbon footprint.



Photo Credit: Eric Kondor (Instagram: YQTspotter)



### 3 TBIAA Administrative Office Renovations Completed

TBIAA completed renovations to its administrative office in 2024, creating a more modern, efficient, and collaborative workspace for the team. The upgrades include improvements to office layouts, employee workstations, and meeting spaces, fostering an environment that promotes productivity and collaboration.

## Security & Digital Upgrades

### Phase 1 of Fibre & Access Control Upgrades Launched

The launch of Phase 1 fibre and access control upgrades represents a crucial step in modernizing the airport's digital infrastructure. This phase focused on enhancing connectivity and ensuring more secure access to critical systems and areas within the airport, laying the foundation for future digital advancements and improving overall operational security.

### New FlipFlow Exit System Fully Implemented

The full implementation of the new FlipFlow Exit System significantly enhances passenger flow and security at the airport's exit points. This system helps streamline the deplaning process, ensuring smoother transitions for passengers while also enhancing security and operational efficiency.

## Sustainability Initiatives

TBIAA continues to make environmental sustainability a top priority. In 2024, the airport advanced its carbon reduction goals and introduced several initiatives aimed at reducing its environmental impact.

### Airport Carbon Accreditation – Level 2 'Reduction' Achieved

In 2024, YQT proudly achieved Level 2 – Reduction certification from the Airports Carbon Accreditation (ACA) Program, an internationally recognized framework for managing and reducing airport carbon emissions. This milestone reflects our commitment to environmental responsibility and continuous improvement.

To earn this certification, we demonstrated a measurable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from airport operations. Our third-party verification confirmed that YQT reduced its emissions by 148 tonnes of CO2 equivalent (t CO2e) in 2023 compared to 2022. This reduction was achieved through infrastructure upgrades, improved building systems, and ongoing operational efficiency efforts.

Achieving Level 2 certification marks a meaningful step in our long-term sustainability journey and sets the stage for future progress toward higher levels of carbon accreditation.

As part of ongoing efforts to modernize airport operations and ensure the highest levels of security, TBIAA launched several key upgrades in 2024.



# SAFETY & SECURITY

In 2024, TBIAA, in collaboration with Transport Canada and key stakeholders, dedicated substantial effort toward strengthening the security profile of the aerodrome to ensure compliance with enhanced regulatory standards for airports facilitating international travel. This included upgrades to both physical and technical infrastructure, as well as meaningful steps to enhance operational safety and support the well-being of our workforce, further reinforcing the airport's commitment to a secure and efficient environment.



## Security Coordinator

As part of the ongoing efforts on strengthening security, TBIAA introduced a new Security Coordinator role in 2024. This addition has played a pivotal role in streamlining security operations and enhancing overall safety protocols at the airport. The Security Coordinator brings essential expertise to the team, further reinforcing the overall safety and security posture of the Thunder Bay Airport.

## Human Performance

On the human performance side, we introduced fatigue management training to address one of the more complex and often overlooked safety risks.

Led by an external subject matter expert, this training session was delivered to 26 employees and generated strong engagement from participants. It helped raise awareness about the signs and consequences of fatigue and offered practical strategies for managing it in a demanding airfield environment. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, confirming that fatigue risk management is an area where our teams are eager to grow.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to reinforcing these efforts through continued classroom-based safety training in 2025. Our goal is to ensure that employees are equipped with the training, tools, and support they need to work safely and effectively, reinforcing our commitment to a culture of awareness and proactive risk management.

## Foreign Object Debris

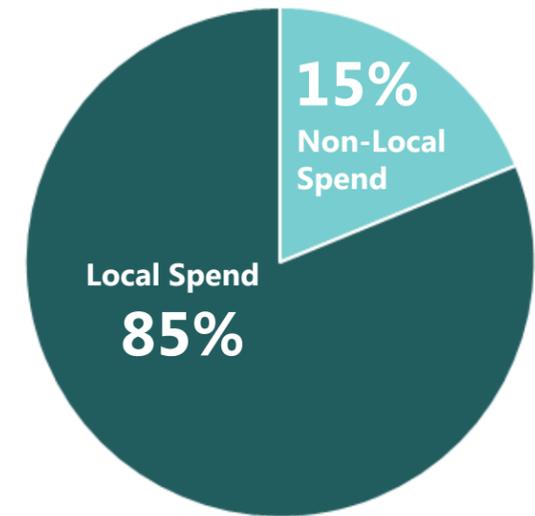
One of the year's accomplishments was the addition of new tools to strengthen our Foreign Object Debris (FOD) management program. The department acquired both a high-powered FOD magnet and durable FOD mats, now deployed across hard and soft airfield surfaces. These tools significantly improve our ability to identify and collect a wide range of debris—magnetic and non-magnetic alike. Their effectiveness was demonstrated during a response to a runway excursion incident, where they were instrumental in clearing broken glass and minimizing the impact to operations.

# FINANCIAL REVIEW

The finance and accounting department had a great year in 2024. With new leadership in the organization, no stone was left unturned when investigating the financial systems and processes of TBIAA. Key accomplishments for 2024 were as follows:

- Delivered a clean 2024 audit report.**
- Established valuable financial projection and analysis metrics which highlight monthly performance.**
- Completed a productivity analysis of Canadian Airport Authorities to allow for real-time benchmarking.**
- Refined the budget approach for 2025 to improve meaningfulness and usefulness of internal financial reporting.**

Looking forward, finance and accounting aim to continue the modernization of organizational systems, while further refining policy and standardizing procedures. Airport capital investment will likely remain high for the coming years, to facilitate much anticipated regional growth. It is incumbent on finance and accounting to remain committed to cost-controllability and budget observance while solidifying the bureaucratic function which is foundational to consistent high performance.



**Total Local Economic Investment = \$14,649,194**

## 2024 Actual vs. Business Plan (000s of \$)

\* Does not include investment results

|                   | Actual        | Plan          | Variance     | Notes  |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--|
| <b>Revenues *</b> | <b>15,127</b> | <b>13,997</b> | <b>1,130</b> | Strong Performance in aeronautical & parking revenue.            |
| <b>Expenses</b>   | <b>14,230</b> | <b>12,945</b> | <b>1,285</b> | Soil remediation, workforce expansion, lapsed capital project.   |
| <b>Capital</b>    | <b>4,299</b>  | <b>1,180</b>  | <b>3,119</b> | Large multi-year efficiencies project, new leadership direction. |

|   | 2025          | 2026          | 2027          |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>2025-2027 Business Plan (000s of \$)</b> |               |               |               |
| <b>Revenues</b>                             | <b>14,546</b> | <b>15,797</b> | <b>17,926</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                             | <b>14,195</b> | <b>15,265</b> | <b>15,710</b> |
| <b>Capital</b>                              | <b>8,392</b>  | <b>7,685</b>  | <b>7,050</b>  |

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## Nominator's Representatives As of December 31, 2024



**Gary Woodbeck**

Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Chair of the Board



**Murray Walberg**

Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Board Vice Chair



**Carol Pollard**

City of Thunder Bay Board Treasurer



**Bianca Garofalo**

Thunder Bay International Airports Authority



**Mary Long-Irwin**

Government of Canada  
Term ended  
October 1, 2024



**Paul Inksetter**

Thunder Bay Labour



**Lynn Peterson**

Government of Canada  
Term ended  
October 1, 2024



**Darren Harper**

Government of Ontario



**Ron Hell**

City of Thunder Bay

# GOVERNANCE

The Thunder Bay International Airports Authority Incorporated (TBIAA) is a non-share capital corporation incorporated under the Canada Corporation Act. Members of the Board of Directors are community leaders nominated by government and non-government organizations who meet monthly to fulfil their strategic and fiduciary responsibilities. The Board has overall responsibility for the management of the affairs of the Corporation and is fortunate to have attracted Board members who offer a wealth of knowledge and experience. The Board has established an administrative procedure outlined in the TBIAA General Operating By-Law and Letters Patent.

## Compliance with the Code of Conduct

TBIAA has adopted conflict of interest guidelines to govern the conduct of, and the disclosure and avoidance of conflicts of interest for, all officers and directors.

The annual compensation for the senior management team for the year ending December 31, 2024 was: \$1,275,645.30.

The annual compensation for the Board of Directors for the year ending December 31, 2024 was: \$184,016.40.

## Senior Leadership Team:

### President and Chief Executive Officer

Ed Schmidtke (retired March 31, 2024)  
Graham Ingham

### Chief Financial Officer

Joel Schuurman

### Director of Operations

Ryan Brading

### Director of Facilities & Environmental

TJ Ahvenniemi

### Director of Safety & Risk Management

Sarah Parkes

### Director of Security & Information Technology

Darren Watts

### Director of Administrative Services

Catherine Krause

### Director of Employee Relations

Jenna Trush

### Director of Business Development & Revenue Management

Jackie Macdonald

### Thunder Bay Airport Services - Red Lake Airport

Duane Riddel

# PARTNER STORIES:



## North Star Air Consolidates Thunder Bay Operations in New 37,000 Sq. Ft. Facility, Targeting Growth and Enhanced Northern Service

North Star Air (NSA) is significantly expanding its footprint and streamlining operations at the Thunder Bay International Airport (YQT) by developing a new, 37,000-square-foot consolidated facility scheduled to open in early May 2025. The significant investment seeks to boost efficiency, improve customer service, strengthen cargo capabilities for Northern Ontario communities and beyond, and support the airline's recent growth.

This development marks a pivotal moment for North Star Air, an airline crucial to the transportation network of Northern Ontario. Over the past five years, NSA has significantly grown, expanding its fleet to include seven Pilatus PC-12 aircraft and four De Havilland Dash-8 aircraft to meet rising demand. However, this expansion has led to increasingly fragmented operations spread across seven locations around Thunder Bay Airport. This new facility signifies a strategic move to centralize activities, addressing logistical challenges and positioning the airline for future growth in a demanding operating environment where reliable air service is a vital lifeline for remote communities.

### A Hub for Efficiency and Growth

The new multi-purpose building is designed to serve as the nerve center for NSA's Thunder Bay operations. It will accommodate the airline's main offices, feature state-of-the-art maintenance hangar, and function as a dedicated terminal for both scheduled and charter passenger flights, alongside significantly increased cargo handling capabilities.

"Bringing our teams and functions under one roof is a game-changer for North Star Air," commented NSA's President, Jeff Stout. "Previously, coordinating between seven locations created inherent inefficiencies. This consolidation streamlines communication, logistics, and workflows, directly translating into better service reliability for our passengers and cargo clients."

A key feature of the new facility is its significantly enhanced maintenance capability. The hangar space is specifically designed to accommodate the larger Dash-8 aircraft, enabling more comprehensive and efficient maintenance checks to be performed directly on-site. This on-site maintenance capability is expected to reduce aircraft downtime and improve dispatch reliability, which is particularly important for serving remote routes. "Having maintenance directly co-located with daily operations greatly improves our efficiency," Jeff Stout stated.

### Elevated Passenger Experience

Passengers flying with North Star Air out of Thunder Bay can expect a significantly improved travel experience. The new facility will function as a dedicated terminal for NSA flights, offering customers convenient on-site parking just steps from the entrance.

Perhaps most importantly for many travellers, particularly Elders and families with young children, the design drastically reduces walking distances from check-in to the aircraft compared to traditional airport layouts. "We listened to feedback from our customers and the communities," said Vice-President, Tom Meilleur. "Minimizing outdoor exposure and walking distance, especially during inclement weather, better's comfort and accessibility for everyone."

The consolidation is also expected to streamline check-in and boarding, making travel less stressful. The ability to manage passenger flow, baggage, and potential last-minute passenger additions within a single, dedicated space provides greater operational flexibility.

### Bolstering Northern Food Security and Cargo Logistics

While the facility enhances passenger operations, a significant portion of the investment focuses on bolstering NSA's vital cargo services, particularly for the Northern Indigenous communities it serves. Recognizing NSA's critical role in supplying essential goods, the new cargo warehouse includes dedicated walk-in coolers and freezers.

"Improving food security and ensuring the reliable flow of goods to the North is a core part of our mission," said Tom Meilleur. "This temperature-controlled storage investment allows us to better handle perishable items like groceries and medical supplies, ensuring they reach communities in optimal condition." The expanded cargo area and its integration within the main facility are expected to increase handling speed and flexibility. "The ability to manage cargo and passenger operations seamlessly enables us to accommodate last-minute freight requests more effectively, which can be critical for communities needing urgent supplies," added Tom. Airline officials anticipate this co-location will contribute significantly to improved on-time performance, as cargo handling delays can be minimized.



## Employee Perspective and Partnership

The benefits extend to NSA's workforce. Employees who previously shuttled between locations will now collaborate in a single, modern environment. "Having maintenance, flight ops, cargo, and administration together fosters better teamwork and quicker problem-solving," shared Maureen Massaro, North Star Air's Director of Passenger Services. When a maintenance issue arises, the technicians are right here. If cargo needs adjusting, the team is on-site. It just makes everything smoother."

North Star Air officials wanted to commend the collaboration with the Thunder Bay International Airport Authority (TBIAA). "This project wouldn't be possible without the support and partnership of the TBIAA," Jeff Stout stated. "Their willingness to work with us enables this significant upgrade, enhancing not only NSA's capabilities but also the airport's overall service offering as the primary gateway to the North." Airport authorities often view such investments positively, as they attract business, bolster infrastructure, and solidify the airport's regional importance.

## Strategic Implications and Future Outlook

North Star Air's substantial investment in this consolidated Thunder Bay hub signals a strong commitment to Northern Ontario and a strategic positioning for sustained growth. By tackling operational fragmentation, enhancing maintenance self-sufficiency, and significantly upgrading cargo and passenger infrastructure, NSA aims to solidify its market position.



The improved efficiency and reliability are expected to strengthen relationships with the First Nation communities reliant on NSA's services, potentially opening avenues for further service expansion. While challenges inherent to Northern aviation persist – including harsh weather, high operating costs, and infrastructure limitations in remote locations – this facility provides NSA with a much stronger base to manage these complexities.

By combining its operations, investing in critical infrastructure like cold storage and advanced maintenance, and relentlessly focusing on the passenger experience, North Star Air is not just consolidating its footprint—it's elevating the standard for regional air service.

This significant investment underscores North Star Air's commitment to remain the region's leading air service provider, connecting Thunder Bay with the vital First Nation communities scattered across Ontario's vast North and beyond.



# PARTNER STORIES:



## History of Aramark and Thunder Bay Airport

Aramark's partnership with Thunder Bay Airport dates back to July 1994, when we first opened our doors inside the terminal with Robin's Donuts and Domino's Pizza. Over time, our offerings evolved to better reflect the needs and preferences of the traveling public—transitioning around 2004 to include beloved Canadian staples like Tim Hortons and Pizza Pizza. In 2017, we introduced a new approach by embracing Local which allowed us to integrate Thunder Bay's unique regional identity into our food and retail offerings.

What began as a traditional tenant arrangement under Transport Canada has since grown into a collaborative and supportive partnership with the TBIAA. This shift was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when our relationship strengthened through mutual support during a period of significant uncertainty. The airport demonstrated a clear understanding of our operational challenges—especially the financial impacts of reduced travel—and worked with us to develop more flexible, sustainable business practices. For example, operating hours were adjusted to better align with flight schedules, ensuring both efficient service and responsible resource management.

## Partnership Evolvement



## 2024 New Initiatives & Improvements

2024 marked a year of thoughtful enhancements. We extended our hours of operation to include weekends, responding to increased passenger volume and flight activity. Additionally, we began opening the lounge at 9 a.m. to accommodate the influx of mining sector workers arriving around 8 a.m.—a small but impactful change that has improved the overall travel experience for this important customer base.

## Overcoming Challenges

Operating in an airport setting certainly comes with its own set of challenges—among them being flight delays and irregularities, which are often not communicated to us in real time. This can lead to situations where travelers arrive with meal vouchers after our operations have closed, simply because we weren't notified of a delay. That said, the support from airport staff has been instrumental in helping us manage this. Security has been a tremendous help by sharing real-time updates when they receive them, and the airport creates a monthly distribution of airline schedules that has proven invaluable in guiding our staffing and operational planning.



One standout success is our continued popularity with Thunder Bay residents and travelers alike for our gift shop's locally themed souvenirs, particularly those with Indigenous significance. It's not uncommon for locals to stop by—or send others—to pick up items, even if they're not flying. Our staff are frequently praised for their friendliness and for curating a unique and authentic merchandise selection.

## Success Stories

## Incorporation of Local & Regional Offerings

We take great pride in showcasing the spirit of Thunder Bay through both our food and retail selections. In the gift shop, we offer a wide range of Indigenous-made merchandise that reflects the culture and artistry of the region. At the bar and lounge, local favourite Sleeping Giant Brewing Company is represented both on tap and through branded merchandise. Meanwhile, our food concepts highlight local partners like Persian Man, Thunder Bay Meats, and B&B Farms—bringing authentic flavours to life through items like fresh-cut fries and the iconic Thunder Bay Persian.

One of our most popular treats is the Persian—a local pastry favourite—which we sell individually or by the box, with many boxes purchased as gifts or taken on flights. Our grill's burgers have also built a strong reputation, particularly among repeat travelers from the mining sector. And of course, Sleeping Giant beer on tap in the lounge has become a customer favourite, offering a taste of Thunder Bay's vibrant craft beer scene right before takeoff.



# COMMUNITY

## Celebrating our People and Community

In 2024, the Thunder Bay Airport Authority proudly participated in the inaugural Airport Workers Day, established by the Canadian Airports Council and celebrated nationwide on June 26. This milestone event gave us the opportunity to recognize and appreciate the incredible individuals who keep our airport running smoothly every day. We hosted two separate celebrations—one inclusive of all stakeholders and airport workers in the terminal, and another dedicated to our internal Airport Authority staff. The event featured prize giveaways and a chance for colleagues to connect with airport workers they might not interact with daily. The day was a tremendous success, and we're already looking forward to celebrating again in 2025.



Beyond the terminal, the Airport Authority remained active in the community throughout the year, taking part in numerous local golf tournaments. These events offered valuable opportunities to network, support local causes, and have a little fun—highlighted by winning exciting prizes like a Porter gift card. We're proud to represent the airport in these spaces and strengthen our connection with the broader Thunder Bay community, and flex our golf skills!



# CONNECT WITH US!



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# YQT BY THE NUMBERS



**Total Aircraft Movements: 101,080**

**Total Passenger Volume: 728,077**



**Total Northern Carrier Passenger Volume 139,106**

(19% of total Passenger Volume)



**78% Average Load Factor**



(How full the planes are!)



**76% CSAT (Customer Satisfaction) Score**

**90%** Ranked the courtesy and professionalism of security staff and check-in staff as 'good' & 'excellent.'

**91%** Rated the check-in process as 'easy' or 'very easy.'

**Ease of navigation scored a 92%.**

**Quality of WiFi scored a 71%.**

# LOOKING AHEAD

2024 was a year of significant progress. As we move forward, TBIAA remains committed to:

Strengthening our **Air Service Network**

Advancing **Sustainability Initiatives**



Enhancing **Passenger Experience**

Supporting **Economic Development in Northern Ontario**

*We thank our employees, stakeholders, and community for their continued support in shaping a world-class airport for generations to come.*



**Thunder**   
**Bay**Airport

