



**City of Lloydminster
Information Report (IR)**

Subject Matter: WestJet in-person discussion

Department: City Manager's Office

Presented By: Dion Pollard

GPC Meeting Date: February 12, 2024

Topic: The City Manager is providing a briefing to the Governance and Priorities Committee following an in-person meeting at WestJet corporate offices on January 30, 2024.

Background: On December 14, 2023, the City of Lloydminster received word from WestJet's corporate office that regular scheduled service to the Lloydminster Airport would cease effective April 15, 2024. Council and Administration sought further communication on the matter and were offered an opportunity to meet with WestJet representatives at the company's headquarters in Calgary on January 30, 2024.

City delegation

- Gerald Aalbers, Mayor
- Michael Diachuk, City Councillor
- Dion Pollard, City Manager
- Wade Frasz, Airport Manager
- Leo Pare, Director of Communications

WestJet delegation

- Andy Gibbons, VP, External Affairs
- Jeff Hagen, VP, Commercial Development and Strategic Partnership
- Christina Iversen, Director, External Affairs
- Rick Jones, Program Manager, Network Planning
- Tara Jago, Sr. Manager, External Affairs

The City delegation prepared a brief presentation to review the City's five-year partnership with WestJet which began when the first WestJet Link flight touched down in Lloydminster on June 21, 2018. The delegation spoke of the modern services and amenities provided at the Lloydminster Airport, highlighting the many infrastructure investments made since 2018, including a \$5 million runway upgrade completed through a federal Airport Capital Assistance Program grant.

The City's representatives also sought clarity on WestJet's decision to abruptly discontinue Lloydminster routes. The WestJet team expressed appreciation for the City's partnership over the past five years, stating the decision was based on numbers and not related to services at the airport itself.

When asked if anything might be done at a municipal level to preserve the partnership, WestJet representatives remained clear and resolute in the company's decision to end service to Lloydminster, citing less-than-optimal passenger counts as the primary reason for the route being deemed non-cost effective.

In 2019 – the first full year of WestJet Link service to Lloydminster – the total passenger count was 19,628. Through 2020 and 2021, COVID had a severe impact on the air travel industry, requiring WestJet to adjust the schedules and frequency of their flights. While passenger counts rebounded strongly in 2022, they never returned to pre-COVID levels and in 2023 only 11,955 passengers utilized WestJet Link to and from the Lloydminster Airport.

While disappointed the WestJet Link service model was not a match for the Lloydminster region’s air-travel habits, Administration remains focused on the airport’s viability as a regional flight hub and will work to gauge interest among other carriers with intent to restore scheduled service to urban destinations in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Objective: To provide Council with a summary of the City’s January 30, 2024 discussion with WestJet to inform further discussion regarding operations at the Lloydminster Airport.

Options:

1. That the Committee request more information and that the item be brought forward to a future Regular Council meeting for decision.
2. That the Committee request more information and that the item be brought forward to a future Governance & Priorities Committee meeting.

Alignment with Strategic Plan: This item is in alignment with the following strategic area: Building Economic Resilience. Strong utilization of the Lloydminster Airport remains a key part of the City’s strategy for long-term economic growth.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	WestJet services discussion.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Feb 8, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Dion Pollard

Doug Rodwell