

Vanderhoof airport has progressed but still no steps

Sometime in the mid-sixties, probably 1966, the entire Alberta cabinet chartered a forty-five seater plane and flew to Vanderhoof for a day, reportedly for the fishing.

On arrival at the airport, the plane was met by the local Chamber of Commerce - and an unexpected surprise.

Former newspaper editor Audrey Smedley-L'Heureux recalls standing by the plane watching the stewardess slide open the door, fifteen or twenty feet above the ground.

"Could you bring the stairs please", the attendant called to the Chamber members, who greeted her request with astonished silence.

"What stairs?", finally came the reply.

Wayne Deorksen, a private pilot and past president of the Blue Mountain Flyers Club, recalls that "the episode was an source of some embarrassment and much laughter... They couldn't get out of the plane".

Eventually, the disembarking problem was solved with a rope ladder

and some athletics on the part of the Alberta cabinet.

Most of the fishing equipment, however, remained stuck in the baggage compartment, high above the ground on the underside of the plane.

Since that memorable day, the Vanderhoof Airport has progressed - though it still doesn't own any steps.

The gravel runway, apron and taxiway were extended and paved in 1978-79 after the Village received two grants totalling \$510,000. from the provincial government for the upgrading of the airport. Since then, the municipality has applied for funds to purchase a non-directional beacon and additional lighting as recommended in a government commissioned airport development feasibility study released in January of this year.

The comprehensive study outlines a two phase development of the airfield with the first section designed to meet expanding local needs throughout the coming decade.

Flyers president Dar-

rell Cursons says the study seems "very favourably disposed to Vanderhoof as a centre for the region" although he disagrees with some of the timelines.

He says the Club feels that "the recommendation for a non-directional beacon is very important because

without it we can't bring in the Air Ambulance or charter services under all conditions. With the beacon and the lighting, we could make it a twenty-four hour airport."

The Flyers also like the recommendation to extend the tarmac in Phase One but would like to see

a 1000 foot extension to the runway earlier than Phase Two.

Presently, the airport boasts a triangular take off and landing configuration with two grass strips and a surfaced 1,200 metre by 22.1 metre runway, 178 m. by 14.5 m. taxiway and 90 m. by 28 m. apron.

It hosts five businesses, flying clubs and schools including the Blue Mountain Flyers, the Vanderhoof Flying Services, Vand-Aero Sales and Rentals, Northern Mnt. Helicopters and Coast Mountain Flight Service, and is the home of the well known Vanderhoof Airshow.

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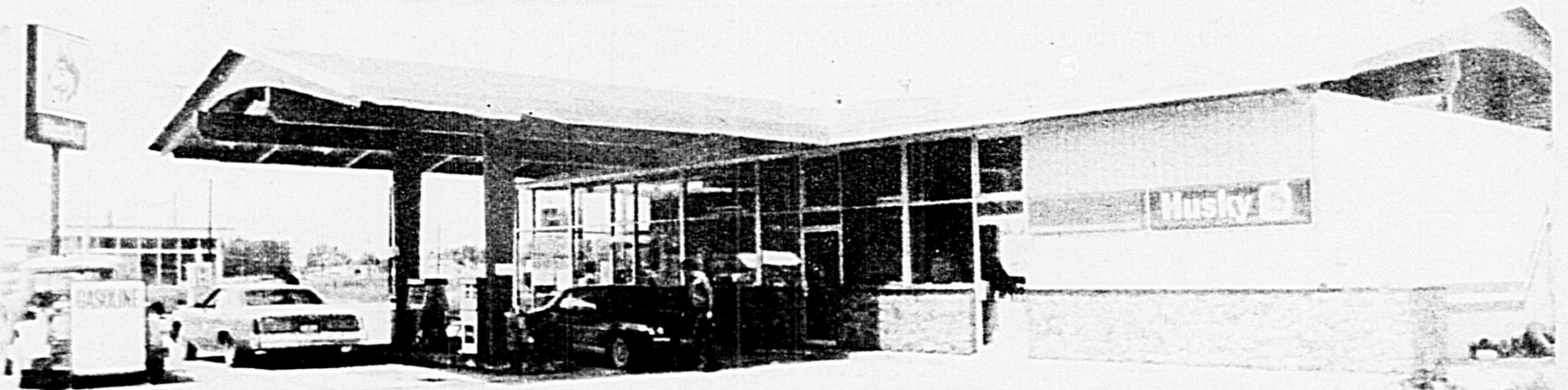
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